

Building According To The Rules

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To millions of people the memories of Hurricane Andrew are still fresh and vivid. Residents watched in terror as houses and other buildings were ripped apart, in many cases exposing sub-standard construction and shoddy workmanship.

One scene will stay with some of us for the rest of our lives. As the news cameras panned the devastation in what had been an up-scale neighborhood, they suddenly paused to focus on one house that somehow had withstood the violence of the wind. Virtually undamaged, it stood in triumph amid the surrounding wreckage.

When the news team found the owner, they asked him why his home stood when so many others collapsed. His quiet reply spoke volumes: "I built according to the rules."

Immediately the words of Jesus come to mind: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it fell. And great was its fall" (Matthew 7:24-27 NKJV).

A very common but deadly idea has embedded itself in the secular mind. Its poison spreads in a thousand ways. It touched millions of viewers one evening in a prime-time TV show when one of the characters contemptuously retorted to another, "Now you are being biblical--ponderous and out-of-date." Whoever wrote that script was being a prime-time "televangelist," but for the wrong "gospel."

Simply put, it is the destructive notion that the Bible is merely a "religious" book with little or no relevance to modern life. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

All the universal, changeless moral and practical laws that are founded in the very nature and relationships of moral beings (people) are embodied fully and perfectly in the Bible. Being laws of nature they are both timeless and timely, whether in the first century or the twenty-first century. Jesus declared, "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). "My words shall not pass away" (Luke 21:33).

God's word is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:87). It endures forever (1 Peter 1:25).

The Bible is in full and precise conformity with objective reality. That reality stand behind its every precept and principle. Thus, every deviation from The Scripture is a deviation from reality; every violation of The Scriptures is a violation of reality.

Because they are contrary to reality and to the nature of things, such deviations and violations have inevitable moral and practical consequences. We live in a free society. We can choose to disregard and disobey the Bible. But we cannot avoid the consequences of doing so. In fact, we are not avoiding them. Every human, social problem that now plagues society can be traced back to a violation of a Biblical principle. Jesus put it this way: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29 NIV).

God created us and He gave us a complete and accurate operational manual. Why wait until all else fails before following directions? How much more pain and trauma will we suffer before we come to our senses?

Even if something "feels good," the smart thing to do is to check it out with the Bible.

Living without the Bible is like putting on a blindfold and driving a car with no steering wheel. Both are reckless; both end up in wreckage.

When people make up their minds to do what they want to do, it makes little or no difference to them what the Bible says. The resulting tragedy is predictable. Get ready for the pain. It's coming.

On the other hand, success is not an accident. Happiness is a choice--a basic choice to build our lives on the word of God, followed by the daily choices involved in actually doing so.

See that young person diligently living by "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"? By continuing to do so that person will experience day by day the unfolding of God's beautiful plan for his or her life. The resulting happiness is predictable. Get ready for the joy. It's coming.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17 NKJV).

We do not have to "make the Bible relevant." It is relevant. It fits reality perfectly and God commands us to get real by making our lives relevant to it.

All of creation is under its authority: nature, the Church, the whole human race. It is a precise measuring instrument, not a piece of putty we can mold to our liking, not a sheet of rubber we can stretch to fit whatever we want.

God will honor and bless the person who takes His word seriously. "This is the one I esteem: he is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2 NIV).

The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8 NIV).

By keeping the word of God "there is great reward" (Psalm 19:11). People who do so will never be put to shame (Psalm 119:6).

The psalmist went on to affirm: "Your word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11 NKJV). The practice of the truth purifies the behavior. when we square our lives with the Bible, we get our act together.

Jesus made clear that obedience to His word is the proof that we truly love Him. "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15 NIV). No obedience, no love.

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32 NKJV).

The banks of a river do not imprison it but protect it. They preserve it from destructive self-dissipation and direct its powerful energies to flow freely to fulfill its destiny. Living according to the Bible is liberty, not bondage. Reality imposes limits, not to impede us but to direct our lives to flow freely to their greatest fulfillment.

"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28 NKJV).