

FOR YOUR OWN GOOD

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OFTEN, TEENAGERS GET FRUSTRATED WHEN THEY FEEL THAT OTHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF THEM ARE TOO HARD TO MEET. Parents have rules. Teachers have rules. Coaches have rules. Schools have rules. Stores have rules. Some get frustrated or angry because they think rules take away their freedom—but do they?

Imagine a world with no rules: no traffic laws; no safety standards for manufacturers; no health rules for hospitals and medical care workers; no industry regulations for television broadcasters, professional athletes, public officials, or restaurant owners. Think about it; it would be a miserable world of total chaos and confusion. God knew that.

God created a world that is guided by more rules than anyone can count. The rules that surround our lives protect us in many ways and make it possible for everyone to live his or her best life. When people do not know how to act or what to do, rules help them to conform their actions to a good, reliable standard. It may sound lame to say it, but the rules are for our own good.

Do the Right Thing

The book of Deuteronomy features the Israelites at the edge of the wilderness, just days away from entering the Promised Land. Crossing over into God's promise would be one of the most significant, life-changing moments they would likely ever experience. But before they got carried away with the excitement of their new life in Canaan, Moses challenged them



to press the pause button. For just a moment, he wanted them to take their minds off their friends, their families, their wants, their feelings, and their problems. In Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Moses encourages the Israelites to stop and think about what God has asked them to do: “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?”

Moses asks the people to think about their lives in terms of what God wants: “What does the LORD your God ask of you . . . ?” (10:12a). As he continues, Moses answers his own questions by giving a simple summary of the commandments. In essence, he says that this is the short version of God’s rules for your life:

- Fear the Lord: Do not be afraid of God but give God honor and respect.
- Obey the Lord: Do what God has commanded; avoid what God has forbidden.
- Love the Lord: Give God first place in your heart, trying hard to please Him above all.

Moses speaks to a young generation, people who did not remember what life was like back in Egypt . . . in slavery. For several days, Moses gives an overview of God’s commandments for Israel. The primary point was to simply remind the people to focus on God’s rules. As they considered what the future in the Promised Land would hold for them, Moses wanted them to think first about how they would live to please God.

Do You Want to Be Blessed?

If you read too fast, you will likely miss the last four words of verse 13: “for your own good.” Moses was saying that the people should do themselves a favor and live by God’s rules. Love God. Do not lie. Do not cheat. Do not steal. Do not kill. Do right. Why? Because sin has some consequences you do not want, and pleasing God has some benefits you do not want to miss. Do what the Lord says, for your own good.

When making plans, many teens only ask themselves three questions:

- Is it popular?
- How much do I want it?
- Can I get away with it?

But if you want to live a good life, a life with less drama, a life that pleases God, then ask yourself some different and better questions:

- What would God have me to do in this situation?
- Will this choice please God?
- Do I want to be blessed?

Many teens feel free or grown when they break rules—but what good is a “feeling” that leads you straight to some tough consequences? There may be some temporary thrill in not following rules, but living without rules creates danger for you.

Life is full of a million rules that protect us from all kinds of danger and difficulty. The best rules are God’s rules. Get serious about living for God and spare yourself a lot of headaches and regret. You can live your best life without unnecessary risks and social-media likes, and without anyone else’s approval. How? By obeying God for your own good. It may not always be easy, but it is definitely worth the effort!