

INTRODUCTION

Rules are set up for our good. Sometimes we may feel that rules limit our freedom. It was more than 25 years ago when I first drove a car in U.S. Once I was making a left turn at an intersection. I saw a green light and so I proceeded. A lady from the opposite direction honked at me. Later I learned that only a green arrow would give me a higher priority to cross the junction. Fast-forward to 3 years ago when I went back to Hong Kong to visit my family. We were crossing a street. I checked and saw no car, and so I continued to walk. Lo and behold a bus was closing in at full speed toward me. The driver blared his horn to warn me. I quickly retreated my steps. My wife scolded me: "Did you not see what is written on the ground – Look Right?" Many of you know that in Hong Kong the steering wheel is on the other side of the cars. I was so used to expect the traffic to come from the left side but I forgot to look to my right. It is indeed by God's grace that I am still standing here today. There are situations where you simply cannot argue with the traffic law. The rules exist to protect everyone. The same is true for God's Word. God lays down His requirements for us in the Bible. We like some of them but not the rest. But as God's children we cannot pick and choose which ones we will abide by. As we continue to study the book of 1 John, the apostle told us that Christians are those who do what God says. In this passage there are three propositions that all begins with "he who says." John went on to explain that if we say God's commands are important, then we have to carry them out.

EXPLANATION

1. Obey What God Said 聽從神的吩咐

How should we treat God's commands? John told us that we simply have to obey what God said. He said in **verse 4**: The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. This is the first "he who says" statement in this passage. John said that a person who knows God should obey what God said. In this letter John used the expressions of "know God," "have fellowship with God," "walk in the light," "love God," and "live in God" to mean the same thing. All those descriptions refer to a believer. By "knowing God" it is not only a head knowledge. For instance, we all know that Donald Trump is the President of this country. But no matter how well we know him from the news, it cannot be compared to the level of knowledge his family members have about him. Before they know him as the President, they know him as a husband, father or grandpa. They not only know what kind of food or color Mr. Trump prefers, but they also know what motivates him and what he values as important. It is a kind of knowledge based on personal experience. In the same way, we know our family members and good friends like no one else does because we spend time with them. Similarly, we can know God more when we interact with Him. How? It is by obeying what He said in the Bible. We read God's Word and we apply it. Then we can experience His presence in our circumstances and deepen our knowledge of Him. John continued in **verse 5** and gave us the correct motivation for obeying God's commands: But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him. Our obedience to God must be

out of love. What the NIV translated as “God’s love” here should be understood as our love for God. Here we can find the third of the thirteen proofs to verify that we are Christians. Believers are those who **obey all the commands of God**. Our Heavenly Father loved us to the degree of sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us. He invited us into the family of God. He wants us to love Him back by obeying what He says. John said that when we do so, our love for God is made complete. The word “complete” does not mean perfect. It should be interpreted as “fulfilling the purpose.” We show that we love God and we want to please Him by obey His commands. In **John 14:21**, Jesus also equates our obedience to Him with our love for Him: “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” God’s commands are like house rules. Parents can only enforce their requirements on their own kids, but none other. Without a genuine relationship those rules are meaningless. Parents expect their children to respond with love rather than reluctance. When kids were young, they were very eager to help. They put laundry into the washer, picked up mail or swept the floor. As they grew up, they gradually realized that chores are no fun. They even felt that they had been used by their parents all their life. They began to love their friends, computers and phones more than they love you. Henceforth, you have to force them, bribe them with money or even threaten them with penalty before they do housework. Do you treat God like that? Do you obey God grudgingly because you have no other choice? Worse still, are you afraid that if you do not obey God’s requirements something bad may happen to you? For example, you catch a cold, your car breaks down or your boss gives you a harsh remark. When similar things occur, you wonder: “Is it because I was mad to my spouse this morning, or I haven’t been attending worship lately or I dropped too little money onto the offering plate?” Is that the reason why our seeker friends hesitate to receive Christ? They have a long list of do’s and don’ts. Christians have to come to worship, have to read the Bible daily, have to offer money, but they cannot smoke, drink or gamble. Brothers and sisters: do we need some tune-up in our relationship with God? Do we love Him enough to obey His commands? Do we have a desire to know Him more?

2. Imitate What Jesus Did 效法主的榜樣

John told us that we have to obey what God said. Besides, John referred us to a perfect example of obedience that we should imitate after. **Verse 6** reads: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. This is the second “he who says” statement in this passage. Those who know God should imitate what Jesus did. We can think of many areas that we can learn from Jesus – His mercy and kindness, His sacrificial love, etc. But since our main focus for today is on obeying God’s commands, we should ask how Jesus obeyed the Father. The answer is: Jesus submitted to the Father’s will without reservation. Listen to what Jesus said in **John 6:38** – “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” In His earthly life, Jesus showed us the perfect example of submission. He came into our world to share the good news of Heaven, and to redeem us through the cross. Sometimes we think that since Jesus is the almighty God, obedience to the Father is a piece of cake for Him. But the Bible clearly tells us that Jesus had struggle in His heart. He too had to go through a thinking process like you and I do when facing an important decision. Jesus pleaded to the Father in **Matthew 26:39** the night before He went to the cross – ... “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Can you sense the dilemma in Jesus’ words? The “cup” symbolizes the wrath of God toward the sins of mankind. All the penalty for sin

would be poured out onto Jesus through His death. Jesus would rather skip all the shame, agony and pain. He knew that He would be ridiculed by the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman officials. His disciples would abandon Him. He had to suffer under the whip and the nails. Most importantly, Jesus would be separated from His beloved Father momentarily when He shouldered the sin of the whole world. Jesus considered all those burdens. But He finally surrendered Himself to the Father. He said: “May Your will be done!” That is the example we are to imitate after. God may not ask us to do something we prefer, but He always send us to do things as we should. For example, it may be hard to let go of our own opinion and submit to others when church coworkers work as a team. Sometimes when we offend another person it is difficult to get rid of our pride and say “I am sorry. Please forgive me.” Most people may like to serve in visible roles in the church. It takes some humility to work in areas where no one notices and you may not receive any compliment. Imitate what Jesus did means that we are willing to follow God’s calling. Notice John said that if we imitate after Jesus then we are living in God. Do you remember where in the Bible did Jesus say that we have to live in Him? What analogy did Jesus use to illustrate His relationship with His followers? It is in **John 15:5** when Jesus said: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” When we received Jesus into our hearts He will continue to stay there. Once again, it pictures our salvation experience as a close relationship with God. Jesus came into our hearts not as a tenant, but as the landlord. That is why we call Him Lord. When we submit ourselves to Jesus, He will guide our footsteps. Are you living in the Lord? Do you treat Him as Your Master? To surrender our will to Jesus is a day-by-day commitment and a progressive learning process. When we consciously remind ourselves that we are in Him, and allow His grace to flow through us, then we can bear much fruit for Him.

3. Love Whom God Loves 去愛神所愛的

John said that we have to obey what God said, and imitate what Jesus did. Thirdly, of all the commands stated in the Bible, John highlighted one particular aspect. We have to love whom God loves. John made his third “he who says” statement in **verse 9-10**: 9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. Based on verse 10 we can derive the fourth proof to validate that we are Christians. Believers are those who **love fellow Christians in the Lord**. John specified that the object of our love is not some unknown strangers, but our brother, meaning a fellow Christian. Of course, the same principle applies to sisters too. The verb “hates” in verse 9 is in present tense. It describes a continuous action. Therefore, it is not like someone who does something that irritates you. But you intentionally treat another believer as an enemy. It is like what we see in the news when people who practice one religion plot to harm believers of a different religion, or the hostility between people of various races. It goes without saying that unresolved hatred can lead to more serious sins. It can escalate to a quarrel, road-rage, fighting with fists or even wars. In our civilized world, some people may resort to a lawsuit. If I cannot win you with my mouth and hands, I will beat you in court and take everything you have. Once I day-dreamed that if I am a litigation attorney, I may register my phone number as 1-800-SUE-THEM if it is not taken yet. I say it just for fun, so please do not call that number! If we say we walk in the light with God then we should love, rather than hate other believers. To love one another is a specific command from Jesus. He told His disciples at the Last Supper, as recorded in **John 13:34** – “A new command I give you: Love one another. As

I have loved you, so you must love one another.” What Jesus ordered the disciples and us is not something we are unable to do. However, it may be something we are unwilling to do. In our human nature we love those people who love us and dislike people whom we find annoying. However, it would be unthinkable to harbor any hatred in our hearts when we say that we have fellowship with God and with other believers. Paul urged us in [Ephesians 4:31-32](#) – 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Paul warned us that we should never hold any evil thought toward another Christian. An effective neutralizer to hatred is forgiveness. Paul said that we have to forgive each other the way Jesus forgave us. How did God forgive us? It is unconditional and complete. Jesus taught us that to those who have offended us, we should forgive them seventy times seven times. It means that we should forgive others without limit. Jesus also told us that before we come to worship, we should settle any grudge with another believer first. Let me ask you this: do you hate anyone in your heart? It may be someone who has betrayed you, someone who did or said something that hurt you deeply or someone who took advantage of you in some other ways. By the grace of God, will you forgive that person today? You may not get back what you have lost. The person may not even admit the offense. You may not even see him/her again. But are you willing to let God take care of the matter? You settle the record with God. Only He can relieve you from the bondage of hatred. It is still a long way to go before you can love the person. But at least you have a fresh starting point. Keep relying on God for His strength. His grace is always sufficient.

CONCLUSION

In this passage, John taught us that Christians are those who do what God says. Not only do they consider God’s commands as important, they put those requirements to practice too. Naturally, we put essential issues at a higher priority. We do not need another scientific study to convince us that exercise is good for our health. We just need to do it. I made up my mind to start something new this year – running. I do not enjoy jogging because I find it boring. Therefore, I did something smart – I found a running mate. I asked my younger son to run with me, and he agreed. On we go with our first jog. I set a very achievable goal to run around the neighborhood once. There are quite a few marathon runners among us and so I would rather not tell you how far I have run. My ultimate target is not to participate in any long-distance competition, but to make running part of my routine. I got breathless and my legs were like dead meat after my first run. However, the very next morning I actually felt great when I woke up. The discipline of jogging is actually quite similar to obeying God’s command. It may not be a fun experience at first when we learn to deny ourselves and submit to the Lord. We want to insist on our own desire. We want to control our life and take it easy. However, when we finally determined to yield to God then we can begin to experience the freedom and joy in the Lord. In case you need some motivation, find a running mate! Brothers can look for some brothers, and sisters pair up with sisters. Go sit down at a coffee shop and just chat about your spiritual life, share a few Bible verses you read recently and then pray for each other. While forming a WeChat group is convenient, nothing is better than a face-to-face conversation. The key is to have someone walk alongside with you so that you can encourage each other in your spiritual growth.