

**Ultimate Survival: Know When to Break the Rules
8-22-10**

By Mary Jane Button-Harrison

Luke 13:10-17 ~ August 22

¹⁰Around this time, he was teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath, *the Jewish day of rest*. ¹¹A woman there had been sick for 18 years; she was weak, hunched over, and unable to stand up straight. ¹²⁻¹³Jesus placed his hands on her and suddenly she could stand straight again. She started praising God, ¹⁴but the synagogue official was indignant because Jesus had not kept their Sabbath regulations by performing this healing.

Synagogue Official Look, there are six other days when it's appropriate to get work done. Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath!

Jesus ¹⁵You *religious leaders* are such hypocrites! Every single one of you unties his ox or donkey from its manger every single Sabbath Day, and then you lead it out to get a drink of water, right?

¹⁶Do you care more about your farm animals than you care about this woman, one of Abraham's daughters, oppressed by Satan for 18 years? Can't we untie her from her oppression on the Sabbath?

¹⁷As the impact of his words settled in, his critics were humiliated, but everyone else loved what Jesus said and celebrated everything he was doing.

I Saw You Crying

by Tara

I saw you sitting on a bench outside

you were crying

I wanted to reach out to you and hug you

but I knew you wouldn't let me

I wished you could have told me what was wrong

I wished that I had the courage to ask

I wished I could have done something

but

I didn't

I was afraid of your reaction to me

so

I walked on

past you

because you were a stranger

I didn't even know you

and I didn't even try to

We live by rules. Rules create order and security in our world.

They give us a map that helps us know where we are and how we are to

behave in given situations. And let's be real. A world without rules would not be a good place in which to live. We need rules in order to help us create a society where people are safe; where freedom is maximized, but doesn't come at the expense of others. Sometimes we may not like the rules, but where would we be without them.

Rules come in many forms. It starts in the home with the rules for getting along and living peacefully with your family. Don't hit your sister. Come to dinner when you are called. Eat your vegetables. Say your prayers. And it builds from there. You go to school. Now you must raise your hand before you can speak. Get permission to go to the bathroom. Keep your hands to yourself. Don't hit. Don't talk to strangers. But we don't just learn rules from those older and more powerful than we are. We also learn many unwritten rules from peers. Don't pick your nose. Don't wear certain color combinations. Don't talk to "those" kids. (And who "those" kids are depends on the group *you* are in.) You might say rules - those maps in our head that tell us what to

do and not do, and that guide us through life - are all about survival.

But our survival tactic for today is: Know when to break the rules.

"When Ken Killip set out on the trail at Milner Pass in Rocky Mountain National Park at dawn on August 8th, 1998, he had the nagging sense that he should not have come." He and a group of friends had planned a 3 day backcountry hiking and fishing trip, but by the time they left, it was down to just Killip and his friend John York. Killip, a fireman, had plenty of outdoor experience, and even some survival training in the military. But he had never been on such rugged terrain as this. Killip followed York, who was much faster than he, and who repeatedly had to wait for him to catch up. After about 5 or 6 hours of that, York grew impatient and left Killip to fend for himself. By this point, however, they were in a trailless wilderness. Killip had the map, but he had not been using it while following York. Instead, he had been forming a mental map of where he'd been since leaving his car. Killip's "brain was unconsciously trying to form a mental map of the route from a position he didn't really know to a destination he'd never seen

before." Soon, a thunderstorm rolled in, so he waited on the slope below the ridge until it passed. The stress and anxiety eroded his ability to perceive accurately. "He saw less, heard less, and began to miss important cues from his environment."

Once the lightning stopped, Killip decided to hurry on ahead. He was sure he'd find York. So, he climbed a steep slope he just knew must be Mount Ida. He had the picture in his mind. He trudged on. When he reached the top he was faced with the fact the landscape in front of him did not match the map in his head. At this point, Killip still could have turned around, retraced his steps, and found his way back. But instead, he kept moving under the false assumption that continuing on was the best course of action. But he only got more and more lost. At one point he found himself in a woods with the ability to make a fire, but that was against the rules and he was a firefighter, so he didn't want to break that rule. But making a fire would have made his presence visible and potentially led to his rescue. Killip was

rescued, eventually, after wandering, lost, cold, hungry, thirsty and wounded for 5 days. He was lucky to survive.

The leader of the synagogue had a mental map of the terrain of religious life in his world. He knew the rules. But when his mental map didn't match what he saw in front of him as Jesus healed the woman who had been sick for 18 years, he didn't go back the way he came. If he had, he may have remembered the spirit behind the rule about no work on the Sabbath. But instead, he moved ahead with that faulty map. The map in his head: work on the Sabbath is against the rules. The map in front of his eyes: a woman is healed and immediately, right there in the synagogue, begins praising God! There in the synagogue, on the Sabbath, praise and thanksgiving and healing take place and all the synagogue leader sees is a broken rule. Clearly he is lost. And, spiritually speaking, would be lucky to survive. Survival tactic: Know when to break the rules.

On April 16, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote his now-famous Letter From Birmingham Jail. This letter, written by King, who had

been thrown in jail for participating in non-violent action to draw attention to the unjust and humiliating practice of racial segregation used by Birmingham's businesses, is addressed to white church leaders. He writes, "My Dear Fellow Clergymen, While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities 'unwise and untimely.'" These local clergy were criticizing King for breaking the law and for his timing. (Sound familiar? The synagogue leader told the woman, "there are six other days when it's appropriate to get work done. Come on those days to be healed.") Anyway, King's letter is in response to their criticism.

In his letter, King writes, "We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are

suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action..."

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fan in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress."

In the synagogue, Jesus exclaims, "You religious leaders are such hypocrites! Every single one of you unties his ox or donkey from its manger every single Sabbath Day, and then you lead it out to get a drink of water, right? Do you care more about your farm animals than you do about this woman...? As the impact of Jesus' words settled in, his critics were humiliated, but everyone else loved what Jesus said and celebrated everything he was doing." Survival tactic: Know when to break the rules. Know when the map in your head doesn't match the reality of what's right in front of you so you can line your behavior and your perspective up with reality. The Gospel of Mark records Jesus saying, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath." Rules are not made to be obeyed. Rules are made to make the world a better place for everyone. So when the terrain shifts and the rule doesn't fit, for the sake of compassion, for the sake of the one who struggles, for the sake of our own soul survival, we must know when to break the rules for God's sake. Amen.