



DOING THE RULE

FOR CHURCHES

10₄ 30

Doing The Rule for Churches proposes a coordinated effort by the senior leadership of a church to inspire as many people as possible to live by the 10-Second Rule for (4) at least 30 days: 10₄30™

A Summary of, THE 10 SECOND RULE

Most of us would like to think of ourselves as followers of Jesus, but what does that really mean, practically?

Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”* Luke 9:23. Simply put, it’s trusting Jesus enough to say “no” to what we want, and “yes” to what he wants. So, then why is it we don’t obey him more often than we do?

Years ago I noticed that during the course of my day I’d have these impressions to do something I was reasonably certain Jesus wanted me to do. It could be an impression to either do something good for someone or a warning about a sin I was about to commit. It might be to stop for a car broken down on the highway, speak to a co-worker about Jesus, or simply turn off my computer before I ended up at a site where no Christian should go.

Almost simultaneously I would sense another voice whispering to me. *“You don’t have time to do that—helping that person could get messy—you can’t afford to help them right now—it’s okay, one more time won’t kill you—send it, you’ve been wronged!”*

If I listened to this other voice and thought about it long enough, the moment for obedience would pass, often to my relief. It finally dawned on me that by procrastinating, I was unintentionally teaching myself the habit of disobedience. Why is that?

Because I knew that almost every decision to obey would cost me something—time, money, embarrassment, inconvenience, or a momentary pleasure denied—something! By choosing not to obey Jesus, I could avoid all of that! As a result, I found myself settling for good enough almost

daily—which is kryptonite for any would-be followers of Jesus!

Then a decade ago a lay pastor from China taught me a simple rule that helped me break that cycle:

THE 10 SECOND RULE

“Just do the next thing you’re reasonably certain Jesus wants you to do.”

(and do it immediately before you change your mind!)

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

—John 14:15

So, I intentionally committed myself to become more sensitive to the leading of God, and to practicing simple, spontaneous obedience. As I did, I began developing the habit of obedience. I actually began looking for ways to follow Jesus daily, even hourly. As a result, obedience became an adventure rather than a duty.

Christian experience over the centuries has proven that godly character is most powerfully shaped by the cumulative effect of thousands of small obedient decisions. And these small decisions prepare us to be even more faithful when major, crisis-of-faith challenges come our way.

Here is the true power behind the 10-Second Rule: Even though every Christian knows we can never obey Jesus perfectly all of the time, that’s no longer an excuse. We *do* know this: we *can* do the *next* thing we’re reasonable certain Jesus wants us to do.

This is obedience you can do—obedience you'll want to do!

The 10 Second Rule book relates stories of ordinary men and women who are living by the Rule and how it shaped and transformed their lives. It shares practical ideas for discerning God's will, recognizing his voice, and studying Scripture so you can gain greater confidence in knowing what Jesus would do if he encountered the challenges of living in the 21st century. The point of doing the Rule is to help you develop the habit of simple obedience so you are prepared to be more faithful to Jesus than you ever imagined you could!

My prayer is that you'll read the book and try living by The Rule for the next 30 days. See for yourself how deeply satisfying it is to be led by Jesus, moment by moment and day by day. (or even in the next 10 seconds!)

How can you encourage the leadership of your church to introduce the Rule to your entire congregation?

- 1 Begin with prayer. If you've experienced the joy of obedience by living by *The Rule* for 30 days or more (**10₄30**), gather other members of your church who have done the same and begin praying that your church and its leadership will be receptive to *Doing The Rule* together. Pray weekly with your small group for several weeks before you do anything else.
- 2 Make an appointment with your Senior Pastor and other leaders of the church to share your experience of living by the 10-Second Rule. Bring along copies of the book and of this plan. That way the leadership will have all the information they need to make an informed decision.
- 3 Offer to help organize and publicize this program in your church. One of the most difficult challenges for pastors are well-meaning people who bring ideas for programs to the church that have to be carried out by an already overburdened staff. Making yourself available to

help is a gift to the church and will increase the likelihood that your church will participate.

Ideas for Inspiring and Mobilizing Your Church:

- 1 Have the Senior Pastor and church leadership decide on a 30-day period in the church calendar in which to do the program.
- 2 Select a date when **10₄30** will be introduced to the church. If the Senior Pastor is willing to do this, rather than a lay person, it will add greater credibility. Ideally, on this "kick-off Sunday", the Senior Leadership should plan the following:
 - Preach a special sermon. (There are many ideas for a message in the book.)
 - A sermon outline has been written especially for the 10-Second Rule by Pastor Ed Dobson, former Senior Pastor of Calvary Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan and is part of this material.
 - Plan a personal testimony or two from people who have lived by *The 10-Second Rule* already.
 - Announce the location for a brief meeting following the service.
 - Present a clear explanation of both the 10-Second Rule and the plans your church has made to *Do The Rule*.
 - Consider showing *The 10-Second Rule* book trailer in the worship service. This can be downloaded from YouTube.
 - Include a flyer or bulletin insert for that Sunday. (Logos, book images, color codes and instructions for downloading them for free, are available at the back of this material.)
 - Allow time at the end of the service for silent reflection and prayer about participating, asking the Holy Spirit to identify a possible prayer partner. However, make it clear that even if they don't have a prayer partner, if God is urging them to *Do The Rule*, they should come to the meeting anyway.

- Provide a sign-up list, as well as books and materials, at the information table or desk after church for those unable to attend the meeting. Then encourage them to attend future follow-up meetings.
- Encourage whole families to *Do The Rule*. There is a free program, *Doing The Rule for Families*, available as a download on our website www.the10secondrule.com.
- Consider showing *The 10-Second Rule* book trailer in your worship service (YouTube). You may also want to put the trailer on your church's website.

4 Set up a room for the after-service meeting.

- Arrange for soft music to be playing as people enter.
- Don't bother with food or coffee. You'll want to keep things moving and their hands should be free for materials.
- Have enough books available for each person you hope will come. You may order books through your local Christian bookstore, christianbooks.com, or go to www.the10secondrule.com to arrange for quantities of books to be shipped directly to your church.
- Decide whether you want to give *The 10 Second Rule* books out for free, or charge half-price or full price. We strongly recommend that even for middle school groups, you charge some minimal amount to prevent kids or people from simply taking the materials they are not really committed to use.
- Consider offering rubber *10 Second Rule* rubber wristbands for adults and children, which are also available on our website. If your Sunday school decides to *Do The Rule*, the children will love the wristbands.
- You could also consider printing t-shirts with the **10₄30** logo.
- You may want to delay the start of Sunday school or any groups which meet immediately after worship services to allow people the time to come to this meeting.

The First Meeting:

- Keep the meeting brief (15-20 minutes). Some people may be hesitant to come if family or friends have to wait too long for them.
- Make copies of *Doing The Rule: 10₄30* (Quick FAQs), and pass them out as people enter. (This document is at the end of this information.)
- Open with prayer.
- Briefly explain again what it means to *Do The Rule*, reviewing the Quick FAQs. Chapter Nine of the book is full of ideas to encourage everyone to spread the word to other Christians.
- Show them *The 10-Second Rule* wristbands you'll be giving them, or encourage them to order wristbands on their own if they wish.
- Encourage questions.
- Ask those willing to *Do The Rule* to consider choosing a prayer partner for the 30 days, preferably someone other than their spouse. But make it clear that having a prayer partner is optional.
- Review the **10₄30** prayer and ask each person to silently pray that prayer or one of their own, before they leave the room.
- Announce that for the next three Sundays, or at the very least, on the last Sunday of the program, you'd like everyone to gather after each worship service for 10-15 minutes to share their stories of *Doing The Rule*. This will be a time of great encouragement and a place to ask questions. At the meeting on the 4th Sunday, encourage people to *Do The Rule* beyond the 30 days.
- Encourage prayer partners to share contact.
- Have one person pray for the entire group.
- Before each person leaves, or when they enter the room, have them record their name and email or home address, so the church has a record of all the people *Doing The Rule*. Then plan to send an email reminder of the weekly meetings to everyone.

- Encourage everyone to go to www.the10secondrule.com to read stories of others who are *Doing The Rule* and to blog about their own experience. The website has a number of useful materials to help church members grow spiritually.

Please encourage your church members to go to our website where they can easily forward a summary of the 10-Second Rule to their friends.

Follow-up Meetings:

- For the next three weeks of the first month, ask if anyone has a brief testimony or story to share about what he or she has experienced. These meetings can be as short as 10-15 minutes or as long as people want to stay.
- Encourage people to also tell stories of frustration or failure.
- Ask each of the prayer partners to connect briefly after the meeting if they haven't talked during the course of the week.
- If your church has a website where people can blog, encourage participating church members to blog about their experiences on the website.
- If possible, in each week of the first four weeks, find one person willing to share a personal story in the worship service of how *The 10-Second Rule* impacted their life or someone else's life. It would be wonderful to have the person who was on the receiving end of an obedient decision also speak.
- Make an announcement each week that it's not too late to decide to *Do The Rule*. Have books and the Quick FAQs information available at the back of the church for anyone who still wishes to participate.

Other Program Ideas:

Depending on the size of your church, it may be that high school and college students meet separately on Sunday and don't always attend worship services. Contact the middle school, high school, and college groups and urge them to *Do The Rule* within their groups, tailoring the ideas that the larger church will be using for their own groups.

If you have leftover books, use them creatively.

- Give them to new members or to adults who are baptized.
- Sell them in your church bookstore or information desk.
- Annually challenge your high school seniors to *Do The Rule* in preparation for college.

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Get ready for your people to be blessed and to be a blessing!

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Doing The Rule: 10₄30™ (Quick FAQs)*

1 Read the Gospel of Luke in 30 Days.

If our goal is to listen and obey Jesus, then the best place to start is reading what he did, what he said, and what others said about him. Read through the 24 chapters of Luke to get a fresh perspective and greater appreciation of Jesus' character, his love for the Father, and for how he cared for hurting, lost, or marginalized people—even his enemies.

2 Fearlessly Obey God.

Just do the next thing you're reasonably certain Jesus wants you to do, as directed by him without over-thinking it. Just do it!

3 If you have a Prayer Partner.

Communicate often with your prayer partner to cheer them on and share your stories of both faithfulness and fear. Ask their advice on how they would have handled certain situations. Talk about new insights you've gotten from your daily readings in Luke. Encourage one another and Facebook about your experience to encourage others.

4 Pray Daily.

- Pray for the routine events in your life: people in your household who you'll meet in the next few minutes, people on the train or carpool, people you work with, or the person who shares a locker next to yours.
- Pray for courage to be bold when God speaks.
- Pray for your prayer partner to be faithful and bold.

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

—Hebrews 10:24

The 10₄30 Prayer: *Jesus, for at least the next 30 days I want desperately to live by the 10-Second Rule as faithfully as I can. I want to honor you and bless others by obeying you spontaneously and generously. Holy Spirit, I ask you to empower me with wisdom, opportunity and courage to live out my faith with boldness and grace. I need you to help me do this. Please forgive me when I don't. Amen.*

*(A full explanation of *Doing The Rule*, or 10₄30, is found in *The 10 Second Rule* book.)

Go to www.claredegraaf.com/resources

to download these images free, for use in your church's print or digital, promotional material.

THE 10₄30 SECOND RULE

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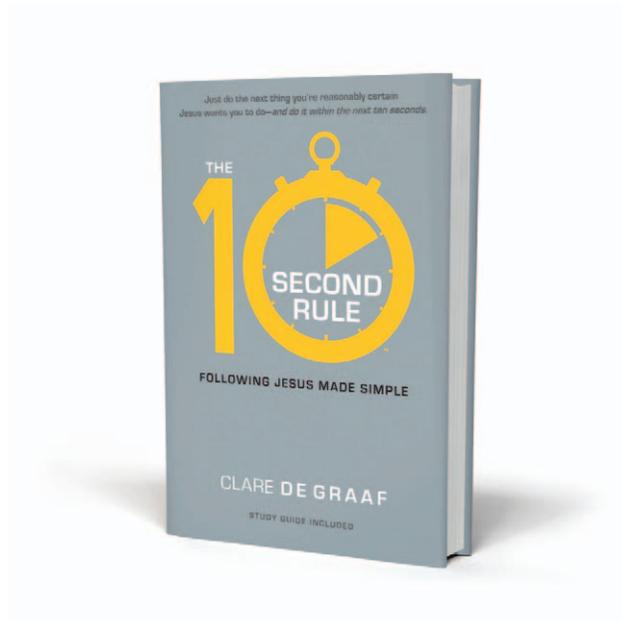
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A SERMON OUTLINE for THE 10 SECOND RULE

Forward

This sermon has been prepared to help introduce the five foundational principles behind *The 10-Second Rule* to your congregation. The sermon is taken largely from Chapters One through Four in *The 10-Second Rule*, book. This sermon outline may be downloaded and edited as you wish and you have freedom to quote, or use any ideas or illustrations without having to credit the author. The bold text is spoken. Unbolded texts are ideas for you to put in your own words.

This sermon was a collaborative effort between Pastor Ed Dobson, Pastor Emeritus of Calvary Church, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, author of many books and past recipient of Pastor of the Year, presented annually by Moody Bible Institute and the author.

I've been reading a new book entitled, *The 10-Second Rule*. In the last chapter the author asks this penetrating question:

“Based on how you live your life, what you're passionate about, how you care for others and spend your discretionary time and money, would your spouse, your children or your closest friends consider you a Christian—or a serious follower of Jesus?”

Most of us would like to think of ourselves as followers of Jesus, but what does that really mean in the 21st century?

Followers of Jesus have made it the supreme purpose of their lives to imitate Jesus by obeying him.

But, how does that work in real life?

God most often and most reliably speaks to us through scripture, but he also speaks to us in ways we don't often think about.

(Begin by sharing three or four situations you or your church members have experienced, similar to those the author shares at the beginning of Chapter Two, in *The 10-Second Rule*.)

Each of us have had times just like that—when we sensed God wanted us to be kind, or generous to a total stranger, or to resist some sin—an opportunity to be obedient—staring us right in the face! Haven't we?

Have you ever asked yourself why it is you just didn't do what you sensed God was impressing you to do?

Could it be that almost immediately, your mind was flooded with thoughts like these—another voice?

(List a number of excuses similar to those found in Chapter Two, which correspond to those you used in your opening.)

In the book, *The 10-Second Rule*, the author, Clare De Graaf says this:

“You know that voice. My guess is you’ve heard it too. It’s the voice of reason, I assured myself. It helps rescue me from foolish impulses. Its job is to make sure I don’t do anything stupid, or embarrassing to myself or others, and that I don’t get taken advantage of or miss out on some private pleasure I feel I’m entitled to. It’s the safe voice—the smart voice—the guardian of sensible obedience.

It’s likely the same voice the Priest and the Levite heard on their way to Jericho.”

And then have you noticed this: If you procrastinate long enough, the broken down car disappears in your rear view mirror, you’re out of church and on to other things... the guilt fades away and life goes on. (These questions and observations should tie into your opening examples.)

That begs the real question; why is it that when we have these impressions from God or the Holy Spirit, to do something good for someone else or to keep ourselves from some sin—why is we listen to the *other voice*, so often?

Here’s the primary reason why:

We know full well, don’t we, that obedience is going to cost us something—time, money, embarrassment, inconvenience—something!

(Illustrate what the cost might be in a few of your opening examples.)

And without really even thinking about it much, most of us, like the rich young ruler in scripture or the religious leaders on that road to Jericho 2000 years ago, we automatically, count the cost of obedience and find it too high. We choose disobedience, because it appears to cost us nothing—at least in the short run!

So, here’s *The 10-Second Rule*: “Just do the next thing you’re reasonably certain Jesus wants you to do.”

Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

So, here’s the first principle that gives power to the rule—that makes it work.

1. When you’re reasonably certain Jesus is asking you to do something—do it immediately! (Procrastination is not your friend.)

Starting Over, Again

I’m guessing that many of you have felt spiritually “stuck” sometimes in your Christian life—perhaps right now. You, love God, believe the gospel and are trying to live the “good” Christian life, but feel spiritually flat. But, you just don’t know where, or how to begin again—you’re living what the author, Clare De Graaf calls the “beige Christian life”.

If that's true of you, here's the second foundational principle of the Rule that makes it so useful in the life of the Christian:

2. *The 10-Second Rule gives you a place to begin following Jesus again, right now, and whenever you find yourself drifting spiritually.*

Remember when Jesus said in Matthew 6 not to worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself? It's as if Jesus is saying to you and me, "Just start here today; trust me. Just do the next thing I direct you to do."

Voices

By the way, when I speak of "this voice", I don't mean an audible voice. Some people tell me they've heard God speak audibly to them. I've not had that experience. So, I get a little nervous when someone comes up to me in church and starts a sentence with "God told me to..." That's possible of course, but personally I would dare stamp "*thus saith the Lord*" on anything, with absolute certainty, outside of scripture.

So when I use words like *impression* or *voice*, it's more like a thought that arrives with a strong feeling that it's coming from one of the Trinity. It immediately feels right and true.

These impressions often remind me of something I learned from Scripture: a story, a proverb, a parable, a command. And always they're consistent with what the Bible teaches us, and with godly character. If they're not—they're not from God!

In John 10, Jesus said that the watchman's sheep "*follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice... I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me*" (verses 4-5, 14).

How, then, can we be reasonably certain we're hearing the true shepherd's voice? Jesus' followers recognize his voice because they've studied his words and his life in scripture so intently they've developed a spiritual ear for God.

"My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:1-5)

Therefore, here's the third foundational principle of *The 10-Second Rule*:

3. *The more you know about the teachings and the character of Jesus Christ, the more confident you'll become following him.*

So, one of the things I'm going to ask you to do at the end of this message and for the next 30 days is to read the Book of Luke.

The Search for Certainty

But, some of you may be asking yourself right now, how do I know with certainty these impressions are in fact from God?

That leads us to the fourth principle that gives power to *The Rule*:

- 4. The Rule doesn't require that you be absolutely certain an impression is from God before you obey. (The need for certainty is often the enemy of obedience.)*

However, you will need to use the Rule with wisdom!

Some decisions in life are so serious and have such major implications for ourselves and others that we'll need to take time to carefully and prayerfully listen to God. I wouldn't advise the 10-Second Rule to make momentous decisions: whom you will marry, what job you ought to take, whether to serve in leadership, make a major investment, or adopt a child. You'll need time, prayer, godly counsel, and wisdom to make important decisions such as those that may impact your family and others.

The 10-Second Rule is best reserved for resisting everyday temptations and for acting on Godlike impressions to be kind, encouraging, and generous. In other words, for "entry-level obedience".

But, think about it for a minute! Let's just assume you misread God and this impression didn't come from him. You've still done something kind or generous for another human being or you've kept yourself from making a sinful choice, you know full well is wrong. *How can that not be the will of God!*

It's been my experience as a pastor that people who are not faithful in little things will rarely respond with faithfulness when faced with a significant moral dilemma, or with a call of God on their life. And, do you know why? They've never developed the habit of obedience in little things.

That brings us to the 5th and final foundational principle of the Rule:

- 5. Christian character is shaped less by your big dramatic decisions than by the cumulative impact of thousands of small acts of simple obedience.*

Most of us dream of doing great things for God someday—going to the mission field, getting rich and being able to give away large sums of money, starting some amazing ministry, singing powerful, moving music before the church.

But, very few wake up each day longing to be faithful in the little things of life which are the building blocks of a godly person. So, let me say this to you again:

Godly character isn't won by doing great things for God. It's won by the cumulative effect of being faithful and obedient in these little assignments from God. We often have no idea why God asks us to do them, but by faith we do.

In *The 10-Second Rule* book, the author illustrates this truth with this personal story:

"My mother passed along to me the story of her godly grandmother who, during the Depression, felt that God was calling her to care for a neighbor woman and her children the

next farm over—who were sick with tuberculosis, then a deadly disease—so that her husband could bring in the desperately needed harvest.

My great-grandmother and her husband prayed about it and came to the conclusion that, if Jesus told us to love our neighbor, then she really had no choice but to care for them. So, for months she devoted herself to them. Miraculously, the neighbor woman and her family fully recovered. However, my great-grandmother caught the disease, and when she returned to her own family, she gave it to two of her own children. All three of them died.

I've often wondered how many hundreds or thousands of selfless, Christ-like decisions one has to make to get to the point at which you're willing to lay down your life for another.

That's really what the Rule is all about—it's the recalibration of our character, one "obedience click" at a time—slowly conforming us to the image of Christ as we trust that he has a reason beyond our understanding.

Now, that is true faith!"

The author gives us this definition of faith—*courageous obedience* to the teachings of the Bible (Chapter Ten).

The purpose of *The 10-Second Rule* is to help all of us develop the habit of obedience—"baby steps" of obedience. This is exactly what Paul tells Timothy.

"Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

The 10-Second Rule is about each of us - training ourselves to be more godly.

I've been reading *The 10 Second Rule* in preparation for this message and let me tell you how I've applied *The Rule*, even this past week (give a personal example).

In His Steps

Did you ever wonder where the WWJD idea came from? Over 100 years ago Charles Sheldon wrote a wonderful novel, entitled *In His Steps*. It has since sold over 40 million copies.

In it, the pastor of a very well established, formal church is challenged by an unemployed vagrant, who shows up at his church unexpectedly, one Sunday morning and challenges he and the congregation to act more like Jesus toward people like himself.

The stuffy congregation is shocked that this man would just barge in and disrupt the service. But, over the next week the pastor, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, decides on a course of action that will eventually change his life and the lives of many others in his church and in that town.

The pastor got up in the pulpit, on the next Sunday and announced that for the next year, by the grace of God, he would try to make every important decision, based on the answer to only one question, "What would Jesus do?" He acknowledged he already knew he wouldn't be able to do that perfectly, but as the Holy Spirit gives him strength, it would be his intention to try to be as faithful as he could to God.

Shocking his congregation even more, he made this announcement, “Anyone who has any interest in considering living by the same pledge, please come to the fellowship room after this service and let’s talk about it together. You don’t have to commit today. I’ve had a week to pray and meditate on this. But, if you’re willing to pray about it, then meet me after church.” With that he sat down, and the adventure began.

Doing the Rule in Our Church

Today, I’m making a similar pledge to try to live by The 10 Second Rule very intentionally, for at least the next 30 days and hopefully for the rest of my life.

And, I’m asking you to consider doing the same. It’s what we’re calling **Doing the Rule: 10430: Obey the 10-Second Rule, for (4), 30 days.**

Here’s how it will work: (Then explain to them exactly what you’re asking them to do after the service, and briefly over the next 30 days.)

Close in prayer—challenging your membership to be bold in their obedience for Christ.

The Five Foundational Principles of The 10-Second Rule:

- 1. When you’re reasonably certain Jesus is asking you to do something—do it immediately! (Procrastination is not your friend.)**
- 2. The Rule gives you a place to begin following Jesus again, right now, if you’ve drifted spiritually.**
- 3. The more you know about the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the more confident you’ll become following him.**
- 4. The Rule doesn’t require that you be absolutely certain an impression is from God before you obey. (Certainty is often the enemy of obedience.)**
- 5. Christian character is shaped less by your big, dramatic decision than by the cumulative impact of thousands of small acts of simple obedience.**

SERMON OUTLINE
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