

BIG IDEA

When we read certain stories in the Old Testament, it's hard not to wonder... Is God legalistic or gracious?

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 30:1-5 & 11-19 in the Message translation.

ICE BREAKER

What was the worst rule you had to follow growing up?

OPENING THOUGHT

Legalism is an excessive adherence to the law. When we see God as a legalist, we might picture him as a basketball referee looking for infractions; ready to blow the whistle when anyone breaks a rule. In what ways have you ever seen God in this way?

BIBLE DISCUSSION

1. Read Exodus 20:1-17. When have you encountered this list of commands? How do these verses make you feel?
2. Read Deuteronomy 30:11-19. What do you notice about these verses? What is Moses encouraging his people to do?
3. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-5. This passage is written to prepare the Israelites to enter the promised land after 40 years of wilderness wandering due to their lack of faith. What do you notice about this section? What is Moses expecting they will do?
4. How does Deuteronomy 30:1-5 influence your understanding of 11-19? Does it feel more legalist or more grace-filled? Why?

LIFE APPLICATION

5. Do you consider yourself a rule follower? Why or why not? Does it make a difference whose rules they are?
6. God's commands are rooted in the goodness of his character. How might we view things differently if we saw them as wisdom that equips us to flourish? Read the Ten Commandments re-written as "imagine if" statements. How do they feel different than the passage we read earlier?
7. Is it difficult to see God as for you and not against you? Why or why not?
8. What would it mean for you to come to understand that God is full of grace and longs for you to flourish? How might that change your view of God? How might that change your view of yourself? How might it change your view of his "rules"?

CHALLENGE

Love is a supremely motivating factor. Spend time this week praying for you to believe or believe more deeply that God is for you. Choose one of the "imagine if" statements on the next page to meditate on this week asking God to show you ways to flourish in that specific area.

IMAGINE IF...

Yahweh says, “Imagine if you had an intimate relationship with Me and only Me, the one true God. No more idols and all of the things that go with that...but a living relationship with the one who made all of this...” Exodus 20:3-4

Imagine if you lived in a way where true rest is possible. Where rather than run ragged you enjoyed a serenity of heart and mind... Exodus 20:8

Imagine if you lived in a way that you quickly and easily gave honor to your mother and father because of your love and respect for them. Imagine experiencing peace in your home... Exodus 20:12

Imagine if you lived with no desire to take anything that doesn't belong to you because, ultimately, you don't need it anyway. Exodus 20:15

Imagine if you lived with no need to tear people down with your words or actions... Exodus 20:16

Imagine if you lived with no desire to have someone else's life or stuff. Imagine feeling content. Exodus 20:17