

Righteous – Doing What is Right

Righteousness, Being a Tzadiq, Namely Following God’s Commandments

We believe in trying to do what is right. A righteous person in Hebraic thought is someone who actually does what is right, not just thinks they are right. Some actually teach that being righteous is not connected to our actions. Living right is a lifelong journey of following God. A good way to remember what righteous means is “to be right,” namely following God, following His commandments, being a tzadiq (tzah-deek, the Hebrew word for being righteous). Yeshua did what was right; He is The Tzadiq, and we are to follow Him, imitate Him, and do what is right (Ephesians 5:1).

Noah for example is referred to as a righteous man, a tzadiq. In the book of Jubilees, it says that Noah taught the commandments of God. “Noah began to enjoin upon his sons' sons the ordinances and commandments...”¹ As the verse continues, not all the commandments listed are the 10 commandments so we are left with the Hebraic concept of a short list instead of a complete list. It makes sense to make short lists to represent very long lists. It is done in the Bible and also Rabbis over the years did this including Yeshua (Jesus). The Torah expert in Luke summarized the commandments into two, to love God and love your neighbor (Luke 10:25-28).² These two commandments are an abbreviated list to represent all the commandments. Noah knew how to do what is right and did what was right. That’s why he was a tzadiq.

Also consider this, Adam had a perfect relationship with God and Noah isn’t that far removed relationally, so we should understand that man was originally close to God and so was Noah. In the garden Adam had a close relationship with God until he sinned. Because Adam knew how to have a relationship with God, He was given the promise of a future messiah (Genesis 3:15) and we think he passed on how to live right. The Messiah will eventually restore man’s relationship with God the way it was supposed to be. Yeshua came the first time to help restore mankind to God and He will come again and restore the final kingdom.

Yeshua did what was right, so He is The Tzadik because He was both perfect and our Messiah. He is our high priest, our cohen gadol without sin it says in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 4:15 CJB says, “For we do not have a cohen gadol unable to empathize with our weaknesses; since in every respect he was tempted just as we are, the only difference being that he did not sin.” The Bible says that we are to try to be like Yeshua. Shaul (Paul) said, “Try to imitate me, even as I myself try to imitate the Messiah;” 1 Corinthians 11:1 CJB. One of the ways that we imitate Yeshua is by being a tzadiq, by following God’s commandments.

Kefa (Peter) says that we are to repent, that is turn towards God. We are to turn away from doing wrong and keep God’s commandments. Our aim is to do what the Bible says with the help of the Holy Spirit.³ Since the beginning, mankind began doing things their own way and has continued to stray from God.

¹ “Noah began to enjoin upon his sons' sons the ordinances and commandments, and all the judgments that he knew, and he exhorted his sons to observe righteousness, and to cover the shame of their flesh, and to bless their Creator, and honour father and mother, and love their neighbour, and guard their souls from fornication and uncleanness and all iniquity.” Jubilees 7:20, <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/7.htm>. Some of the New Testament letters quote books not in our modern-day Bible. For example, the books of Jasher and Enoch are quoted in the New Testament portion. Just because some books are not considered canonical, it doesn’t mean they don’t have some pertinent information in them. Some extra biblical books are obviously not useful. God overlooked the ignorance of idol worship referred to in Acts 17:29-30 so that some could come to believe in the Messiah. It is not talking about the ignorance of Noah etcetera as some say because obviously Noah knew God’s commandments.

² A Torah expert asked Yeshua what he should do to get eternal life. Yeshua asked him what was written in the Torah. The Torah expert said to love God and your neighbor. Luke 10:25-28.

³ We are to turn from sin and accept the authority of Yeshua for forgiveness of sin and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38. The Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, is our helper the Bible says – John 14:26.

Man Continues on a Path of Destruction; God Wants to Help Us

We see man's fall recorded in the Bible and it is obvious that mankind continues to be rebellious towards God. The giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, the coming of the Messiah, and the giving the Holy Spirit are attempts by God to bring man back to Him and help man to live right. It should be easy to understand that since God is the creator, He should know the best way for man to live and that any deviation from God's commandments is going to cause pain and destruction. The commandment to not kill is an obvious example, but there are many more applicable commandments. We only have to look at history or the local newspaper to see that mankind needs a good God who wants to help us live better.

Some theologians teach that Noah didn't really follow God the way he was supposed to. They subscribe to the idea of the spiritual evolution of man which says that man started far from God and has become closer to God over the centuries. That is not biblical. As we can see from the above, the Bible says that man was originally close to God. I wonder how many of those theologians themselves have conversations with God like Noah did and I wonder how many of them would be willing to build an ark. Man continues to go His own way and without God intervening and re-giving His law at Mt. Sinai (remember, Noah knew the law), bringing the Messiah, and helping us to have a relationship with Him, mankind would all be spiritually dead. Yeshua (Jesus) came to give us life,⁴ not the death and destruction that the world keeps ascribing to.

The Bible also says there are evil spiritual powers, so we should be careful what ideas we decide to live by.⁵ Do we live the way a good and loving God wants us to live or do we want to do things our own way and risk being hurtful and destructive contributors to our society? The Bible describes the people of Sodom as murderous sexaholics (see Genesis 19:1ff). Sometimes it looks like our society is trying to create a society of completely messed up people who hate God. The Bible says that God will forgive us if we want to change. The creator God says a relationship with Him is better than gold and riches or anything else for that matter.⁶

The False Doctrine of Doing What is Right, Without Doing What is Right

Then there is the matter of the doctrine that says we are made right (righteous) without any effort on our own. It seems almost silly, yet this false doctrine has infected a lot of New Testament belief systems and many verses in the New Testament portion have taken on a wrong theological meaning based on this doctrine. This doctrine is not biblical.

There are many scriptures that tell us that it is important to actually do what is right, not just think we are right. Why bother with the commandments in both the Old and New Testament portions if it doesn't matter (or why even write them). Besides the few hundred commands in the Old Testament portion that are applicable, I have found a place online where 1,050 commandments in the New Testament portion have been listed.⁷ These New Testament commandments would almost certainly be ascertained as coming from the Old Testament portion because there was no New Testament at the time. The only scriptures for

⁴ Yeshua came to give us a great life. John 10:10b.

⁵ "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations;" Isaiah 14:12 NKJV. The devil is trying to mess up this world; we need to listen to God and follow His commandments. The Bible says that we are to fight against spiritual powers of wickedness. Our fight is against the devil. Ephesians 6:11-12 NKJV.

⁶ We are to fear God; doing right is better than getting gold. Psalm 19:10-11. God's promises in the Bible are like a treasure. Psalm 119:162.

⁷ https://www.abc.net.au/reslib/201407/r1308729_17984331.pdf

those living in the first century were the Mt. Sinai commandments.⁸ The Rabbis would make good logical conclusions from the Torah and that is what Shaul (Paul) did and also the other writers of the New Testament portion letters. We have commandments from an all knowing God, so why not keep them. There are many reasons we need to do what is right.

It says in Hebrews that it is possible to apostatize. That means we could renounce our faith. We need to make an effort to live right so we don't start messing up and quit on our relationship with God. We need to firmly hold on to what we believe to the goal it says, until the finish line, until the end (the Greek word telos). Hebrews 3:12-14.

Hebrews 3:12 CJB:

"Watch out, brothers, so that there will not be in any one of you an evil heart lacking trust, which could lead you to apostatize from the living God!"

Also, in Hebrews it says we need to be careful that we do not "drift away" and that every act was judged and therefore by implication, every act will be judged. Hebrews 2:1-2. I don't know about you, but these are some strong words. If you are not making your best effort to do what is right now is the time to start learning and doing.

Shaul (Paul) said about Yeshua (Jesus), "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him;" 2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV. It says in the Greek text that we "become;"⁹ our aim is to be like The Tzadiq who was perfect, Yeshua our Messiah. We become more like Him through Him. Some have learned a false theology about the word righteous. We become righteous because we are trying to actually live right. A good rule to help us replace unbiblical understandings of the word righteous is to replace the word righteous with words similar to the words "to live right."¹⁰ Also, being a tzadiq means to be just. When we see "justified" we can use words similar to the words "to live justly." We need to start understanding the Bible correctly when it talks about righteousness (and justification) and the first step is to understand that our goal is be a tzadiq and to live right, to actually be righteous.

Our Journey to Learn How to Follow God; Beginning our Journey of Teshuvah

We begin our journey to be righteous as we learn how to follow God. "Anyone who has to drink milk is still a baby, without experience in applying the Word about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by continuous exercise to distinguish good from evil:" Hebrews 5:13-14 CJB. We don't want to keep acting like a baby all our lives; kids learn not to stick their fingers in the light socket. We need to grow up and learn about God and His commandments and train ourselves by continuous effort so that we learn to do what is right.

⁸ Since Rabbi Shaul was a Jewish leader and teacher in the first century who taught about the Messiah, his frame of reference was the Tanakh, the Old Testament portion. When he refers to the scriptures, he is obviously referring to the Tanakh. Again, there was no New Testament at the time. We see this in the context of 2 Timothy chapter 3. Timothy's mother was a Jew so the scriptures he learned were the Old Testament scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). It is clear from the context in these verses that all the Jewish scriptures of the Old Testament are profitable to live by and they are to be taught with "unfailing patience" (2 Tim. 3:15-4:2). Yeshua "will judge the living and the dead" at the bema (The Greek word Shaul uses is "bema" in Romans 14:10 NKJV referring to where he will judge mankind; the place the Torah is read in Jewish synagogues is called the bema; we should be careful to do what is right.

⁹ "g1096. γίνομαι ginomai; a prolongation and middle voice form of a primary verb; to cause to be ("gen"- erate), i.e. (reflexively) to become – Strong's Enhanced Dictionary.

¹⁰ We should understand that God's favor (grace) should rule through living right (righteousness), to eternal life. That should be the understanding of Romans 5:21 Because theology has taught us wrong, the wrong understanding pops into our head as soon as we read this scripture. We need to get wrong theology out of our heads and then the scriptures are more easily understood correctly. Use words similar "to live right" or "living right" when you come to the word righteous.

Also, Kefa says that we are to repent, that we are to turn our lives around and do things God's way (Acts 2:38). That's what it means to make teshuvah. We have to apply God's word and live out His commandments and continuously exercise our thinking about how to apply God's commandments and stay away from evil. We do this every day by turning toward God our Father and making teshuvah. It's a journey, but we have to start that journey sometime and now is the time to do it (Romans 13:11-13). We all are at different places in our spiritual walk and need to decide to turn toward God wherever we are at. Often scriptures can be a good help. I have nine pages of favorite scriptures that I pray into my life on a regular basis and over the years there have been many more that I've used to address specific situations. Also, here are some of the things I've verbalized to train myself up to help me be more like a tzadiq. We are made right (righteous) by:

- *What we do and say. James 1:22, 1 Peter 3:10
- *By believing in Yeshua as the Messiah. Rom. 10:9-110
- *By keeping God's commandments. Matt. 5:17-19
- *By our deliberate acts to follow God and do what is right. Deut. 6:18
- *We are made right because we are growing spiritually. Eph. 4:14-15
- *We are made right by refuting and rebuking sinful thoughts and cleaning up our thoughts. Ps. 19:15
- *We are made right by refuting and rebuking sinful behaviors in our life. Jer. 31:18; Isa. 1:16-17
- *We must receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is good. Luke 11:13; Acts 2:18
- *We are made right through the help of the Holy Spirit. 2 Pet. 1:3-4
- *We are made right by allowing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Gal. 5:22-23
- * As we do what is right we allow the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives and help us. By not living right we "cause grief" to the Holy Spirit because our actions are rebellious against God and the Holy Spirit. "Don't cause grief to God's Ruach HaKodesh," Ephesians 4:30 CJB.
- *We are made right because we follow God's directions through the Holy Spirit. Jer. 7:23
- *We are made right by a true confession of sin, repentance, and the decision to no longer sin. 1 John 1:9; Ps. 103:13-14

Faith is not just mental assent. Ya'akov said: "But someone will say that you have faith and I have actions. Show me this faith of yours without the actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions! You believe that "God is one"? Good for you! The demons believe it too - the thought makes them shudder with fear! But, foolish fellow, do you want to be shown that such "faith" apart from actions is barren?" James 2:18-20 CJB. We know that the devil is destined for damnation and guess what, it says the devils believe in God.

We need to live like we believe in the true God and do what is right. Don't just hear God's commands, but to them (James 1:22). Also, it says in James 1:25 we will be blessed by keeping the law. Shaul said we are to be set free from sin and be righteous (Romans 6:18), do what is right. Again, we may forget that the early believers reference for doing what is right was the Torah and since Shaul was a Jewish teacher and leader, his reference for teaching was also the Torah and the Tanakh (the Old Testament portion of the Bible). When Shaul talks about being righteous he is talking about actually doing what is right, being a tzadiq and when we do what is right we are blessed and set free from sin.¹¹

The Bible is the Source for Life

God is the creator and knows best how we should live. There needs to be a difference between our lives and that of the world. "Do not love the world or the things of the world. If someone loves the world, then

¹¹ I shouldn't have to write this, but some people have "theologized" the word righteous to mean "I am right" when instead, it means to be righteous and do what is right.

love for the Father is not in him; because all the things of the world - the desires of the old nature, the desires of the eyes, and the pretensions of life - are not from the Father but from the world. And the world is passing away, along with its desires. But whoever does God's will remains forever;" 1 John 2:15-17 CJB. We need to come to our senses and be different than the world and do things God's way and observe His commandments.

*Do we become right by saying, "pickles."

*Or by saying the prayer, "I want a dog for Rosh Hashanah."

*Or, developing a philosophy about how to help guinea pigs live a happier life.

While these things are not sinful, there are things that God says are wrong. We can make up just about anything about how to live and avoid the truths of the Bible.

The Bible has been a source for the stabilization of society that has given mankind hope for thousands of years and all of a sudden some know better than the creator of the universe?! The following are some verses about those who think they are just fine, but the truth is, they are not. Proverbs 30:12; Luke 16:15; Proverbs 21:2-3

What does it mean to do what is right; it is doing things God's way and following His commandments. There is going to be some strain on your life as you change. Most of us want to do what we want to do.¹² We may want to eat candy all day long, but we control ourselves because we know that it is not good for us. The same can apply to your TV time and electronics. I met someone once who told me they had no time for anything. I asked her what she did and she said she watches TV. Yikes, what a wasted life.

Spend time actually living in the real world. Work on your relationship with God, with your family and also your spiritual brothers and sisters (1 Chronicles 29:10). I'm not saying to eliminate electronics, but regulate it just like you would regulate how much you might eat something. How can you follow God's command to love others (1 John 4:7-8) if your life is completely disassociated from reality? We need to live out our lives and not just watch life go by. I limited my TV and electronics to almost nothing for a period of time and I didn't miss it. I had so much fun being active and getting out and doing things.

Our Goal¹³

Here are some other things to consider in this messianic age. Yeshua was the righteous Messiah (The Tzadik); and, because we rely on Him and believe in Him we receive:

*The Holy Spirit¹⁴

*Forgiveness comes from a true confession for sin, repentance, and a decision to no longer sin. This is ongoing in our lives; God will forgive us if we sin. 1 John 1:9-10.

* Our goal is to live right, be a tzadiq like Yeshua; living right is our present hope. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God has help us to do what is good and right. God wants us to escape the evil desires of the world. 2 Peter 1:3-3

¹² Some people go much farther than being protective of their time. They don't want anyone to speak into their life, least of all God. It has been proven that allowing others to speak into our lives helps us to be more successful. It has also been proven that people who follow God are often happier in life and even live longer. I read somewhere years ago that belief in God actually has a positive effect on our DNA. Now that's a great plan for a healthier life!

¹³ "For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts;" Romans 10:4 CJB. We are to aim at living like the Messiah, that is our goal. The context of this verse is about the Jews accepting their Messiah. If it was saying not to follow God, the Jews of that time would have had nothing to do with Rabbi Shaul (Paul) if the passage really meant that.

¹⁴ We are to receive the Holy Spirit Acts 2:38. The Holy Spirit is good (Luke 11:13); by not accepting the Holy Spirit we are not accepting the authority of the Messiah.

* We are to look different and be a new person; we are to do it. The new nature is shown by right living and being holy. Ephesians 4:24.

*The Old Testament believers also received benefits with the coming of Yeshua. The Messiah died and rose from the dead for them too. Abraham looked forward to Yeshua's day (see John 8:56).

Hebrew and Greek Words

Righteousness means “right, correct, lawful;” “a state approved of God integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling,” (from Strong’s Lexicon).

Hebrew, Tzadiq H6662 קִיָּם

Righteous (in government), just, right (in one's cause) just, righteous (in conduct and character), Righteous, a tzadiq (as justified and vindicated by God), **right, correct, lawful.** ¹⁵

Greek, Dikaiosune in Strong’s Lexicon G1343

“In a broad sense: **state of him who is as he ought to be**, righteousness, the condition acceptable to God

The doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain **a state approved of God integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling**, and acting in a narrower sense, justice or the virtue which gives each his due.”¹⁶

In Conclusion

According to Strong’s Lexicon, righteousness is “the condition that is acceptable to God” ... “integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling.” The people who live by their own rules are wrong. To live right we need God, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

I want to tell you a story that is horrifying to me. I was with an atheist once and he was discussing beliefs with someone else. He said that might makes right. In other words, those that control society determine what is right and wrong no matter what those in society are doing. It’s not true is it? We all know that certain things are wrong; for example, the harming of innocent children. Yet he was saying that if society accepts something, it wouldn’t be wrong. What was horrifying about what he believed is that he went on to use the holocaust, the murder of some 17 million people which included 6 million Jews¹⁷ as an example. He said that if Hitler had won the war, the German leaders would not have been held accountable for their actions. Is that what this godless world is coming to?

That’s NOT what following God breeds. Godless behavior breeds disaster, murder, hurt, and hatred. The Bible says there is a devil and by not doing what is right, we align ourselves with the devil, the “destroyer of the nations.” “Shining morning star, how you have fallen from the heavens! You destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground;” Isaiah 14:12 HCSB. That’s why we have so much pain and hurt in the world; it is because of the devil and because mankind doesn’t do things God’s way. Yeshua was talking about the leaders of his society at the time and said, “The thief comes only in order to steal, kill and destroy;” John 10:10a CJB. Those are attributes of the devil. The devil steals our lives, is a murderer, and destroyer. In contrast, Yeshua came to help us to live like we are supposed to live, life the way it is supposed to be. Yeshua said, “I have come so that they may have life, life in its fullest measure;” John 10:10b CJB.

¹⁵ From <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H6662&t=KJV&ss=1>

¹⁶ From <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=G1343&t=KJV>

¹⁷ Under “Victims and death toll,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust.

Doing what is right (righteous) is a lifelong journey. We need to be committed to that journey so that we won't fall away. We need to exercise our thinking about how to apply God's commandments and stay away from evil. We are in the process every day of returning to God, making teshuvah, no matter where we are in our spiritual growth. Doing what is right actually means that we are to do what is right. Shaul said, "I am not going to let anything gain control over me;" 1 Corinthians 6:12 CJB. Imagine being Noah and how committed he must have been to follow God all the years of his life. We need to be like Noah.

When we read the word righteous we can avoid false doctrine by using words like "to live right" when we see the word righteous. Faith is not just mental assent, but as Ya'akov says, works must accompany faith. People often have personal ideas about what is right, but we need to learn what God tells us to do and do it – that is the meaning of doing what is right. Shaul also said, "We demolish arguments and every arrogance that raises itself up against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey the Messiah ... become completely obedient;" 1 Corinthians 10:4-6 CJB.

Our goal is to be like The Tzadiq, our Messiah Yeshua who says that through Him we can have "life in its fullest measure."¹⁸ Someday those who love God and follow His commandments will be with Him. "For ADONAI is righteous; he loves righteousness; the upright will see his face." Psalm 11:7 CJB. I am determined to not let any sin gain control over me. I am determined to do what is right. How about you?

¹⁸ What can be better than having life the way God originally intended, "life in its fullest measure;" John 10:10b CJB. God never wanted man to have all the problems they've experienced, but man has gone his own way. Yeshua the Messiah gave Himself for us so that we can begin our journey to live right. "We all, like sheep, went astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet ADONAI laid on him the guilt of all of us;" Isaiah 53:6 CJB.