

Rules

Chapter Summary

Weekly Win

- The win for this week is for participants to understand that God's rules are designed to protect and provide for us, which is evidence of a loving relationship.

Bottom Lines

- Rules always assume a relationship.
- God's rules didn't establish his relationship with Israel; they were a confirmation of his relationship with Israel.
- God's plan, beginning with Abraham, always included us.

Before the Meeting

PRAY

Continue to pray for your group members individually. Ask God to help your group members choose to trust him in spite of their circumstances.

COMMUNICATE WITH CO-LEADER(S)

As leaders, you should address the following items:

- Evaluate the third meeting with your co-leaders soon after it's over. Talk about what you feel went well and what you think needs to be adjusted for the next meeting.
- Decide who will be facilitating which parts of the discussion for the next week.
- Clarify which leader will follow up with any group members who you feel need individual attention.
- Ask yourselves, "Are group members experiencing a *conversational* environment where they can explore faith and experience community?"

CONTACT GROUP MEMBERS

Contact your group members individually by email, phone, or text. You might also want to invite them to coffee or a meal sometime soon. Remember, what happens outside your group is sometimes more important than what happens in the group. Also, remind those who are sharing stories this week so they come prepared.

We've created this [email template](#) to use as you contact your group members each week. We recommend sending an email a few days before your group to serve as a reminder.

PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Prepare a welcoming environment for the group members by being available before and after group. Hopefully, by this point, your group members will start talking more with one another as they come into the room and even start welcoming each other.

Discuss Section One

Relationships and Rules

Section Win

The win is for participants to understand that God desires a family model and that his rules are evidence of that relationship, not a requirement to start it.

Section Summary

Rules, a part of every religion, are often the main reason people are turned off to religion. Even people who consider themselves religious are constantly looking for ways around the rules of their own faith tradition, which breeds the well-earned reputation for hypocrisy. Rules always assume a relationship. Two relational models built on rules are the family model and the club model. God desires a relationship first and foremost. His rules are for the protection and provision of those in his family.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. In general, how do you respond to rules? Do you tend to keep them or break them?
2. What were the most important rules for you growing up? What rules are still important to you?
3. Which model—family or club—best represents your understanding or experience of rules and relationships in religion?

Leading the Discussion

- **Question 1:** This question allows participants to indicate if they are generally disposed to keep rules or break rules. You may think about following this question with, “How do you think your posture toward rules in general impacts how you view religious rules?”
- **Question 2:** This question helps reveal how the environment that participants grew up in impacts their view of rules today. You may want to help participants explore this idea

with a follow-up question like, “What impact do you think the environment you grew up in has on how you view rules today?” This could begin a healthy conversation about legalism if anyone in the group has experienced that.

- **Question 3:** In some ways this discussion is the logical conclusion of the previous two. The value of discussing this question is that it gives you the opportunity to reinforce that God has always desired the family model regardless of what the participants have experienced to this point.

Discuss Section Two

God's Rules

Section Win

The win is for participants to understand that God’s rules for Israel, specifically the Ten Commandments, were given because a relationship already existed. God related to Israel using the family model.

Section Summary

The Ten Commandments are arguably the most famous list of rules ever created. Looking back into the Old Testament when they were first delivered, we see that God gave them specifically to the Hebrew nation—his chosen people. Even the commandments themselves open with the statement, “I am the Lord your God.” The Ten Commandments were a confirmation of, not a condition of, Israel’s relationship with God. Consider showing the [60 Seconds of Rules of God](#) video.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. What value do the Ten Commandments have today?
2. Have you considered that God declared a relationship with the people of Israel before giving the Ten Commandments? What do you think of this?
3. What rules do you think matter most to God?

Leading the Discussion

- **Question 1:** This discussion can help establish the merit of these rules for any person or nation. Wouldn’t our personal lives and our society be better without murder, slander, adultery, and theft? You may want to have someone read the Ten Commandments from [Exodus 20:1-17](#) aloud to familiarize everyone with them.
- **Question 2:** This question gives you a chance to offer a different perspective on how most people view rules associated with church or religion. Rules without relationship encourage rebellion, but what if God’s motives for giving rules came from a motive of

protection and provision for people he considered family? What if God's rules were similar to rules parents set for young children out of love? If that was true for Israel, how might that change the way we look at God's rules?

- **Question 3:** This discussion allows participants to share their thoughts on what they believe matters most to God. In some ways it can reveal the sins they think are the worst. If you have time, you may want to turn to the passage where Jesus answered this question (Matt. 22:36-40). This passage further illustrates God's motives behind the rules. In Jesus' opinion, all the rules were meant to increase love for God and love for others.

Discuss Section Three

Your Role

Section Win

The win is for participants to understand that God views all of humanity through the family model.

Section Summary

God used the family model with Abraham and Israel, but what about us? God's plan from the very beginning included the idea of inviting everyone into the family (Isa. 49:6). Jesus reinforced this message in the New Testament, stating that all who believe have the right to become God's children (John 1:12).

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. Is there a connection between the way God accepted Abraham, Israel, and us? Explain.
2. Is it easier to see God as a rule maker or a parent with boundaries? Why?
3. What would change if you really saw yourself as a child of God?

Leading the Discussion

- **Question 1:** This question helps determine if participants connected the dots that God uses the family model for everyone— Abraham, Israel, and us.
- **Question 2:** This question helps to surface any barriers between what participants have experienced and what they are hearing in the group. One of the most significant steps of faith for many Starting Point participants is choosing to see God as a loving heavenly Father when their personal experiences have reinforced a very different picture. Our hope is that this discussion will be a place where that can be surfaced and discussed.

- **Question 3:** This question allows participants to explore how their thinking or choices would be different if they truly believed their relationship with God was one of parent/child. If the conversation doesn't gain traction, be prepared to share from your personal experience.

Wrap-Up

Bottom Lines

- Rules always assume a relationship.
- God's rules didn't establish his relationship with Israel; they were a confirmation of his relationship with Israel.
- God's plan, beginning with Abraham, always included us.

Prep for Next Week

Remind the group of the additional resources on the website to go deeper on what was discussed. They can prepare for next week by answering the questions in the guide and listening to the message for Chapter 5: "Jesus."

Review Group Experience and Purpose

Since you are halfway through your group experience, now is a good time to review the purpose of Starting Point. Ask group members how they are enjoying it. Do they feel like they are exploring faith? Are they developing relationships and experiencing community? Ask them how you can make the group meetings more beneficial.

Stories

If you chose not to have a social gathering to share stories, or you didn't get through them all at the gathering, ask for volunteers to share in your next group meeting. Remind them of the Appendix: *What's Your Story?* to help them prepare their stories if needed.

Prayer

It might be the right time to ask your group members if they have any specific prayer requests to share with the group. As you close in prayer, remember that you are modeling prayer for your group.