

Rules for Christian Living

What do Christians, sheep and pirates have in common? Let's find out.

Where can I find the rules for being a Christian?

Perhaps in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5?
You shall not kill. You shall not steal, etc...

But these are really the rules for the Jews.
They called them, "The Law"

We usually only count the main 10, but later on Moses described some more.

But they're not for Christians, they are for Jews.

Perhaps we find the rules for Christians in Matthew 22:37-40?
"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Yeshua replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

But as Yeshua says, this is a summary of "The Law"...

And it is in the New Testament, but, is it for Christians? He was talking to Jews when he said that...
This is a summary of The Law, and it's also meant for Jews.

(So were the beatitudes by the way, Matthew 5/6, Yeshua wasn't talking to Christians. He was talking to Jews and telling them that even fully obeying The Law isn't enough, you need something more than that to be saved.)

Consider these two verses as well:

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 7:6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

There are other verses that say the same thing... Like the whole book of Galatians.

Christians are not under the Law.

The Law is not a collection of rules for Christians. It's just the rules for Jews.

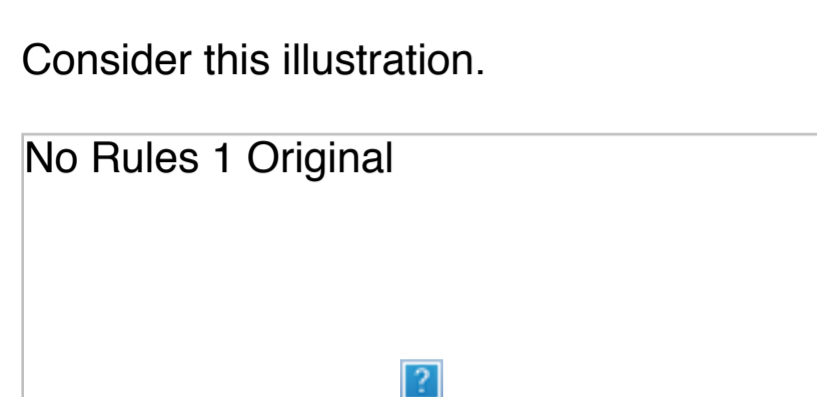
So where are the rules for Christians?

There aren't any!!

Christians can do what they want.

Seriously.

Consider this illustration.



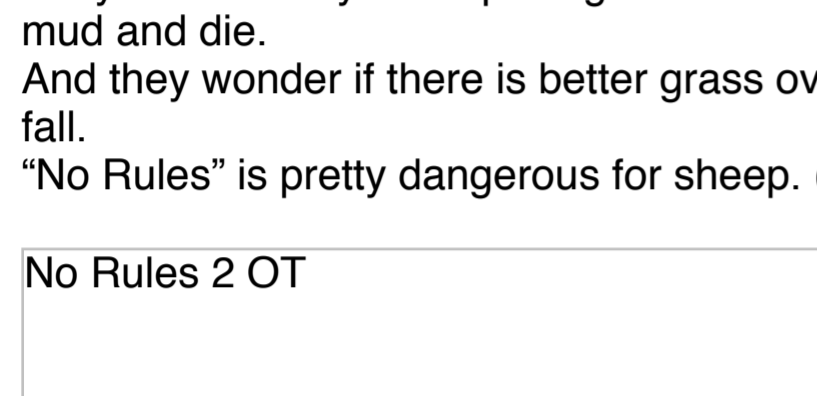
Originally there were no rules. We, (the sheep), were free to roam wherever we wanted to go.

But sheep are pretty stupid, they think dandelions are tasty, and they don't realise that eating them will make them sick.

They think muddy swamps might have cool clear drinking water, but they don't realise they can get stuck in the mud and die.

And they wonder if there is better grass over the edge of the cliff, without realising that they could easily slip and fall.

"No Rules" is pretty dangerous for sheep. (And for humans).



So, God gave us some rules to protect us. (You can read them in Exodus 20. "The Law").

Not to control us, but to protect us.

The Law is sort of like a fence with black and white, easy to understand rules that keep us out of trouble.

If they stay inside the fence the sheep will be safe. If we keep The Law, we won't get hurt.

But sheep don't like fences. They just want freedom.

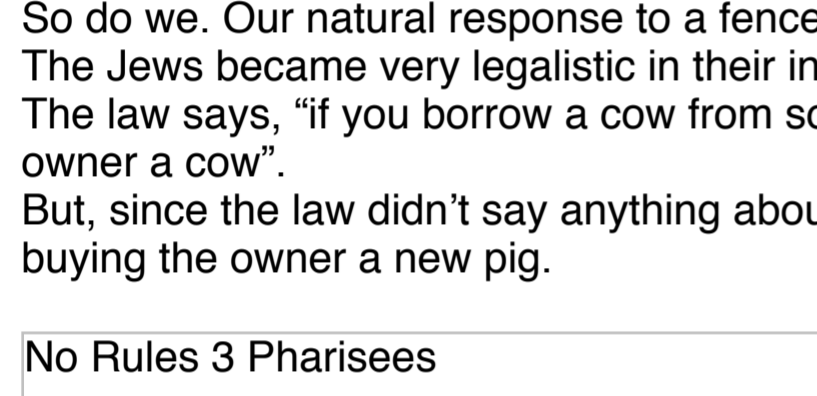
Sheep always think "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence".

So do we. Our natural response to a fence is to try to push it.

The Jews became very legalistic in their interpretation of the Law.

The law says, "if you borrow a cow from someone and it gets killed while its in your possession then you owe the owner a cow".

But, since the law didn't say anything about pigs, you could borrow a pig but if it died you can get away with not buying the owner a new pig.



The Pharisees were the most legalistic of all.

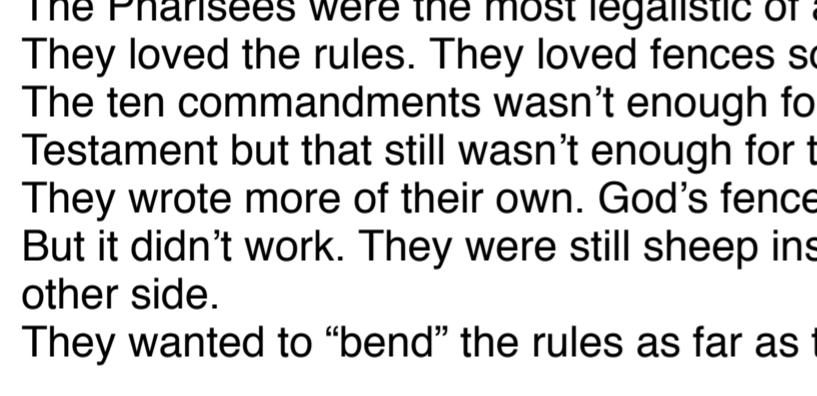
They loved the rules. They loved fences so much they built lots of them.

The ten commandments wasn't enough for them. They counted 613 commandments in what we call the Old Testament but that still wasn't enough for them.

They wrote more of their own. God's fences weren't enough, they built more and more fences.

But it didn't work. They were still sheep inside. They still wanted to push the fences and get to the grass on the other side.

They wanted to "bend" the rules as far as they could. In fact, the Pharisees were so corrupt they killed Yeshua!



But then Yeshua fulfilled the Law. Colossians 2:14 says Yeshua cancelled the written code. He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Christians are righteous apart from the Law.

For us righteousness is a gift from God. We are free from the Law. The fences are gone.

We don't have to live inside them any more. We can wander around, just like in the beginning.

Some people get freaked out by the lack of fences and try to build their own.

And they try to build fences to keep others under control too.

But we are free.

There are no rules for Christians. Or for sheep. (Or for pirates... well, they have the Pirates Code, but that's more like guidelines really)...

So where are the rules for Christians?

There aren't any.

None. Zero. Not even one.

Christians are completely free to do whatever they want.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

But...

But we still have the old fence posts as reminders.

We still have the Old Testament to show us where the fences used to be.

Sheep (and people) have a natural reaction when you take away their fences... they want to run wild.

But we need to be careful with our freedom.

When we see an old fence line... we are free to cross the line, but it is still a dangerous place.

We need to remember that God put those fences there for a reason. To protect us. We need to be careful if we think we can cross it.

Young children need rules. Boundaries are good for them.

But when they grow up and become adults they get freedom to live as they choose. They can do whatever they want.

But with that freedom comes responsibility.

Our natural response to having freedom is to abuse it.

Young adults can abuse their new found freedom and start getting drunk every night, they can start sleeping around, they can be lazy, they can turn to crime.

But there will be consequences. These are not wise choices.

For Christians too. We have complete freedom, but our actions have consequences, and we have responsibility to make wise choices.

We will have to give account for our choices.

Not because we have broken any rule, but because we have made foolish choices when we should have made wise ones.

Instead of what we do being the important issue, why we do it becomes the issue.

God has given us his Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us good from bad.

The Holy Spirit helps us make good choices, but **we** have the ultimate responsibility for our decisions.

The fences are gone, but we need to choose carefully if we think we can cross the old fence lines.

We need to make sure we are choosing wisely, not foolishly.

There are lots of passages about this in the Bible:

Ezekiel 34 talks about shepherds and fat sheep.

If you think you are a mature Christian, read this chapter about fat sheep and give yourself a reality check.

Especially verses 17-19. This is really about Israel, but there is a good warning here for us fat sheep.

Paulus also had warnings for "mature Christians".

Read Romans 14, especially verses 13-15

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord, Yeshua, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.

Paulus is saying that Christians have freedom, but we shouldn't exercise our freedom in a way that makes weaker brothers stumble.

And by the way, by "stumble" he means to act in a way contrary to your faith.

(So if you believe you shouldn't eat meat, but because I eat it, you eat it even though you think its wrong, ... then you have stumbled).

Just like the fat sheep of Ezekiel – mature Christians have a responsibility to look after the weak.

We can do whatever we want, but it could be a poor choice and we will have to give account for the choices we made.

And finally, Paulus says in Romans 6:14-15, and in Galatians 5:13-18

"Shall we sin because we are not under law? No way!!"

We are free. We can do whatever we like.

But we shouldn't use that freedom to indulge our own desires.

We should use it to love each other. To serve each other.

We should use it to glorify God.

Do you get it? There are things we shouldn't do, but not because it's against a rule, (it isn't - there are no rules), but because they are not wise choices.

There are no rules for Christians, but we must listen to the Holy Spirit and use our freedom to choose very wisely.

There are no more fences, but the swamp can still trap a wandering sheep who is not paying attention. The cliff is still a very dangerous place. And even though we can eat them if we want to... dandelions will still make us sick.