

- A. Rules are...
1. a prescribed guide for conduct or action
 2. Usually, they are a valid generalization; a regulating principle
 - (3.) the exercise of authority or control
 - (4.) a strip of material divided in proportional units used for measuring lengths
- B. “Exception” –
1. a case to which a rule does not apply
 2. with the exclusion of (daily ~ Sundays)
 3. on any other condition that that
- C. Often people demonstrate their belief that *THEY ARE AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULES* of life.
1. The man who was the last to arrive at a 4-way stop, but immediately made a r-hand turn without even slowing
 2. “No parking” or “reserved parking” zones are often ignored.
 3. “Please stay off the grass”, 35 MPH speed limit, no smoking, etc.
- D. Making a spiritual application, look & see how exceptional you are in each of 3 areas.

Discuss.**I. ...IN YOUR FAITH?**

- A. **Jn. 8:24** – Jesus requires faith in Him as the exception to \implies *dying in sin!*
1. Being of the world hindered the Jews’ ability to be spiritually minded.
 2. If they did not overcome their worldly disposition, they would absolutely die in sin.
 3. Remarkably, Jews separated from Christ due to His imagined sin (suicide, **Jn. 8:22**).
 4. Only faithless, deprived people attempt to impute sin to the Righteous in effort to hid their own sin.
- B. **? Do you believe in the risen Christ?**
1. Many do not believe – **Mt. 13:14f** – willfully & woefully ignorant!
 2. Others profess faith, but fail in its demonstration, **Jas. 2:16f**
- C. Remember the faith of the apostles upon hearing of the resurrection?
1. **Mk. 16:11,14** – They DIDN’T believe it!!!
 2. John indicates their faith became fixed upon seeing the risen Christ, **Jn. 20:20**.
 3. Thomas established strict qualification for his own faith: *Unless I see... & touch...* **Jn. 20:25**
 - a. Faith does not require blind devotees.
 - b. There’s a point when continued rejection of reasonable evidence is not a virtue, but *closed eyes/mind*
 - c. Lack of love – not weakness of proof – is responsible for most unbelief, especially within the church

II. ...When It Comes To BEARING FRUIT?

- A. Fruit is ...
1. ...the result of plant growth – maturity; it is the reproductive part of a seed plant
 2. to be *fruitful* = being abundantly productive
- B. Jesus taught imp. lesson **Jn. 15:4** about the fruitfulness of His followers.
1. Fruit-bearing is an essential, **Jn. 15:2, 4, 6, 8**
 2. There are 2 kinds of unfruitful branches:
 - a. 1 kind is *in Christ* but not productive, therefore subject to pruning, **vs. 2**
 - b. 1 kind of unfruitful branch = artificial, *not in Christ* \rightarrow will be cast into the fire, **vs. 6**
 3. **Except** focuses on a 2-fold command / condition to fruitfulness:
 - a. ...*abide in Me* – (c. **Rom. 6:3**) baptized into Christ (united in the likeness of His death @ sin)
 - b. (See to it also that)...*I abide in you*, **Gal. 2:20** *Christ in you, the hope of glory* - **Col. 1:27**
- C. Fruit = evidence of the kind of seed planted.
1. seed = word, **Lk. 8:11**
 2. fruitful = receptive & obedient (c. **Lk. 8:15**)
 - a. \rightarrow seed must be sown – People must hear, **Rom. 10:14f**
 - b. Faith is essential, **Jn. 8:24**
 - c. **Lk. 13:3**, immediate change of mind & conduct, with longlasting effect.

- d. **Jn. 3:5**, unless – if & only if – one is *born anew* (**Jn. 3:3**) of water & Spirit
- e. **Jn. 6:53**, *except you eat... & drink...* Jesus' way of life sustain & promote sp. life, as food does ~ body

III. ... In YOUR FAMILY?

- A. **Mk. 10:11-12** records the general rule give by Christ.
 - 1. If divorce & remarry, you are living in adultery.
 - 2. God's rule is: *1 man for 1 woman for life* **Gn. 2:24ff** & **Mt. 19:4-6**
- B. Jesus give but a single exception to that rule.
 - 1. **Mt. 5:32** – anyone putting their spouse away *makes her an adulteress* (Gen. Rule) **except sexual immorality** (the sole exception).
 - 2. **Mt. 19:9** - ...*put away, except for sexual immorality, & marries another commits (continually) adultery*
- C. Application:
 - 1. If you & spouse are married, & it was your 1st marriage for both, God sanctions & approves.
 - 2. If you or spouse have a previous marriage, & that marriage ended because of the former mate's adultery, the God approves of your marriage.
 - 3. If your 1st mate died & you have remarried an eligible spouse, God approves (c. **Rom. 7:2-3**)
 - 4. If you never marry, or if you are a widow/er, God's plan for the family is still in tact.
 - 5. If you are in a 2nd or 3rd marriage with a guilty fornicator, or if previous marriage/s ended for some reason other than a spouse's adultery, then you are currently living in adultery in your current marriage (c. **Rev. 21:8**)

Concl.

- A. God has given us rules to govern our lives both spiritually & physically.
 - 1. Spiritually, **2 Cor. 13:5** – *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves.*
 - 2. Need to be sure that we are not *reprobate* (i.e., disqualified, unapproved, worthless)
- B. When it comes to your....
 - 1. ...*faith*, are you exceptional – because you live & walk by Faith?
 - 2. ...*fruit*, will you be found fruitful or fuel for the fires of torment?
 - 3. ...*family*, will you be blessed by it or condemned for its very formation?
- C. (I want to read again **2 Cor. 13:5-6** as you contemplate the Lord's).