

## Life and Rules

Driving a vehicle without knowing traffic rules or taking account of the vehicle's hardware and road conditions makes for a rough and difficult ride. Sometimes even this is not enough. The speed of moving vehicles must also be taken into account.

It will be a safe trip if one is mindful of the state of their car's hardware and road conditions. This is a fundamental rule of driving. No driver is exempt from the said rule. Everyone must adhere to this principle on the road. The alternatives are wrong.

The same goes for a healthy and fulfilling life. If we firmly grasp life's rules and follow them with sincerity, life becomes cheerful and pleasant.

Life has specific, unchanging, rational meanings and rules. For life to endure and flourish materially and spiritually these meanings must be grasped and rules implemented. MORALITY is knowledge put into action; it breathes spirituality and liveliness into life in service to the continuity of life's meanings and rules.

This fundamental principle that considers peoples' mental level (shallow or deep) binds everyone. A contrary attitude is both wrong and confusing. It is like quicksand. **Just as ignorance of the law is unacceptable as an excuse before the judge, ignorance of the rules of life is not an excuse for a person.** As it has been said, "**Even more than eyes, there must be a heart to see.**" It is righteous to see what is wrong and speak up about it. However, we should know that righteousness cannot come to pass without morality, the building block of righteousness.

We only go through life once. The best and most meaningful passage is one where we strive to part the veil on our eyes and follow moral principles. Otherwise, life will somehow reclaim the things it has given us as well as the things it will give us in the future, like an uncompromising repo man. Since learning through experience is so expensive, learning through research, listening and learning is more ideal. Writer Terry Brooks (1944) says, "**We are constantly being put to the test by trying circumstances and difficult people and problems not necessarily of our own making.**"

Life is like a team game. In the long run, only the benevolent win. To participate in the game and contribute, one must learn its rules. In the game of life, everyone plays themselves as the main character. What would a football game look like if everyone forgot the rules and played however they wanted? It would turn into a free-for-all, most likely.

The match can only end in a gentlemanly fashion if the players are knowledgeable of the rules beforehand. This is the fundamental rule of football.

The same is true in life. Life has its own unique rules as well. And we cannot rule them out. We must be mindful of them. We should know that the slightest negligence or inattention can have dire consequences. The consequences will be different if we can evaluate life like a newborn, with a fresh and lively perspective and fullness of spirit.

Morality is the foundation of individual and common life. The main reason for life's discrepancies is the infringement of moral principles. Do we wear our seatbelts when driving in traffic? Do we stop at the red light on an empty road with no sign of police or radars? The true test in life is how we behave when no one is there to see us. Just like love, morality will surely find its course and flow along it. However, it will flow wherever it is most highly valued.

People and societies whose moral foundation is not firm experience tremors and problems. It is much more valuable for a country than following the law because the people/families who make up society are moral. Because a moral person will naturally do a good job and follow the law. A moral person is honest, consistent, and fair in his dealings at work and home. He controls his passions and doesn't act selfishly. He is charitable.

Moral principles remind us of who we are, revealing our true higher self. **However, just as buttoning the wrong buttons at the bottom of the shirt causes all other buttons to be misaligned, moral degradation negatively affects all areas the person is in connection with.** Every immoral thought, word, deed, undertaking, and exercise of authority can lead to injustice. Therefore, immoral science is ignorance. Immoral wealth is poverty. Immoral success is failure.

An immoral person is either in a deep sleep or suffocating due to his carnal appetite. He must discipline his character in order to wake up from that deep sleep. There is no other way to get rid of your suffocating carnal appetite.

Though the subject of following rules varies from society to society and person to person, the highest priority is a commitment to moral values, which is our fundamental task on this earth. The virtue of endurance and human dignity necessitates this. No matter where you are, this is an unchanging and infallible rule of life.

Otherwise, it is difficult to overcome the obstacle of "I". Following moral principles requires that we submit to the dominion of the spirit with an inner and external discipline. This means we need to remove our ego from the driver's seat because it does not see the bigger picture; it is rotten to the core and uncontrollable, and we must let the spirit take the wheel as the source of beauty of virtue. **Otherwise, an eclipse of the ego will cause an eclipse of reason. As long as our lives revolve around self-interest, we will drift further apart from one another.**

This is a grueling process that entails abstention from carnal/selfish attitudes. This process, which requires getting rid of the weeds and couch grass in our mental soil, necessitates adherence to valid and legitimate methods. Because valid and legitimate methods have positive energy, whereas illicit and illegitimate methods have negative energy, and they bring evil.

There is free will in this world. Humans have the right to make their own decisions. How one overcomes problems or difficult situations depends as much on their personal reflexes and reaction as their personal choices. It is best to reach one's goals by upholding human dignity through cooperation and helping others without causing grievance to anyone.

When exercising one's right to choose, knowing that each choice can lead to different results is important. It is imperative to find a purpose in life that is compatible with the purpose and design of creation. Without confusing ends and means. Otherwise, humans drift around aimlessly. Well-known writer Montaigne (1533-1592) says, **"The soul which has no fixed purpose in life is lost; to be everywhere, is to be nowhere."**

Thinker Les Brown (1945) remarks, **"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars"**, while modern writer Paulo Coelho (1947) adds, **"If you only walk on sunny days, you'll never reach your destination."**

Our soul is reflected outside us, and the outside world affects our soul. One way to find inner peace is to escape our conditioned reality. The right to choose can be considered if one has good reasons. Giving up on some things can lead to new beginnings. Those who do not exercise their right to choose or are unable to give up on certain things or people miss the opportunity to discover the new possibilities life offers.

As per the principle of free will, humans can choose whether to abide by moral standards. If they do, they are rewarded. Their purpose and field of work become a source of joy. If they do not, they must face any undesirable consequences.

Although there are certain exceptions, this is an unchanging rule and reality of life. It is a fundamental truth.

Our duty in the limitless world of meaning is to remember who we are, understand and know ourselves. Our duty is to find ourselves. To know our rights and limits. To get rid of the false/fallen self and discover our true/higher self. To stop being selfish and allow ourselves to heal. To stay on the right path and continue with divine support. This is where all divine knowledge is hidden.

If one's character is shaped by self-interest, they cannot take flight and soar through the heights. Not only do they remain stagnant, but they also begin to poison life. Seneca (4 BC-AD 65), the author of **"Letters from a Stoic,"** writes, **"We must aspire to live right instead of living longer."**<sup>1</sup>

In other words, it all comes down to disciplining the character in developing virtues. A good person is someone who has successfully trained their character. **Character and values training enriches the inner world and enhances the spirit. It opens the mind.**

People make wrong, harmful choices if the character is not well trained. This complicates life. Turns it into a labyrinth. This undesirable state of affairs increases the probability of straying from the main road. If one strays too far from the main road, attempts will be made to wake him up and redirect him to the right path (the right choice). Chastising lessons will begin. If he still does not wake up and continues on the wrong path, the process of learning the hard way begins, which is a ceaseless struggle and a dead end. Although this is common, humans are unaware of it due to their carnal attitudes.

This process continues until the person wakes up and gains awareness. Unfortunately, one cannot pass to the next grade without learning this lesson. To pass, the inner world must flourish. This means waking up to a new level of awareness. The journey through the world without full ownership can only continue with a clear mind and respectable understanding if one can internally graduate to the next level.

How can we graduate to the next level despite life's humps and pitfalls?

Here is how modern writer Sri Prem Baba (1965) explains the topic of passing to the next grade in the school of life: **"Similar things will keep happening until you learn your lesson. These things can keep happening forever, and each time, the test intensifies. This goes on until you can no longer tolerate the pain, and your defiance against the lesson is shattered. This is how the school of life works."**

In that case, knowing that inner humps and pitfalls lead to accidents in life is the key to all initiatives and developments. It flattens the humps and fills the pitfalls.

If a person is at peace with himself, he will not be at odds with others. He will be moral. He will not bother others. He will not crash easily. Even if he does, he will not be as shaken up by the impact. He will abound with the joy and enthusiasm of living.

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<sup>1</sup> When asked **"What is value?"**, Rumi answered, **"Wheat and flour are valuable. Bread, which is the final goal and product, is even more valuable. What is the most valuable? The person who gives thanks for the seed that became bread. This person has fed not only his body, but also his soul. First he died, then sprung from the ground."**

A narrow mind does not tolerate flaws. It is of narrow understanding and lacks compassion. It is incapable of digesting imperfections and differences. But when it expands, the pain it once felt goes away. It accepts what it once rejected. As people accumulate blind spots, their ego ossifies while their spirit constricts. But when blind spots are illuminated, the spirit expands, and the ego slackens. The inner world blossoms and grows with new insights and an inclusive attitude.

Syriac writer Mor Abdisho Bar Brikha (1318) has this to say on the topic: **"For the rational soul has a threefold power, lust, anger, and discriminating judgment, from the excess or the want of a due proportion of which, evil acts and follies proceed, and from the harmony of which proceed virtues."**

In other words, the traps and pitfalls of life can be avoided by finding balance ("harmony"). This means that inner humps are leveled, and pitfalls are stopped. **Wider and cleaner inner roads, covered potholes, and inner warmth to dispel inner coldness make for a smooth outer journey.**

Inner roads supply the positive flow of energy through life's natural cycle and lead to good things and development. On the other hand, evil is the absence of this energy (love). It is the absence of goodness. Not only do the inner and outer walls of evil block life energy, but they also obstruct the path of good things and development. To flow freely through life, to be in a state of positive flux is to fulfill the law of love. **For humanity is not in a cold and dark space. Humanity is in the radiance of our inner roads. Humanity is in their broadness. Humanity is in their cleanness.**

Under such conditions, it becomes easier to reach one's destination. Life is blessed. Curses are lifted. The following entreaty by a saint effectively conveys the essence of the issue: **"Permit me to sow seeds of love wherever there is anger; let me bring forgiveness wherever there is hurt. O Divine Master, let me love for the sake of love and not for being loved. In other words, grant me the ability to give and expect nothing in return."**

Essentially, the obstructions we face on the road of life are diseases in the inner world obscuring the light of the spirit. In Christianity, these diseases are defined as the **"seven deadly sins"**, namely, **"pride, greed, lust, wrath, envy, sloth, and gluttony"**. If one succumbs to these without a struggle, their life will go off the rails. Becoming and remaining human is possible by resisting these deadly sins, checking their desires, and gaining self-control. These seven dehumanizing viruses have malicious and fatal qualities that poison their host. They shroud the light of the spirit and besmirch its beauties with their contagious influence. They make life far less enjoyable.

These fatal diseases are not a bad thing in the animal world; on the contrary, they serve the purpose of protecting them. They are forces that keep them safe and help pass on their genes. But the situation is different for us humans. We possess an intelligent spirit and willpower. We cannot set aside our morals

and conscience for the sake of personal interest. We cannot succumb to our ego and ambition, choosing to live according to our selfish and corrupt impulses. If we do, we end up poisoning and complicating our lives. We exacerbate those fatal diseases that blight our bodies.

A close connection exists between these treacherous diseases-the root cause of evil in humankind. The existence of one is ground for the other to set in. **Their negative energy is essentially the root of all evil conduct and ambition.** Growing selfishness or lack of love makes them stronger.

The important thing is to rescue the inner world from the negative energy of these fatal diseases and the malicious influence of hate. The best remedy is to learn about its harms and discover the meaning of life, overcoming ignorance, mindlessness, selfishness, and unawareness, and showing restraint in one's speech and actions.

The sole antidote to these fatal diseases is humility. Humility is a form of comprehension and consciousness. It takes root when we acknowledge that we are weak and helpless. It strengthens our morals and brings merciful awareness.

Humility means silencing 'ME' to hear 'YOU'. Humility means showing **ME** my place. Humility is not depreciating ourselves but appreciating others. Humility means dismissing our ego and opening our hearts to all creation. It means seeing all people and even creatures as our equals without condescension. It means a person putting our ego in its place. It means that we do not champion our ego. It is a matter of hearing that incomparable divine whisper and holding back our ego.

A wise man once said, "**Just as darkness brings forth light, humility reveals the lights of heaven inside a person. It is a deep, quintessential, constantly perceived state of being that embraces totality for what it is and blesses all without discrimination.**" A humble person takes inspiration from life, other people, and the entire universe and tries to inspire others as much as possible. Though full of kindness and mercy, a humble spirit has to be closed off to exploitation and abuse.

Every relationship we develop and every road we embark on with this awareness makes us more human. Therefore, we must keep our hearts and spirits warm. Our intentions and thoughts must be pure. Our hearts need love to find meaning and excitement. Otherwise, our spirits will begin to grow cold.

Though we have the privilege of making our own decisions in life, we can reach our destinations with more ease and peace of mind depending on the roads and means we take to get there.

Remember, our moral values are what make us human.<sup>2</sup> **A life devoid of moral values is akin to building along a fault line prone to earthquakes. It cannot withstand the harsh truths of life!**

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<sup>2</sup> THE VALUE OF ZERO (On the Importance of a Virtuous Character)

If the outside world is the reflection of the things that pass through our hearts, possessing a conscience that renders the cold world around us as clear and warm would be a great service to ourselves and to life. It ought to be known that without us, life is incomplete. Therefore, our existence should not be a detriment to life. On the contrary, it should enrich life.

At the end of the day, since everyone is destined to be buried in their own conscience, we must earnestly strive to embrace morality and virtue, the progenitors of conscience. Without forgetting that we will reap what we sow!

**They say nothing extends youth like a clear conscience!**

Yusuf Beğtaş

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Values help a person live in harmony with themselves and their environment. Values make individuals happy. They are necessary for spiritual health. A person whose character has values will be a worthy person indeed.

A wise teacher once gave the following lesson that succinctly describes a virtuous person with values: *The students in the classroom were waiting for the teacher. Soon the teacher appeared at the door, all serious like. He glanced around the classroom, then took a piece of chalk and wrote a huge number 1 on the blackboard. Look, he said. This 1 is a person's character—a virtuous character. It is the most valuable thing you could own in life... Then he placed a 0 next to the 1. This is success. A successful person turns a 1 into a 10... Another 0... This is experience. With this, you go from 10 to 100... These zeroes keep adding on—talent, discipline, love, humility. Every new 0 that adds on enriches your personality by tenfold. Then he erased the 1 at the very beginning, leaving only the zeroes behind. And this was all to say, Without a virtuous character, everything else means nothing.*