

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

By Rev. Christine Meier

Our title this month will entail a few examples concerning how God engages mankind or said another way, some examples of His rules of engagement. In fact, many industries, towns and corporations have rules encompassing their engagement. Sometimes they're called by-laws, regulations or ordinances. Our military has rules of engagement first developed by George Washington, along with many other founding military men.

Here are some examples of God's rules of engagement. God is love and He embodies love as He engages us. Another is the Word of God, which He embodies as He speaks to us. Both of these concepts personify a force, a person and a way of life; in other words, a rule of engagement. The principle of love can be difficult for humans to understand. Someone needs to model this for us. Our greatest example of this was Jesus Christ. While Abraham, Moses and David are excellent Old Testament heroes, none of them died to save their people (John 10:10; 15:13). Jesus embodied this in a way few others in history have done, and no one has ever done on a spiritual level. In other words, as a result of His death others would be able to live for eternity (John 3:15, 36; 10:28). Other examples of God's rules of engagement also exist, and we have precious few lines of print to go over all of them. If we needed a table of contents all one would have to do is look at the example of Christ.

Unlike other forces on this planet, Christianity holds a unique place because of its engagement and embodiment of love. This is because Christ embodied this love. The only true way to understand this way of life, and be able to live it, is to allow what the Bible calls the 'indwelling' to take place. In John 14, Jesus tells us that the Father and the Son are one and when Jesus is taken up to heaven He will send the Holy Spirit to reside on earth, indwelling the hearts of the human beings who accept Christ as Savior. There are awesome examples of Christians who excelled at living this lifestyle: St. Patrick, the Apostle Paul, Mother Theresa and millions more who will go nameless until God reveals them. Unfortunately, we have also had our shameful moments as well: The Spanish Inquisition, the Catholic and Protestant wars, as well as others who might also remain hidden until God judges humanity.

Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, no matter how much we profess Christ, we just don't cut it. Jesus told us plainly the Holy Spirit would reveal all things concerning Christ to us. The other New Testament writers constantly stressed our inability to remain Christian without living through the Spirit and not through the Law or through the unchecked ravages of human emotion.

Following Mosaic Law was for a certain period of time, primarily for the Jewish nation. It had its place, and it helped us to understand the God who claimed to create all that we see. Without the Law we would never have been able to understand His requirements and character and personality. By doing so, those who have spent any amount of time reading the Bible and have a relationship with the Holy Spirit have been able to know the Divine in such an undeniable way, that humility and Love can reign in what would otherwise be very stone-cold hearts.

Human emotion was created by God and cannot, nor should it be denied. But unchecked with no input from the Holy Spirit, it spouts nonsense, demanding its own way, regardless of how it affects other human beings or society as a whole. Without the Holy Spirit actively engaging our soul, we tend to be quite narcissistic as humans. This is what creates war and this is what maintains war. People tend to think addictive personalities are limited to drugs, sex and alcohol. That minimization tends to ignore the heart of our problem. There is this little secret we deny constantly: WE WERE CREATED TO LIVE FOREVER. Because we did not act in love with a loving God, He had to shorten our life-span (see Genesis 3:8-10). If you look at the evidence of human beings who lived closer to the Genesis 1:1 timetable, you will see their lives extended 600 to over 900 years in some cases. Most scientists believe the atmosphere on the planet at that time sustained us in ways our environment cannot help us now.

Deep down in the very heart of the soul and spirit of man, we know we are supposed to live forever. This conundrum creates a vacuum for the psyche. Add the ravages of everyday life and you reproduce addictive personalities: Always striving for the unknown, yet never able to achieve, coupled with an unquenchable need to dull the pain. People use all sorts of methods to silent the ache. Drugs, sex and alcohol tend to be the cheaper, quicker and easier methods. But we have workaholics, foodies, shopaholics, power-junkies, political junkies, warmongers, techie slaves (and gamers alike), socialists who become globalists, and religions who demand to control in an effort for world domination, along with every other compulsion in between.

In some cases people seek help by connecting with professionals, or they engage the help of family and friends. The worse-case scenario is when these helpers become enablers. Ultimately, it isn't until the Holy Spirit resides in that vacuum to unravel the web the controversy creates, that healing begins. Addictions, with all the ravages of time, held in a space void of the love and indwelling of the God who created the universe, decimate souls. It isn't until the Holy Spirit indwells when something deeper than healing takes place. His Love answers the age-old questions of life and love, yet His love goes deeper still. It goes to a place where you and I were first formed in love for a purpose and with a word spoken from the lips of the Ancient of Days.

It's this connection which compelled St. Patrick back to Ireland. This word kept the Apostle Paul going, and this Love kept Mother Theresa working in India. Love is a person. 1 John 4:8 says, "God is Love." This portion of Scripture is in a tense of the Greek language which means Love is not just God but that because God Is, Love Is. He created it and sustains it by His existence. Without Him, there is no such thing. This is why love is a force who lives even after humans die. Humans have to choose to operate within the framework of love as a way of life.

Unfortunately, being on the face of the earth means we have to engage in battle. Sometimes the battle is within us; sometimes it is in self-defense, either as a nation or as individuals, and sometimes it is spiritual, either as a group of Christians or as individual believers. In any one of these situations it is war, and there are rules of engagement which govern. You might wonder how on earth we can talk about God's love when we talk about war and rules of engagement. When humans decide to engage in battle, God still allows the outcome to be governed by His rules of engagement and His purposes toward His desired end. It's because of love that He cannot allow anyone who "practices the magic arts, is sexually immoral, a murderer, idolater or loves and practices falsehood" to enter into the kingdom (Revelation 22:15). It's by His rules and purposes He tells mankind how to get out of its own struggles with these lifestyles and how to step into a freedom which goes beyond wars, addictions and other degradations. There are times when a battle is a choice and sometimes it is foisted upon us, but God will always have the outcome work toward an end which fulfills His purpose and plan for the earth, even before the earth was formed and created.

One of the ways we know this is through His word. His word is another way He engages mankind. His word carries such force and strength that by it, as Christians, we wage war against an unseen enemy in our own souls. Some call these demons in a conceptual sense, and sometimes inner healing and other mental or emotional

problems can be classified that way. But in other cases these unseen forces are very real entities who have waged war against the Adamic-seed line since God formed him and Eve.

When the word comes to challenge our addictions, we tend to believe we have to be super-heroic or stoic. We forget it is in the act of believing God's word where we are set free. There is a point in time where we must believe God loves us enough to set us free. We let go and let God, to quote a phrase. This is when we decide to trust God and do it His way. This is when we are loosed from chains we know exist, but have become blind to see. When we believe God's word, we receive God's word and we start to speak God's word. God modeled this behavior to us initially by speaking the world into existence, giving us a record of that spoken word, as well as all the other creatures who came after God spoke them into existence. He then gave Adam the ability to name and proclaim the word spoken to the animal kingdom. God gave man spiritual power to create through love by His word.

Once man left the way of love through mistrust and disobedience, he would have become the unwitting errand boy of the devil when using his God-ordained gift. God took responsibility by blocking the way to the tree which would have sustained man in his sin-stained state for eternity. There are many 'faiths' and religions who want to capture and use these gifts without the covering of God. That covering comes with His rule, purpose and plan. Why are they able to function at all if they refuse the covering of Yahveh? Because God gave mankind gifts and He will not take them back. It says so in His word. Romans 11:29 says, "God's gifts and His call are irrevocable." But here's the rub: Like all things involved in disobedience, such as spells, witchcraft, fetishes and idolatrous behavior, there is the law of unintended consequences.

Without functioning the way God wants us to with His gifts, according to His rulebook, it is sin. This works against our bodies and our souls even though everything looks okay on the surface. The Scripture tells us "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:23). So when we function in God's prescribed way— or by His rules of engagement— with His word, with Christ in our hearts through the Holy Spirit in love, things change around us for the better because we've come in line with how the universe is supposed to work the way it was originally created to. When we don't, just like that unseen atmosphere I talked about, we keep getting pounded by our sin. This works against our bodies and we age, or don't live out the fullness of our years like we should. Then we have those "laws of unintended consequences." All of

mankind can become engulfed in those. Let's explain them, from a biblical point of view.

Like love, the word is also a person. This is why the Bible is so enduring. John 1 tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning . . . He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God . . . The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:1, 2, 10-14, 17).

Since the Scriptures make it clear Jesus is still very much alive, the word of God is alive. The printed word is found more specifically within the pages of the Old and New Testaments. So how is war connected to God's rules of engagement? First, we are to function in love and word. If we are waging war against the body God gives us, we are not in love or His word. These actions encompass the soul-based realm and work themselves out into the physical. In a physical realm as a nation or individual, if we go to war for something other than self-defense, we have gone against God's word. If we don't repent and seek God's face on how to make things right, that 'wage of sin' we talked about before, and that inconvenient truth of the law of unintended consequences takes over. These are spiritual forces, with physical effect, much like the law of gravity or the law of covenant.

Whether the consequence is to our environment or the waging of war on the desired lifestyle you want to live, all become affected by this negligence. If we overeat, we go against God's love and word for our bodies and we get fat. Unfortunately, though, because we live in a sin-soaked environment, not the one God originally intended for us, years of overeating have the potential to cause disease to affect our bodies. This is the law of unintended consequence. No one intends for extra slices of cake and pizza to cause ill health, but it can happen. Likewise, no one intends for our country to become a mess when we neglect teaching the next generation our sacred national trusts, but this is exactly what happens. Ignorance is the result of our neglect (sin), but the unintended consequence of this could be poverty, persecution, war or another form of captivity. No one intends for this to happen when they neglect to study our history and pass it down to the next generation, but this is the unintended consequence.

Is there no hope for us or our planet? There is a great hope and truth which can set every single man, woman and child free, along with the environment which has suffered and been held captive by our sin (Romans 8:19-22). That hope is found in trusting God's love and believing in His word. That word says He raised Jesus from the dead. Because Jesus was raised, we will be also. That trust in love and word will carry its own ability to change our lifestyles and our environment. Addictions no longer hold the same power they did before. We won't want to pollute ourselves, whether on an individual level or corporately. Engaging in war would only happen in self defense against an enemy who refuses to communicate — in other words, where there is absolutely no other way. That reality gets us in touch with the purpose and plan for our individual assignment here on earth. It does more than give us purpose; it gives us a game plan and a source of strength for the future.

The enemy of our souls— and not just the concept some talk about but the actual entity— does not want us to come in contact with that kind of purpose. He will do anything he can to deceive us; whether it is by tricking us into war, into addictions or false religion. We become so over sensitized to our own pain, we lash out at those around us. The enemy uses this pain to distract us from finding God's plan and purpose for our lives.

The devil's purpose and plan is to lie to us enough so we find nothing but death. Have you ever wondered why the only book (the Bible) about life before creation, during creation's existence and after the earth is transformed, is so misquoted, misunderstood, and in some cases, used to wound or hurt? If there is no real devil, then I suppose we would all consider the Bible as just some sweet book with some good ideas in it. There would be no need for the controversy surrounding it. This alone should tell us there is a real devil. When properly read and followed, the Bible holds the keys to life within its pages, as well as our deliverance once we speak it forth (Proverbs 12:18; 18:21). The Bible unveils the lies the devil uses to trap people (John 8:44). It makes sense he would use every lying tool available to misquote, misread and misinterpret such a book. Unfortunately, we humans become his favorite tool. Sometimes the proof really is in the pudding, as the old English saying goes.

For those of you fighting the good fight within the context of God's rules of engagement be encouraged. There are days, weeks and months where it looks like love and the word spoken will not manifest the results God says they will. Abraham waited ten years; Noah waited one hundred. Let me share a story from

my own life. As a teenager, I enjoyed a few vices. Beer was a favorite. When I got saved, I gave up all such things because God showed me His love and His word. Only once since I had left those vices was I ever tempted to get a beer. I grew up in NYC. Being anywhere from 25 to 50 percent Irish— there's an argument on my mother's side as to exactly how much of the clan-blood we have— I grew up around pubs. One of my favorite poisons was Guinness Stout. Almost fifteen years into my freedom, I walked past a thirty-foot tall stack of the dark brew in a supermarket. Innocently getting groceries for the family, I did not expect this experience. We had just made a big move and the stress which accompanies such a change was going on in our lives. All of a sudden this sweet reasoning took over. It went something like this: "Oh, it's just like water because it's only beer. One case won't affect you because you're strong enough to have only one bottle."

Back when I was a teen, I had the ability to drink a small army under the table. Guys were always trying to 'buy me drinks' and that 'talent' in drinking alcohol came in quite handy for getting free beer while never waking up sorry the next morning, if you know what I mean. When I passed that stack of Guinness I could taste it, smell it, see it and literally feel it going down my throat. But there was another feeling at work also. It was quieter, stiller and not as emotional. It was also much deeper. Had I not stopped that first train-wreck of dialog to listen hard for that deeper, inner voice I might have missed the signature of love on the second voice. That second voice carried a clear warning. Had I only heard the warning and obeyed it, I would have been fine. But I stopped to listen hard because Love was quieter. It was sweeter, even while warning me. Just by listening and hearing it I realized I wanted something better, and that something far greater was waiting for me.

That experience was over twenty years ago. Since then, I've had the honor to minister to many addicts engaged in their own personal war. I want to encourage you to realize with each success over temptation, you become stronger and far less tempted. Maybe you're stuck in a place you don't want to be or with an addiction that's taken all the oxygen out of your 'atmosphere.' I can say with a certainty the way of Love and Word is always there for you when everyone else fails you. If you can't get someone to pray for you, we're here for you in prayer and purpose. Email us by hitting the contact button, and let us know how we can pray for you.