

## Rules

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Look

Some people find that having a set of rules to follow is comforting; they find the structure useful for them. Other people experience rules as confining and oppressive, making it hard for them to be creative or do all the things they want to do.

1. Which type of person are you? Generally, do you like rules and structure or do you find them challenging?
2. Describe a time or situation when you experienced rules to be a good thing for you or for a group of people. How did the rules help make things better?
3. Describe a time or a situation in which the rules caused more problems than they solved, or when rules seemed arbitrary and unnecessary. What was it about the rules, or the rule-maker, that was so problematic?

## Book

### Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 and Psalm 19:7-8

The Israelites came out of slavery in Egypt as barbarians. They were used to lawlessness and having to survive in whatever way that they could, even if that meant hurting one another. God knew that to thrive as a people – as God's people – that they would need to learn to live as a community. The Ten Commandments are the first set of rules God gave the people to help them begin to move away from barbarian behavior towards living as a civil people.

1. If God wants the Israelites to live as civil people, why do you think the first three commandments are focused on their relationship with God?
2. What does the Psalmist's perspective tell us about how the Israelites experienced God's laws? Did they find the law useful or oppressive? Why do you think that is?
3. Has there ever been a time in your life that you found it useful to follow a law (or commandment) from God? What was the commandment? Why was it helpful?
4. Have you ever found it difficult to follow one of God's laws? Why?

## Took

Sometimes the Ten Commandments can seem outdated or maybe just so common place that we hardly think about them anymore. But if the Israelites found them to be useful, maybe they are useful to us.

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1. Do you think the Ten Commandments are still important for us? Why or why not?
2. As you look at them again today, which of the commandments do you find the hardest to follow and why? How do you think your relationship with God would change if you could align yourself more with that commandment?