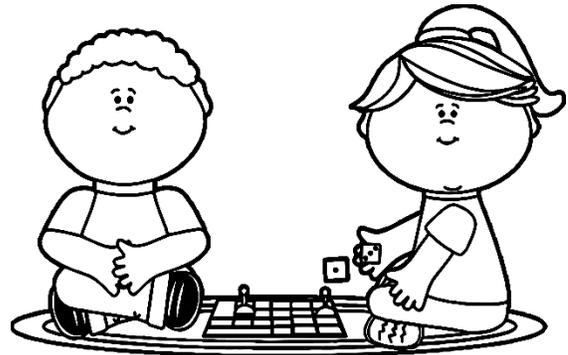


Session Two

Why Does God Give Us Rules?

Thought Starter

What are some of your favorite board games to play? What makes them so fun? What are some of the rules of your favorite game—how do those rules help define the game? What happens when some people don't play by the rules?



"Let your heart hold fast to my words; keep my commandments and live."

(Proverbs 4:4)

Catechesis (Teaching Our Faith)

God establishes a covenant with His beloved people

Remember how last session we talked about God being the Creator of all things visible and invisible? All these created things obey the rules of God's creation—that is how they function, how we can predict things, and how we can make use of God's creation. So, the first answer about why God gives us rules is that they teach us reality, they teach us how things actually work and what they actually are.

But why does God give us His commandments to follow, and then let us choose whether to follow them or not? The commandments God gives us point to a spiritual reality, but it is possible to break them (we can't break the law of gravity, but we can break the law about not stealing).

God wants us to enter into a covenant with Him. A covenant is a life-long bond between two people or groups (or between God and people) that is sealed with promises. When we enter into a covenant, we promise to keep the rules of the covenant forever—it is not like a contract that we make for a little while with someone. Covenants unite us as family (a marriage is a covenant), contracts connect us for worldly gain (like when I take out a loan to buy a car). Covenants come with laws and rules. We choose to enter into a covenant; they are not forced upon us, we are free to give our "yes" or "no." A covenant's goal is to create a relationship where love will flourish. And you can't *make* someone love you.



**"If you will, you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live. ... God has not given any one permission to sin."
(Ben Sira 15:15, 20)**

God is the Ruler, the Lord—He establishes the Rules

When we enter into a covenant relationship with God. We promise to obey His rules. The commandments He gives us are not ways we earn His love. He loves us first, and that is why He gives us the commandments. What is the purpose of His commandments? There are three:

1. For Safety—We need to know what is good (what brings us life) and what is evil (what leads to death). Rules help us make proper use of God's creation. Rules help us understand what will keep us and the people around us in good health (in both body and soul).

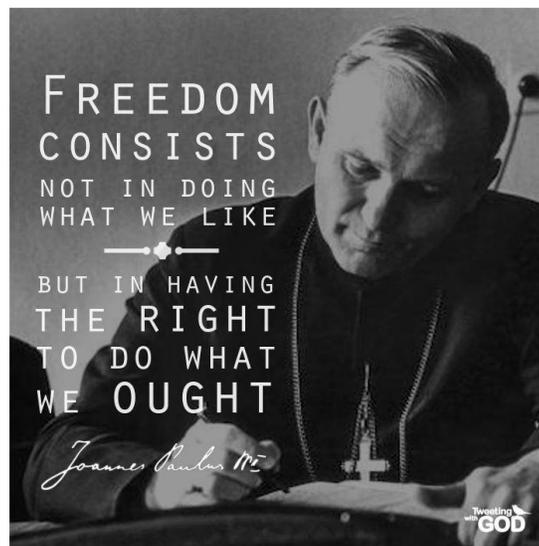
2. For Excellence—Rules help us understand how to achieve excellence; rules help us develop to the fullest extent we can in some activity (the athlete achieves excellence when he/she obeys the rules of the game).

3. For Identity—God's rules reveal His heart; they help us understand how to be like God in the ways we love others, give mercy, seek the common good, and bring about healing. When we are baptized, we become adopted children of God, and His rules help guide us to be more like Him (to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect).



**"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. ...
And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his
Son Jesus Christ and love one another." (1 John 5:3, 3:23)**

We are free to choose. God's dream for us is to live forever with Him in heaven. This requires us to love God. The only way He could create us able to love, to say "Yes" to being in a relationship with Him, is to make us able also to say "No." Otherwise, our "Yes" wouldn't be a free yes. In order to freely say "Yes," we must be able to say "no." God doesn't want us to say "no" to loving Him, but He allows us to choose and He won't force us to accept Him. This is why is it so important for us to use our freedom for the good. When we freely choose to do evil, we are misusing our gift of freedom. When we freely choose to do good, we are using our freedom in the way God wants us to, in the way that brings us fullness of life.



"God in the beginning created human beings and made them subject to their own free choice. ... Before everyone are life and death, whichever they choose will be given them." (Ben Sira 15:14, 17)

Thinking and Reflecting on What I've Learned

1. When you think about God's rules and commandments, how do you usually think of them?
2. "Why should I obey God's commandments? They were written so long ago they just don't apply to me." How would you respond?
3. How do rules help you achieve excellence in your life?

Digging Deeper in Scripture

Matthew 7:21, 24-27

[Jesus said,] "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ... Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

John 15:9, 11-12

"As the Father loves me, so I also love you. ... I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."

Colossians 3:1-2, 17

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. ... And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father through him."



Activity

The Purpose of God's Rules

Why does God give us rules? Unscramble the words to complete the sentences.

God's rules keep us _____. (a f e s)

God's rules help us achieve _____. (l x e e l n e c c e)

God's rules give us our _____ (d n e t y i t i)

(Word bank: excellence, identity, safe)

Matching

Draw a line connecting each statement to the purpose of God's rules that it explains.

God's rules keep us safe

When I follow God's rules, I am free to become a saint; I am able to use my gifts and talents to their fullest.

God's rules help us achieve excellence

When I follow God's rules, I think, act and love as God does. I live as His beloved child.

God's rules give us our identity

When I follow God's rules, I learn to avoid actions and attitudes that will hurt my body or my soul or other people.

Prayer

1. **Settle yourself and make the Sign of the Cross**—prepare to pray by quieting your mind and asking the Holy Spirit to be with you as you pray and hand over this time to God

2. **Begin by honoring and thanking God**—think about your day and give thanks for at least 5 things—they can be little things or big things.

3. **Talk to God** about what happened to you today. Share with God when you thought of Him and His rules, and ask forgiveness for any time you did not obey God's commands. Talk to God about what you have learned about His rules—that He gives them to us to keep us and other people safe, to help us achieve excellence, and to help us find our identity as His beloved children.

4. **Ask God to open your heart** to learn His rules and follow them fully.

5. **Bring to God the intentions in your heart**—people and situations you want to bring before Him

5. **Move to worshiping and adoring God**—in this time, don't think about God, just be with Him, loving Him and letting Him love you

6. **Close by speaking to God about something you feel in your heart that God wants you to do**—maybe a word of encouragement to someone, maybe telling someone you're sorry about something you did, maybe choosing an action to bless someone in your life

7. **End your prayer with the Sign of the Cross**—make it prayerfully and with great awareness

