

God's Rules or Man's?

“It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

John 5:10 (NIV)

Some people are turned off by the church (and Christianity) because of so many rules to obey—and things to avoid.

Some of us in the church today are doing what Jesus said of the religious leaders of His time, **“They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders.... Everything they do is done for men to see.”** (Matthew 23:4-5 NIV)

Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5) and told him to pick up his mat and walk. The man did so, but the religious leaders said it violated the law to carry a mat on the Sabbath.

They even taught that if a tailor discovered a needle in his cloak (while in the synagogue on the Sabbath), he'd broken the law by carrying his work tool on that day. Or if you swatted a mosquito on the Sabbath it was considered hunting, and therefore forbidden. You had broken the Sabbath.

They also debated over whether or not it was

permissible to eat an egg laid by a hen on the Sabbath, since the chicken “worked” to produce the egg. They taught that you couldn't use a rope to lower a bucket into the well to fetch water on the Sabbath, but you could use a belt. Some kinds of knots were allowed to be tied on the Sabbath, others weren't.

Jesus confronted these rulers when He said in Mark 7:6-8, **“Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’”** (NIV)

The era I was born into didn't permit me to change out of my church clothes on Sunday. I couldn't play with my friends or swim at the cottage on Sunday, even though it was very hot out. We had to maintain our Christian witness in front of the other cottagers—we were told. I knew that the message we were giving to

them wasn't good.

On and on it went with the rules. As a child, all I could think of was that God wanted to spoil my fun.

But that's not true at all. He made the Sabbath so we could enjoy, relax, and worship Him.

“Then He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.’” (Mark 2:27 NIV)

Do you think it's too hard to be a Christian? If so, examine the kind of Christianity revealed in the Bible. The Christianity that teaches God's rules, and not the rules contrived by men.

“The Sabbath is God’s merciful appointment for the common benefit of all mankind...It is not a yoke, but a blessing. It is not a burden, but a mercy...Above all, it is good for souls.”

J.C. Ryle

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