

You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not worship false idols. You shall not take the Lord's name in vain. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Honor your father and mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or anything that belongs to your neighbor. Exodus 20:2-17. A new command I give you: Love on another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. John 13:34-35.

Rules To Live By

When I was growing up, I had no rules. My brothers kept track of me and my brother Bill talked to me frequently about the importance of an education. He was protective of me and taught me to value myself. When my children came along, they had a lot of rules. I had learned the importance of rules in a family. It teaches a child that someone cares about them, gives them security and yes, that not following the rules has consequences. I don't mean harsh or unjust rules, just your basic "keep you safe" rules. Where are you, who are you with, be home by 11, respect yourself and respect others' rules. I was reminded of this when riots in Baltimore were happening and a mother came storming out of nowhere and grabbed her son, who was wearing a mask, and had been with a group throwing stones at Police Officers. She not only yelled at him but smacked him about the head and shoulders. People reacted to this, some for it and some against the violent way she reacted. I looked at it and felt her terror. This was a frightened mother. She could see the consequences of his behavior. What if he was arrested, what if he got hurt. She could see things that would affect his whole life. Later, the press interviewed them. They asked this young boy how did you feel, and he said that when he saw her his thought was "what is my momma doing here?" Not even his mask saved him from his momma's disappointment. They then asked him how he felt about being publicly hit by his mother and this is what stuck with me, he said "I know my momma cares about me."

I came to the beginning of my faith at 12 but didn't get to church until I was 15. Took me 3 years to work up the courage to walk into that church alone. There I found a family. They taught me that God loved us so much that he made rules for our lives. That as Christians, we are to follow the rules. I know I fail daily. I'm glad there was nothing in the 10 commandments about patience, I would fail hourly. When I look at where I fail, I seek forgiveness and try to do better. God doesn't grade on a curve, so it doesn't matter what everyone else does. It's personal. While our faith is best developed within the church family, our relationship is a personal one between us and God. I need that church family to remind me who I am and whose I am. Just as that young man knows his momma cares about him so much that she came after him, so God has loved us as a parent loves a child. This young man had on a mask, thinking that no one would know who he was, but his momma knew. So, God knows us with or without our masks. He has, through Christ, commanded us to care about each other and to seek out those who need to know the love and mercy of Christ. God loves us so much that he has come after us.

Dear God, you have given us rules to live by and to be called your children. Lord, we want to serve you, we want to be better Christians. Help us to seek out those who need to know your love and mercy, your children that are hungering and thirsting for you. Be with us and guide us. In the blessed name of Jesus. Amen.

Grace Epperson