

Change 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. What was one rule in your house growing up that you still remember today?
2. In general, are you a rule follower, or a rule bender? Explain.

Read the following passage: Luke 5:29-39.

Jesus makes several stunning statements in this passage. Firstly, he indicates that his very presence is so significant that it alters the normal course of common religious practices like fasting. Indeed, his reference to himself as a “bridegroom” would probably have reminded the religious leaders of moments in the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament) when God referred to himself as Israel’s “husband.” Jesus goes on to proclaim that his mission and teaching are so revolutionary that they cannot simply be patched on to the old religious system. The covenant God had made through Moses, Jesus was implying, would have to be changed.

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

1. Why do you think Jesus’ contemporaries so often wrestled with the question of Jesus’ identity? How would you respond to someone who claimed that Jesus saw himself as nothing more than a Jewish rabbi, or religious teacher, or prophet? (See, for example, Mark 2:1-12.) Why is Jesus’ identity a central component of the Christian faith?
2. The religious leaders applied the Law of Moses to their lives in such a way as to justify avoiding people they did not want to be around. Read Luke 10:25-37. What is Jesus teaching with this parable? What was Jesus confirming was the proper way for his contemporaries to read and apply the Law of Moses?
3. What are some ways we justify avoiding people that God may want us to engage? Are there any people you think God wants you to engage that you may be avoiding presently?
4. Many of the religious leaders Jesus encountered were more focused on upholding the traditions surrounding the Law of Moses than they were on doing what God desired. They closely analyzed Jesus’ actions regarding the Sabbath, fasting, and ceremonial washings, and completely missed who Jesus was. What are some ways we can lose sight of God’s presence in our lives? Are there any areas of your life in which you think you could become more conscious of God’s presence and activity?
5. What do you think it looks like practically to honor God and fulfill his purposes in your studies or workplace?

6. Pharisees (like Saul of Tarsus who eventually became the apostle Paul) were considered the most religiously devout individuals in their cultural context. But their interactions with Jesus often revealed that, beneath their religious exterior, they were angry, self-righteous, and even violent people. How is it that very religious people can sometimes be very joyless people? What is the solution to this problem? Do you ever see any Pharisee-like tendencies arising in your own heart? Explain.
7. Are there any “rules” that you have been operating by that you think God wants to change? Explain.

Pray