

Break the Rules Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Are you more of a color in the lines or outside of the lines sort of person? Explain.
2. How many tickets for traffic violations have you received in your life?

Read the following passage: Mark 2:23-28.

The Pharisees in the first century were very committed to remaining ritually pure before God through strict adherence to the Law of Moses. They believed honoring the Sabbath was a very serious matter and they defined 39 categories of activity that qualified as work, and which therefore should not be engaged in during the Sabbath. One of these activities was reaping. The Pharisees considered the actions of the disciples—picking some heads of grain—to fall under that prohibition, and so accused them of violating the Sabbath.

In response, Jesus makes several points: 1) If King David could apparently violate the Law of Moses in the matter of consecrated bread and not be held guilty, then Jesus—one greater than David—had even greater authority over the Law, and specifically the Sabbath; 2) the Sabbath is intended to be a help to God's people, not a curse.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. This example of Jesus' disciples violating policies that the Pharisees felt strongly about is just one of many such moments during Jesus' roughly three-year public ministry. What are some other ways that Jesus seemed to "break the rules?" What kind of figure did the religious leaders and crowds consider Jesus to be? Was Jesus a revolutionary? An anarchist? What sort of opinions formed around Jesus?
2. Read Matthew 5:17-20; Matthew 7:12; Matthew 22:37-40; and Matthew 23:23. How would you summarize Jesus' view of the Law of Moses? Did he take it lightly? What did he think was central in the Law?
3. Read Matthew 23:23. The Pharisees established a number of rules to help them maintain ritual purity and carefully keep the Law of Moses. In their case, what was the negative underbelly of this careful compliance? What are some ways our rules, habits, or traditions can actually hinder the mission we should be focusing on? Are there work or personal routines in your life that are hindering your personal growth with God or your influence in the lives of others? Are there habits or policies that are making you less effective in your school or work life? Are there any patterns you would like to break out of so you can be more effective in what God has called you to do with your life?
4. Jesus' teaching that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath is a strong reminder that God's "rules" are intended to help his people. What are some

ways following God's rules can benefit our lives? How can we tell when the way we are enforcing particular rules is no longer benefiting the people they are intended for? Are you more prone to be a rule follower or a rule breaker?

5. In your life, do you feel like you prioritize people over possessions, money, entertainment, achievement, or having a "simple" life? Explain. Jesus was able to prioritize people and accomplish a mission. How can we likewise be productive without pushing people to the side? How are people and productivity related?
6. On several occasions, Jesus made it clear that the policies of the religious leaders were at odds with God's will. A particularly dramatic case was the moneychanging and market activities taking place in the Temple area. (See Mark 11:15-17.) Are there any "rules" that your family followed that you feel you need to reject in order to please God? What about in your personal life? Workplace? What about in the cultural environment you currently find yourself?
7. What is one way you need to "break the rules" for the good of God's mission, for the good of people, or for the glory of God?

Pray