

# starting<sup>®</sup> point

## PART 4: RULES

The perception many people have of the Christian faith is that it is primarily a code of conduct that you must adhere to if you want to be on good terms with God. If you can do it, you're in. If you can't... you're out. This leaves people with a picture of God that looks more like a cosmic police officer than a loving father. So, what role does our behavior play in our relationship with God?

### CONNECT

1. In general, how do you respond to rules? Do you tend to keep them or break them?
2. What is it about a rule that makes it feel controlling instead of caring?

### DISCUSS THE PODCAST EPISODE

1. Which of these models describes the churches or religious traditions you've been exposed to?
  - In the **family model**, the relationship comes before the rules. Disobeying may have consequences, but you're always part of the family.
  - In the **club model**, you have to agree with the rules to get in. If you break the rules, you're kicked out.
2. Have you considered that God declared a relationship with the people of Israel before giving the Ten Commandments? What do you think of this?

### LEARN

Watch the short video.

### APPLY

After giving your group members an opportunity to share what stood out from the video, discuss the following questions as a group:

1. Have you ever thought about the idea that, within the Christian faith, the rules are intended to confirm our relationship with God rather than being a condition for it? How does that change the way you view the rules in the New Testament?
2. Talk about a time when you made rules for someone else. What was the heart behind those rules?



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3. Read **John 1:12**. Just like with Israel, God desires a relationship with us that reflects the family model. How would seeing God as a loving parent with boundaries instead of a distant “rule maker” impact your relationship with him?

## BEFORE NEXT TIME

You can discover a lot about a person by the rules they impose. They tell you what the person values. They also tell you who the person values. This is true of God’s rules too. They’re not a condition for a relationship with him; they’re confirmation of that relationship. They provide us with a framework for healthy relationships with God and others. His motive is one of provision and protection for the people he loves.

Be sure to listen to the “Jesus” episode of *The Starting Point Podcast*.

## PRAY

Take some time to thank God for a group where you can share your thoughts, ideas, and experiences about faith for the next eight sessions. Ask him to guide your discussions as you begin this journey together.

