

**Read: Matthew 5:21-37**

## Do Rules Ruin the Fun?

### **Matthew 5:21,22a**

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.”

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

Why do we have rules in a family? In a classroom? In a nation? Discuss the purpose of rules for a moment.

Some say that rules ruin the fun. But when you stop and think about it, rules are in place for our good.

*Don't jump on the furniture because you might fall and break a bone.*

*Don't drive faster than the speed limit because you might lose control and crash.*

*Don't stay out too late because you'll run down your health.*

Rules protect us. Rules protect *other* people. For example, speeding puts pedestrians and bikers in danger. If we care about people, we'll behave in a way that won't put other people in danger.

Our Bible reading for today is a portion of Jesus' teaching called “The Sermon on the Mount.” One purpose for this sermon is to help Christians understand how to live good and peaceful lives. As we read it, we see that God puts rules in place not only for our own safety and comfort, also for the benefit of others. Look at some examples from our reading:

- God wants us not to be angry with people because our anger causes hurt (vv. 21,22).
- God wants us to keep our hearts and minds pure in order to protect people from the sins that come from lust (vv. 27,28).
- God wants us to avoid taking oaths because it causes unnecessary drama (vv. 33-37).

You see? God knows how to create a safe and orderly society. He wants that for us, not just for our comfort; also to protect the most innocent and vulnerable souls among us.

There will be times when people break God's rules and hurt us. And there will definitely be times when we break rules and hurt other people. We're sinners in a sinful world. And that's another reason Jesus gave this sermon: to help us see how incredibly high God's standards are and how far we fall short. We all have had times when we've been angry, spoke an unkind word, got

into a dispute, or used God's name to swear. We don't always look out for our neighbors. People get hurt.

That's why we need Jesus. Jesus actually lived up to God's incredibly high standards. He never sinned! Not once! And he gives us his perfect life as a gift so that God treats us as if we had lived it. Thank you Jesus!

*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**

- What rules are the hardest for you to obey?
- What does Jesus do for you when you ask for forgiveness?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- Which rules—either from God's Word or in your household—are most difficult for you to live by?
- When you feel guilty for breaking the rules, picture Jesus obeying those rules in your place and then ask him for the strength to obey the rules in the future.

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- Do you have friends who think that God's rules for living are too strict? How can you redirect their thinking toward God's true intentions of love, protection, and peace?
- *Discuss:* The high standard God sets for our behavior actually protects us from thinking we can obey God perfectly on our own. (ref. Matthew 5:48, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

### **Closing Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, help us understand how to live as Christians in a sinful world. Help us use your Word as a guide for holy living. When we fail, make us truly sorry and remind us of the righteousness you won for us. Amen.