

Living By The Rules

A very wise man walked among God's people and the people wanting to know God and wanting to reach their highest level of development said to the wise man, "Master, give us some rules to live by."

And the very wise man began to list rules, rules which if followed might lift the consciousness to the level of God realization. And he said, "There should be one day a week that should be holy, a time when you should forget everything else and come apart, and spend just a seventh of your time doing nothing, absolutely nothing but being still and listening and worshipping and making God the most precious and important thing in your consciousness."

And that rule called for other rules, and so he said, "You can only go a few yards from home on that day. That is how precious it is. And you can't buy or sell on that day. And you can't do this and that." And the rules extended into personal, private life.

He said, "Your body is precious because it is the Temple of God that lives in you. We should have rules about diet, and rules about exercise." And he set up a whole program of nutrition for the health of the body, and people began to believe that they must eat exactly according to these rules and this diet in order to grow and be attuned to God.

And then the very wise man said, "We must deal with guilt, with feelings of being out of sort with God. So you must take what you have and what you consider precious and take the life out of it in symbol of what sin and error does in you, and killing it, you will sacrifice it and as the blood, as the life goes out of it, you will feel cleansed. And you will take a scape-goat and have him carry the sins of the entire camp out of the camp into the wilderness, and then we will all be empty of sin for another year."

And these were the rules. And there were rules regarding cleanliness. There were rules regarding fair exchange. There were laws, and there were commandments. And for every rule, there were a dozen rules for the application of that rule, until they extended and became complex and complicated, and there was an entire university developed for men to study the rules and to interpret the rules. And churches evolved around the rules, some saying, "The rules are just guides and unimportant." The other splitting hairs over the rules.

And the differences in thought engendered hate, and the rules became points of contention, and men became caught up in the rules rather than what the rules were intended to teach and to say. And the wise man was gone and could no longer interpret the rules for them or help them in the application of them, but another wise man came and walked among the people.

And this new wise man said, "Understand this. It is not following the rules that will make you one with God, but a change that happens within you."

And the new man instituted a new form, and he said, "Come and let me take you down to the river. And in the river I will put you under the water and bring you up again, and it will be as if the old man that tried to follow the rules and could not, the old self will be dead, and a new man will come up out of the water like a death and a burial and a resurrection. And the new man then can live in a new way because of the difference within him."

And he taught the people and many people were baptized. And then baptism became a rule. Everyone had to be baptized in order to get saved, in order become new, in order to know God, and it became just another rule that was added.

And another wise man came, and the wise man said, "All of these rules, all of these laws, all of the commandments can be summed up in just one commandment. I am not giving you a new commandment, just a fulfilment of the old. Take this one law. Just love one another. Love your neighbor as you love yourself, and love God most of all. And then all of the commandments take care of themselves. And that is my only teaching."

And having done all of these things, you can do all other things. And the wise man taught the people and they listened, and they were confounded by his words. They were so simple, so easy to believe.

He was teaching an impersonal life that if you follow just one law, all of the rest of the laws would take care of themselves, and he lived that way and he made a point of breaking some of the old laws so that men could see this holy man is holy not because of the rules, but in spite of the rules.

Because he has satisfied the intent and the highest purpose of the rules and the laws, now the rules and the laws have no power over him. And so he appeared to break even natural law, showing that even this law had been overcome by satisfying the intent, the purpose or being one with the law. And then he died.

And his followers, his students went out to teach among the people and they said, "All that you need is to experience within yourself a living presence. There is an impersonal life. The only sin that ever existed was selfishness. If you insist on self, and self's own way to the exclusion of others and their happiness and their way, and it is wrong, and there is nothing else that is wrong."

But the people said, "We understand love and we will be loving and we understand this listening within, and we will do that. But give us rules. It is so much simpler if we have rules to live by. Should we be vegetarian?"

And the wise men said, "It is not what goes in your mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out."

"Well then, should we keep the Sabbath?"

And they said, "Make every day holy."

And they said, "Should we wear certain colors, certain kinds of clothes. Must we have steeples on our churches? Give us some rules. We must have rules to live by."

And the teacher said, "But the rule, the law, is in the giver of the law, and the giver of the law is within you. There simply are no rules."

But the people made rules anyway, and built themselves churches around their rules. And they persecuted people who didn't practice their rules. And still do today.

There is only one law, and only one rule. The new birth is when you discover that there are two selves. A smaller self and a greater self, or a lower self and a higher self, and when you discover the lower self insists on being separate and getting his own way, and very righteously he will cling to the very highest and religious and spiritual rules and say, "If you don't believe in this which I know is right, then you are wrong and I am separate from you and I am higher and I am more spiritual."

The lower self can be very, very spiritual in the eyes of the world, very, very righteous, very, very self-righteous. It can follow all of the rules, all of the things. It knows how to sit just exactly right in meditation. Perfect posture. Very impressive. The lower self knows all of the rules, has them memorized very often.

But it is selfish, makes a comparison between himself and other people and condemns other people's failures and thoughts and lacks. It can be very spiritual, very righteous, even very disciplines. It can put the body through all sorts of things that appear to be kundalini experience and God knows what. At least it is not what happens to everybody else. And it can use visions and colors and lights and sounds and all sorts of impressive things, phenomena.

But the Higher Self, the Higher Self is not a separate self. There is only one Higher Self. Only one ever existed. Only one ever was born. It is the only begotten of the Father. The only child He ever had. The expression of God born of Him who is all that He is, and every once in a while somebody discovers, "I don't want to be me. I want to be all that He is. And it is not precious for me to have you believe what I do or do things my way, to be like me or to believe like me. It is only precious that I find whatever it is that is common in you and me, what it is that we share, and if the light is within me, that is what I will seek out in you. For light seeks light.

And if I find light in you, once I have found it, I will magnify it, and you and I will become great lights. But if I find the light and I say, "Yes, but...here is some darkness." Then my attention is focused on your darkness, and may overcome your light and mine.

If I seek light in myself, I will seek light in others and darkness will simply be overcome by exaggerating that light until it is brighter and brighter. The darkness disappears. There is a new birth experience. The new birth experience is the moment that I discover the impersonal life or the greater self, and find out this very personal self, this very selfish self

that is me, however religious, however spiritual, this separatist me that insists on having my own way, is the lesser.

And there is a greater. There is a self that cares more about the life of this universe and the lifting of all consciousness to God than it cares about me personally, and because it cares more about the greater than the lesser, then the lesser me, the selfish me might have to take quite a beating for the purpose of the greater self.

The two selves are very often diametrically opposed to one another. What I would want for the selfish self may not be for the greatest purpose at all, for the greatest cause. And when I go into meditation and I say, "I will take it within me and see how it feels," I still yet have two voices, and I must learn to discern. And I must test the voices very carefully, very carefully because even in meditation, even when I follow all of the rules and do all of the things right, there still is a choice between two voices. One that will tell me to do what is best for me, and another that is recognizable as the voice of God Himself and may require a great sacrifice on my part to follow it.

A few men, a very few men in history, have learned to listen to the Greater Voice consistently, very few. Not because it is so impossible. It is not. It is really very simple. But because it requires a great choice and the ego dies hard. The lower self will put on a number of masks, a number of faces, a master of disguise, and it will have me doing all of the pious things to be more religious and more spiritual so I can salve my listening to the wrong voice. I may destroy myself in fasting. I may crawl as Martin Luther did on my knees for miles for penitence and punishment in the name of religion, and gain nothing because it is the guidance of the lower self that can put on a disguise of many faces.

Then how can I know, how can I recognize the Highest?

Perhaps the best way is to ask one question. What is the most precious thing I have? If my fondest wish is to become a great healer, a great channel, a great teacher, even a great parent. Would I give that up if required by the highest voice? If anything, if any other goal, if any goal at all is more important, if there is anything that I would not give up, that is the place to start because it will for sure be required. The most precious thing that I have must take second place to the guidance of that which is highest within me, not because God wants anything that we have or even needs it, but because we can't listen to two voices at once, and if what is our fondest desire is what we are listening to, then we are being distracted from highest purpose.

If we can become absolutely impersonal without a will of my own for a moment and then ask, I can accept that answer knowing that it has come from the highest within me. That answer I can accept.

Check to see if it comes from ego. Check to see if it comes from the selfish self. Even if it is from the highest self, it may agree with what your goal was, and if it has come from the impersonal, from the highest, from God within, then you will meet that goal. If the goal is selfish, it will be hollow, even when we do.

If all of your hopes for developing spiritually are based in following the rules, if you know exactly what to do and how to do it and what rules to follow, be absolutely sure that you are going to find an exception to your rules because the rules will not get you there. No matter what they are, no matter who gave them, the rules do not work because they are a limitation.

The one thing that does is a change, a change within yourself. It is not what you do, but what you are that is the new birth. Not what you do, but what you become, and what you become is God.

And all of the rules that you follow is because you are one with God, not to become one with God. And then the rules you follow because you want to follow the rules, not because the spiritual community puts on pressure if you don't eat right or dress right or go to the right places or do the right things. The change has to come within, and it is what you are, not what you do.

Probably for the rest of the time that we are on this planet, people will be insisting on a set of rules. Every time a spiritual teacher comes, the people will ask, "Give us a set of rules to live by." And many spiritual teachers, ever today, are making the mistake of handing out a set of rules and saying, "If you do these things, you will attain cosmic consciousness."

But it is slightly in error. The truth is what you become is what will make the difference and the rules are with the giver of the rules, the highest that is within you, and attuned to that, you will have the rules.