

# Rules For Basketball and For Life

Tonight is the big finale! Two of the 68 teams have fought through March Madness to compete for top honors in college basketball this evening. Although I enjoy watching the sport, I've never been much of a player. Being vertically challenged hasn't helped, but beyond that, I've never been very athletic.

I remember an old 16mm film in PE class summarizing basketball rules. In less than 30 minutes, it covered all the major infractions and got far into the weeds as well. While I could comprehend traveling and double dribbling, all the backcourt, forecourt, charging, and other technicalities lost this short country boy somewhere around the foul line. How was anyone supposed to remember all those rules while performing as a vital team member? Concentrating on opponents and layups was enough to worry about without the minutia of detail.

That's what many feel like when reading the Bible. Leviticus alone has 251 laws, and others are listed elsewhere. If one is overwhelmed by basketball rules, how much more so by those of Scripture? How can they all be kept?

Most of the Levitical laws were written for priests and involved not only ritual purity but also the necessary sacrifices for violations. Incredibly, by the time of Jesus, the Jewish leaders had added even more rules erecting safety hedges to keep adherents from even getting near infringement.

It's no surprise that Jesus addressed this overabundance of rules. He went beyond the written law to state that even our thoughts and attitudes can be sinful. He told us that it's not only wrong to commit adultery, but lusting in our hearts is also despicable. He raised the bar even higher!

Thankfully, He helped us greatly by boiling all the Old Testament laws down to two. The first is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. Shew! That's much simpler to remember!

But Jesus did something even better. He took our punishment for breaking all those rules. Because God's standards are perfection and purity, we have all fallen short in many ways, and Jesus Himself, the purest of the pure who never broke a single rule, accepted all penalties for us who have. He died for our sins through which He extended grace to all who fouled out.

Paul tells us the Old Testament laws were given to help us realize how impossible it is to live up to God's standards and to help us understand our need for Jesus as our substitute. While He still expects us to obey in every way we know, thankfully, His grace covers our many failures. In addition, He empowers His followers with His Holy Spirit, who helps us keep His commands and do His will.

As we watch the athletes battle for the championship tonight, may the rules of basketball remind us of Jesus' sacrifice to forgive us for breaking God's laws, and may we ask Him to do so.

**George Bowers CBC Executive Board**

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## **Weekly Prayer Points**

"We are fools on account of Christ, but you are prudent in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are without honor!" 1 Corinthians 4:10 (NASB).

Tuesday this week is "April Fool's Day." Maybe someone will catch you in a surprise! But let's remember that while explicitly following Christ and His unchanging Word may look foolish to many in the world ... truly it is the path of wisdom, blessing & eternity! Jim Elliot, the martyred missionary to Ecuador in 1956, famously said, "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*" Pray for strength to live completely for Christ each day!

**Please pray for these congregations and pastors:**

- St. Luke Congregation in Woodstock, VA seeking Pastoral leadership
- Stone Bridge Congregation in Williamsport, MD and Pastor Harry Strite

**CBC Prayer Committee**