

10 RULES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR

By

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Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations in this booklet are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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Scripture Readings: Psalm 19:7-11, Psalm 119:9-12, Mark 12:28-31

The Message translation of our last reading Mark 12 says “One of the religious scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: “Which is most important of all the commandments?”. Jesus said, “The first in importance is, “Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.’ And here is the second: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself’.”

God led something in my heart this week –it was ‘Ten rules for a Happy New Year’. Are you interested in this? Are you ready for this? It will radically change your life.

1. I will (this year) love the Lord with all I’ve got.
2. I will (this year) treat others the way I wish to be treated. If we are Christians, “by this shall all men know that we are His disciples if ye have love one for another”.
3. I will (this year) not strike back - but bless.
4. I will (this year) be careful what I say.
5. I will (this year) forgive and forget. Bury it forever under the blood.
6. I will (this year) help someone who can’t repay the favour. It is not back scratching or back tapping. I will give someone help who cannot repay back the favour.
7. I will (this year) spend quality time with my family and loved ones. Christianity begins in the home, among your family.
8. I will (this year) raise the spirits of someone who is discouraged. Everybody needs encouraged at times.
9. I will (this year) exercise daily.
10. I will (this year) win **one** soul to Jesus. That is not an impossibility.

Simple rules that will change this year forever - and your life.

1. **I will love the Lord with all I’ve got**, because He is worth it. First and foremost, foundational and fundamental the greatest commandment is “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength” [Mark 12:30] I will love the Lord first. I will seek the Lord first. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”. [Matthew 6:33]. I will love Him first, honour Him first and seek Him first. Proverbs 3:9 says “Honour the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine”. The Message says “Honour God with everything you own; give him the first and the best. Your barns will burst, your wine vats will brim over”. Now if the Lord decides to ask me what He asked Simon Peter in John 21:15 – “*George McKim, lovest thou me more than these? Do you love me first and foremost?*” I will be able to say this year “*More than ever before, because I am making a choice this year*”. I will be able to say as Simon Peter said, “*Yes Lord, you know that I love you*”.

2. **This year – 2004, I will treat others the way I wish to be treated.** If we did that every day in community life, family life and church life, there would be less strife and less hurt. Human nature is a war against the spirit. The flesh wars against the Spirit, and the flesh always wants to look after ‘Me’. No, the spirit says you need to die to ‘Me’ and live for Christ. Mark 12:30 says that the first commandment is to love the Lord and the second one is that you shall love your neighbour. The golden rule is not as the world says, “*Do to others before they do it to you*” The golden rule is, [Matthew 7:12] “Therefore whatever you want

men to do to you, do also to them". I will practice the golden rule with everyone I encounter, irrespective of class, colour or congregational title or creed. I will do unto others as I would want them to do unto me.

3. **This year I will not strike back.** Human nature is a self-defensive thing. Self-preservation. *"They will not do that on me again."* *"It's not over yet, the day is still open. I will get my own back"*. I will not strike back - but bless instead. If someone is rude, that is their problem not mine. If they are impatient or unkind, I will not respond in like manner. Ignorance begets ignorance. Love begets love. No. Let love beget love, and let love overrule ignorance. We can change the format, the mindset. In fact, if I come across someone who treats me harshly, cruelly or unfairly I will refuse to retaliate or seek revenge.

Matthew 5:10 says "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Instead, I will ask the Lord of heaven to bless the individual. "Blessed are you when men shall revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake.' 'Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets in heaven" [Math 5:11,12]. I refuse to retaliate anymore. Life is too short to retaliate. Rather, I will bless. *"Give me the scripture Pastor"*. Romans 12:17 says, "Repay no-one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves". *"But I was wrong, I was hurt. I was blamed"*. Forget it. "Do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord." Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." [Romans 12:19,20].

In John 18:18 Peter, in Pilot's judgement hall, says that he warmed himself at a fire of coals and there he did the dastardly deed of denying the Lord Jesus. Do you remember resurrection morning when Simon Peter knew it was the Lord and He was swimming out. It says when they came to land there was a fire of coals. One look at the fire of coals melted Peter's heart - because it brought him back and there wasn't anything said. God knows how to melt us. God knows how to melt those who hurt and offend us, and He can do it in ways that we would never dream of. But if we do it in the name of the Lord, the Lord will avenge.

Let God be your avenger. I will not strike back, but rather bless my enemy. I understand my enemy because we can all look at the other guy on the other side of the fence and say *"that is my enemy"*. Who is my neighbour? It was the Samaritan who the Jews would have no dealings with, and yet Jesus called the Samaritan the neighbour. I understand my enemy could be a family member. Joseph's own brothers hated and despised him. It could be a neighbour - and a neighbour from hell! Have you ever had the experience? It could be a fellow worshipper or a co-worker in ministry or in business. It could be a stranger in the street who doesn't even know us but no matter what, I want to respond, not retaliate, with "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace" [Num 6:24-26].. That is the way to take the sting out of hurt and the sting out of wounds.

4. **This year I will be careful what I say.** Some Christian's tongues are 10 feet long and they need to be rolled back! Psalm 141:3 says "Set a guard O Lord, over my mouth". There are things which are said which should never have been said. There are things which have been said to people who, actually, you love. You should never have said them. But you said it out of hurt, and you said it out of revenge, and out of self-preservation. It should not have been said. It should have been *"Hold your tongue and ask God to help you"*. "Keep watch over the door of my lips". Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works [Psalm 141:3,4] I will carefully choose and guard my words, being certain that I do not spread gossip. For a gossip or a talebearer or a slanderer is a destructive individual according to Proverbs 11:13. The Living Bible says, "A gossip goes

around spreading rumours, while a trustworthy man tries to quiet them". Proverbs 18:8 says, "The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body". The Living Bible says, "What dainty morsels rumours are. They are eaten with great relish". "*Did you hear...*". "*No what is the latest biz, what is the latest prayer request?*" We can justify everything, can't we?

Proverbs 20:19 says "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips". The Living Bible says "Don't tell your secrets to a gossip unless you want them broadcast to the world". This year I will guard my mouth.

Proverbs 26:20 says, "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases". The Living Bible says, "Fire goes out for lack of fuel, and tensions disappear when gossips stops." If you can't say anything good, don't say anything at all! We need to listen to this folks, because after today we are accountable to the word of God. You are accountable to God's word and the precepts in God's word.

5. **This year, I will forgive and forget.** I will not resurrect anything that will give the devil a foothold. I will not resurrect **anything**. I will forgive any hurts or injuries or wrongs done to me, or that come my way. I refuse to hold on to a grudge. I rebuke any spirit of unforgiveness in George McKim. I resist the need for self defence. The Lord is my light and my salvation [Psalm 27:1]. The Lord is my fortress..., in whom I will trust;... my shield" [2 Sam 22:2]. "*Ah but Pastor you don't know what I've come through*". Well I Corinthians 13:5 says, "Love does not hold grudges" [The Living Bible]. You either bury it or you carry it. It will either eat you or you will be delivered. Another translation says, "Love does not keep any record of wrongs". "*I remember in 1963 you said something in that meeting!*" "*I remember you stole 20p from me. You gave me back the wrong change and I haven't forgotten that. It was in 1954!*" Get a life! Tell me, is this right or is this wrong? I will not be a prisoner of past hurts, sins or failures. I will not allow anyone to be a prisoner of anything that I have said. I will forgive and I will bury it.

Ephesians 4:31,32 says "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Forgive and forget. "*But...*". But nothing! Today it's over. It's a clean sheet. "*Ah but...*". You are going to die this year if you say that continually. The '*but*' will take you down into depression.

6. **This year I will help someone who cannot repay the favour.** "*You scratch my back I will scratch yours*". That is wonderful, we can have sweet fellowship together. But what about the guy in the street who can't buy you back something, who can't repay the favour? What about those people on the LifeLine Bus who are controlled by addictions and would love to return the favour, but they can't. What about those people in Nigeria? That young girl who hasn't got anything, but she needs an operation and she needs transport, a flight, consultant, a surgeon, a hospital. She can't give us back anything but we can give her something. Are you with me folks? "Take heed that you do not your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly [Math 6:1-4].

Psalm 41:1 says "Blessed is he who considers the poor". The word 'poor' in the Hebrew means "the powerless" and the helpless. The people who can't help themselves but we can help them. "The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble"[Psalm 41:1] If we extend our hand to the poor and to the helpless and to the hopeless and to the powerless, if we can reach out

and say "Jesus loves you, here is a token gesture of His love". *"I can't repay you"*. You don't need to. He paid it all. He gave His life for you and for me. This year I will help someone in a vulnerable position. "The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive" [Psalm 41:2]. That is, the one who helps the poor. The one who reaches out to the poor, the helpless and the powerless, their reward is that the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive and he will be blessed on the earth. You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness. You will sustain, restore him on his sick bed. That is what God does for those who reach out and help others who cannot return the favour. God looks after that. That is why I want to help someone this year, because if I reach out to someone else, God will see my heart - because it will be done when no-body else knows.

William Carey – the leader of modern missions said "He who is too proud to stoop to others in order to draw them to him, though he may know that they are in many respects inferior to himself, he is ill-qualified to become a missionary." If you want to reach somebody, you have got to get down onto their level and identify with them.

7. This year I will spend quality time with my family and those I love dearly. Have you ever played Monopoly with your wife and your kids? I always end up bankrupt! I always give in. Spend quality time with your family and those you love dearly. *"My parents certainly loved the lost but I am not sure or convinced they ever loved me"*. That was said by the son of a missionary couple. If you have got to do something with your family do it now. Tomorrow might be too late. Do it now. Christianity begins in the home, your own Jerusalem.

Husbands, love your wives Eph 5:25]. Don't let the next door neighbour love your wife, or some stranger, or some workmate. Husband, you love your wife the way you should, as Christ loved the church [Eph 5:22]. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands. It doesn't mean doormat, slave, dishwasher, get me, go-for. That is not in the Greek. It means compliment. It means you have something to offer. You have opinions to be heard. You have gifts to give, talents to use. Compliment each other in marriage. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath" [Eph 6:4]. Have you been there? Ever say sorry to your kids?

"Children obey your parents" [Eph 6:1]. Joshua challenges me "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" [Josh 24:15]. That challenges me. Acts 16:31 "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..... and thy house". That is what I desire. That inspires me.

8. This year I will raise the spirits of someone who is discouraged. My smile, my words, my handshake, my embrace, my eye contact, my body language, my expression of support - can make a difference to someone who is wrestling with the issues of life. I want to inspire a loser to become a winner. I want a defeated failure to become a victorious overcomer and if I can do that "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,... but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" [Heb10:25]. This is the time for encouraging and exhorting and lifting people up, not putting people down. Give them a hand up, not a hand out.

Raise the hopes of someone who is struggling. I will this year speak a word, make a call, send a letter, e-mail or fax, visit a home, leave a message, a gift or a card. "I will speak a word in season to him that is weary" [Isaiah 50:4]. This year I will give someone a hand up. I will raise their self esteem, I will lighten their burden, I will show them they are a Somebody, not a Nobody. I will tell them that God has great plans for them [Jeremiah 29"11]. I will tell them God's love is reaching out to them. His mercy and grace is available for them. His word has hundreds of promises for them to experience and receive, and His call is especially unique to them individually.

Acts 11:22,23 talks of how Barnabas encouraged them all at Antioch. In Acts 14:22 Paul and Barnabus encouraged them to continue. Hebrews 10:25 says "Encourage one another". Michael Jordan, the famous Basketball player, used to ask his Daddy to come to every one of his competitions, to every match he played. A reporter asked him "why do you ask your Daddy to come". He said "well at least I will have one supporter because my Dad is my biggest fan". I missed that as a boy because my own Daddy was always drunk. I want to counteract that for my children.

9. **This year I will exercise daily.** I will exercise my body – personal discipline and diet. There is a problem in our youth today with obesity. That is, in the children of Scotland eating junk food. I will exercise my mind, I will read more and meditate more on the right things. I will exercise my spiritual gifts. I will discover. I will develop and I will deploy. This is the year I am going to do that. This is the year that I am coming out of my comfort zone and exercising my faith. I am stretching my spiritual muscles to grow in God and believe the impossible. I am exercising my faith. This year I am stepping out into the miraculous. He is the same yesterday, today and forever [Heb 13:8]. He is the same for me. Faith sees the invisible, believes the impossible and achieves the incredible. That is what faith is – the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen.

10. **This year I will win one lost soul to Jesus.** We only have 350 odd days left! We can do it. If every one of us won **one** soul to Christ this year the Word and Worship Centre would be an urgency! Matthew 28:19 says, "Go and make disciples of all nations". Mark 16:15 says, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature". Paul says "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" [1Cor 9:22]

I am made all things - Sometimes we have to adjust, adapt, change our approach, look at the way our actions are in order to win somebody. You win a Catholic person differently from a Protestant person. You would win a Churchgoer differently from a non-Churchgoer. But if we can adapt to the person we are speaking to, if we can get on their level and say, "Jesus Christ died for you, and He has got wonderful things for you. Do you want Him?' Do you want a future?"

And if you live by these 10 Rules, you will automatically achieve Rule number 11

11. **This year I will not be bound by Satan.** I will not be restricted by men, limited by inadequacy, hampered by circumstances, be deterred by criticism, imprisoned by small mindedness. This year I will rise higher to another level, advance further than I was last year. This year I will grow and grow and become all God wants me to be.

I encourage you today, step out of non-entity into significance. Step out of existence into your God given destiny.

May God Bless His word in the name of the Lord.