

It's so elementary

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Let's take a trip back in time. For some of you it may be a further journey than others. Return with me to your younger days, when you stepped into your first elementary school classroom. You can probably envision all the desks strategically placed within sight of the teacher's and can look back on exactly where the hooks were for hanging coats, gloves and so on. As you may also recall, your eyes glanced around the top of the blackboard to the alphabet with handwritten upper and lower case letters drawn beside a picture that started with the appropriate letter like an apple or a ball. You scanned the room with its bright colors and gasped at the joy of discovering all that was contained within these new four walls. Right now your heart is beating erratically from the reminiscent memories of your schooldays, as your mind seems to disconnect from reality, isn't it?

But don't stop there. Think even further. Close your eyes. Look off in the corner by the teacher's desk, near the blackboard. There sits another desk for the one unruly student who simply can't seem to get it together that day. Perhaps it is the daydreamer or the student who marches to the beat of a different drum. And right beside that small desk - a list. Do you recall the list? That's right, every classroom has one...the list of classroom rules. *Raise your hand. Be polite. Respect each other. Don't talk when someone else is talking* - things like that. As a substitute teacher I personally love to see this list when I walk into a classroom. Its posting serves as a reminder that this particular group of students are held accountable and made aware on a daily of what is expected of them. So, with that said, you can imagine how ecstatic I was when I found my "adult" list of rules [for living].

One day, while doing my daily devotions, I ran across this scripture in a New Century Version Bible. It was so pure and simple it rocked my world in a way that I cannot explain except to take me back to my childhood days in elementary school. It is from Romans 12:9-21: *Your love must be real. Hate what is evil, and hold on to what is good. Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give each other more honor than you want for yourselves. Do not be lazy but work hard, serving the Lord with all your heart. Be joyful because you have hope. Be patient when trouble comes, and pray at all times. Share with God's people who need help. Bring strangers in need into your homes. Wish good for those who harm you; wish them well and do not curse them. Be happy with those who are happy, and be sad with those who are sad. Live in peace with each other. Do not be proud, but make friends with those who seem unimportant. Do not think how smart you are. If someone does wrong to you, do not pay him back by doing wrong to him. Try to do what everyone thinks is right. Do your best to live in peace with everyone...If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink....Do not let evil defeat you, but defeat evil by doing good.*

Can't you just see those on posters around a classroom? 1). Hate what is evil! 2). Hold on to what is good! 3). Do not be lazy but work hard! 4). Serve the Lord with all your heart! 5). Be patient when trouble comes! 6). Pray at all times!... you get the idea.

This scripture has been that "rules for living" list for me. I've printed them out one by one and placed them around my house as a daily reminder of how God wants me to live. They are my mantra for my life. I need them like I need air. I believe we all do.

I hope you read each one over and over again and really chew on its meaning and that they would move you as they have me. Perhaps you feel it is too overwhelming, too much to take in all at once. I challenge you to grab one or two and focus on that for one month. Then do that one and another one for the next month and so on. Imagine what kind of world we would live in if everyone followed these rules on a daily basis. I hope that you will join with me in the quest of not just "making" the world a better place but "leaving" the world a better place.

I think I should warn you though, that should you choose not to join me, I'm perfectly content to sit in the unruly desk all by myself- *serving the Lord with all my heart.*

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