

Read: Galatians 2:11-16

Too many rules!

Galatians 2:15,16

We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you were put in charge of how many rules there would be at home, what number would you choose?

Every home has rules from how to do chores to not hitting. Every school and classroom has rules that tell you when homework has to be done or what types of clothes you can wear. Every town or city and state has laws that tell us how fast we can go or what licenses we need for our pets.

Before we get to the topic of rules from our Bible reading for today, let's remember five simple Bible truths about them:

1. God made the rules.
2. Adam and Eve broke them and now we all break them.
3. God sent Jesus to keep the rules for us.
4. God punished Jesus because we don't keep the rules.
5. Because of that, when God looks at us, it's as if he sees us as perfect rule-keepers.

Okay, back to today's Bible reading. Things got confusing a couple of thousand years ago when Peter, whose family members had been believers for years, was torn between wanting to keep the old rules (or traditions) and also wanting to live with the freedom from rules Jesus gives. He wanted the people who just learned about Jesus to keep following the same traditions and rules that he grew up following. Paul confronted him—strongly!—"Come on, Peter!" Paul reminded him that "good" believers aren't good because they wear the right thing or act a certain way. While it is absolutely true that when you open up the Bible, there are rules that tell you things to do (and not to do) that are meant to make your life better, sometimes we start adding to God's rules about how people should look or act or sing in order for them to be part of church. It's sometimes easy to forget that while those things might be good to do, that's not what makes us good believers or a "good" church. Only Jesus makes us good.

So here's the question: what if we see that someone is making rules for people that aren't God's rules? Do what Paul did. He talked to his church family about it. He talked to them about Jesus. As kids, it can be hard to talk to adults, so that's why God made us a family. We talk about it ... together. Talk about what? How about we start by remembering the five simple truths about God's rules? Because it's more than just keeping the rules but getting more people to know the good news of Jesus, who followed and finished God's rules for me.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Name two rules that you are told to do (or not do) in church.
- Why do you think we have those "rules" in church? (Like not yelling during church?)

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Have you been to other churches? Describe some are traditions that are different from your church?
- *True or false:* As long as *you* like how things are done at church, then those traditions are okay.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Describe how your grandpa and grandma dress for church compared to how you do. What determines which tradition or custom is right?
- When comes to rules or traditions, what must *not* change in your church? (*Hint: anything connected to God's Word and Christ's teachings*) What *can* change in your church? (*Hints: technology, buildings, things that help connect people to Christ*)

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for keeping all the rules for us. That's how we get to heaven. Help us not think that following rules makes us good, but that you already made us good. Amen.