

Following the Rules

by Wayne Goff

As you all know, I underwent my first surgery ever and it was an eye-opening experience. My concerns fell under the “fear of the unknown” category. Needless to say I paid strict, careful attention to every aspect of the surgery — pre-op and post-op included. Everything went fine, and I am thankful to the trained men and women and the Lord for the successful outcome to date.

Follow The Rules

Doctors, nurses and hospitals have very specific rules about surgery. They know from study and experience what works well and what can make things complicated. Being a “rule follower” myself, I felt very comfortable with the numerous instructions given to me. It made me feel that everything would go well if I did what they told me to do.

Spiritually speaking, Jesus Christ expects us to follow His rules for a successful outcome in life. *“Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen”* (**Matthew 28:20**). After all, Jesus is the “Great Physician” (**Matt. 9:12**) Who can heal all our souls’ diseases, *if only we will follow His rules!* Sadly, the world in general cannot see well with their spiritual eyes, and so believe that somehow or another they can live a spiritual life based upon how they “feel,” using whatever “helter-skelter” plan they choose and all will be well. **Imagine trying that plan with surgery!** Disaster would follow, to be sure.

The Difficult Course

Naturally, there are a number of instructions given by the doctors that the patient is to follow. Not all of them are pleasant, or enjoyable. But if you have faith in your doctor, then you must follow his instructions. A few examples include: (1) do not eat several hours before surgery; (2) soon after surgery, you are to get out of bed and begin walking. (3) For the next several weeks you are to do “physical therapy” which involves some fairly painful exercises. None of these instructions are joyful, and some are quite painful. But a good patient will not moan and complain, and blame the doctor for being some kind of masochist, etc.!

Spiritually speaking again, Jesus gives us difficult things to do. *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and follow Me’”* (**Matthew 16:24**). Self-denial and cross-bearing do not sound like a joyful experience! But if you want a successful spiritual outcome, then you must follow the Great Physician’s guidelines. **Unbelievably, people moan, groan and complain about the Lord’s commands and instructions — as though they had some other option!** But a sin-sick soul is a serious thing, and only with the God-assisted vision of the Scriptures can we see the value of God’s instructions.

Man tries to direct his own steps (**Jer. 10:23**), cannot see the end from the beginning (cf. **Acts 15:18**), and consequently makes a mess of his life. Then he turns to the Lord, and the first thing he learns he must do is **“repent”** (**Acts 17:30-31**) — have a change of mind that leads to a change of life — and yet he moans and complains about it! But this is the natural path to follow for one whose own plans led to disaster. **So trust the Doctor!**

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