

Civility Mandate

Around the world today we are seeing mask mandates and vaccine mandates to try and battle the COVID-19 pandemic. Today we are talking about a mandate that has been in place for thousands of years; the civility mandate.

Introduction

There is so much fighting and bickering in the world about mandates. In nations where freedom is held dear people are rebelling against mask mandates and vaccine mandates. We are not going to get into the legitimacy of these mandates. Frankly, our personal thoughts about civil mandates are fruitless to share. We are here to promote and encourage the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, not to fuel arguments that only divide people further and further. Regardless of which side of the mask mandate or vaccine mandates you find yourself on, there is a mandate that should not be argued with.

What we are talking about today is a civility mandate that has been in place for thousands of years. This civility mandate was handed down from God and is spoken about many times in scripture in different ways. Our goal today is to encourage you and shine a light on scripture that you can anchor yourself to when you find yourself in a difficult situation.

We are looking at being civil to fellow Christians, our neighbors, and those that oppose you.

Mandate to Love One Another

The first passage of scripture supporting God's civility mandate is found in John 13:34-35 and is directed at the disciples, but is just as applicable to you and me today. Let's read John 13:34-35 and discuss it.

John 13:34-35

(34) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

In this passage, Jesus has just finished washing the disciples' feet. Jesus' earthly ministry was nearing its end and he was preparing his disciples, and us, for their future ministry. Jesus gave them a new command to love one another. This was going to be their identifier to the world. This is how everyone was going to still know that they followed Jesus and represented him on earth.

None of us are perfect and we all sometimes lose our composure. But we must continue to love others as Jesus loved everyone. It is by our love that the world sees Jesus. It is by our love that Christ's ongoing mission to reconcile man to God can be fulfilled. This requires being civil to one another; a civil mandate so to speak.

This also requires grace and forgiveness. None of us are perfect. We all get frustrated or upset. We all get to a point where we seemingly can't take any more attacks. I encourage you to first look to Jesus' example of being marched through the streets on his way to his crucifixion. He was beaten, whipped, spat upon, and hung on a Roman cross, yet he said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."



We must look to Jesus' example and love one another even in the face of extreme adversity. Yes, it is easier said than done. We all know that, but we must try and lean on the strength and power of the Holy Spirit to succeed.

Mandate to Love Your Neighbors as Yourself

The next part of God's civility mandate expands the civility we are called to beyond our fellow Christians to others in the world. We are mandated to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Let's read Matthew 22:34-40.

Matthew 22:34-40

(34) Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. (35) One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: (36) "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (37) Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' (38) This is the first and greatest commandment. (39) And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (40) All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

This is a familiar passage of scripture for many and we encourage you to continue reading in Matthew's gospel as Jesus goes on to share a parable about the good Samaritan to prove the point of loving your neighbor as yourself. Verse 40 says all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

Everything we are to do and not do can be traced back to one of these two commandments. But God's civility mandate did not start with Jesus saying this. He was quoting the Law of Moses when answering this question. Loving your neighbor as yourself was first shared to Israel by Moses and is found in Leviticus 19:18

Leviticus 19:18

(18) "'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

We are to treat our neighbors, whether they know the Lord or not, with love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. This, again, is easier said than done sometimes. It is a part of God's civility mandate for us though. We must help our neighbors, not hinder them. Our neighbors should experience nothing but the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ from us.

God's civility mandate goes back to the Law of Moses and is not something new that Jesus introduced.

Mandate to Minister to Those Who Oppose You

Regardless of where we find ourselves in work or social situations we will find people that oppose us. Sometimes it is something we said or did and sometimes it is just because of who or what we represent. This is not new and it can be very difficult. None of us are immune to it and we all have difficulty with it. King Solomon gives us some wise words in Proverbs 25:21-22.

Proverbs 25:21-22

(21) If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. (22) In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.



The Apostle Paul quotes this proverb in Romans 12:20-21

Romans 12:20-21

(20) On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is often misunderstood that by serving those who attack us we can force the hand of God to enact revenge on the person. This would be counter to God's commands to love one another and love our neighbor as ourself. It is not for us to take revenge or ask the Lord to take revenge for us. Our main mission is to point people to God through Jesus Christ.

The phrase, "In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head" means that you will cause the non-believer to see and understand the judgment of God helping them to turn to God and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. For the fellow believer, it is a realignment from some self-centeredness to be back in full agreement with Christ.

To accomplish these things we must minister to those who oppose us. When we serve others, even in the face of opposition, we testify to the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

God's civility mandate means we are to serve others and be a witness of Jesus Christ to them.

Conclusion

There it is friends. God's civility mandate. It is as old as the Law of Moses and it applies all the way until we are called home to Heaven. It is by our love that we are identified as followers of Jesus Christ. Our love for our neighbor means we help our neighbors whenever they need it and however we can with a good attitude. Ministering to those who oppose us is the ultimate witness of Jesus Christ in our lives and can help those who do not know Jesus to learn more about him and turn to him themselves.

These are all easier said than done at times. But the more we practice God's civility mandate, the better we will be at being civil and the better this world will be.

