

LESSON 6



WHY DO WE HAVE RULES AND LAWS?

Scripture Texts: Micah 4:1-5; 1 Kings 21:1-15; Galatians 3:24; Romans 13:8; Ephesians 20:1-17; Genesis 2:15-17

Laws and rules have come a long way since God gave the first one to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Laws and rules were in God's plan from the beginning. God knew that man needed laws to help guide him along the road of life. As there are signs on our streets and highways, so are there signs on life's road to remind us that others are depending on our actions as well as we are depending on theirs. Without laws and rules, life everywhere would be in chaos. All laws ever made by man are derived from the original ten laws given man by God in Exodus 20:1-17.

MEMORY VERSE: *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Galatians 5:14

To Do or Not to Do

Once there was a man who set sail for a distant country. A violent storm came up, and his ship sank. Of all the passengers, he alone escaped. He was stranded on a deserted island in the midst of a great sea. So Robinson Crusoe set out to build a house. He looked about until he found just the site he wanted. Wonder of wonders! He did not have to ask anyone if he could use it, nor did he have to pay for it. He did not have to sign any papers, nor did he have to get a permit to build. He hunted about for materials to use. When he found them, he took them and did not have any fear of the police coming to arrest him for stealing. Anything he wanted, he took. Anything he wanted to do, he could do. Did he need rules?

King Ahab was a powerful king of Israel. One day he saw a beautiful vineyard very near his palace. He wanted it for a garden of herbs for his use. He sent for its owner, Naboth. When Naboth came, King Ahab asked him to sell the vineyard, but according to the rules that God had given the Israelites, each man was to keep his own land and hand it down to his sons. So Naboth refused to sell. King Ahab went back to his palace and all his luxuries, but he was very unhappy. He lay down on his bed, turned his face to the wall, and refused to eat. When the queen found him, she asked what was bothering him. He told her that he wanted the vineyard, but could not get it. She suggested that as he was king he might take it anyway, and so they planned a scheme whereby Naboth would be killed. When word came of Naboth's death, King Ahab took the vineyard. He thought now he would be happy, but God sent a severe punishment upon him for his wicked deed.

What is the difference between these cases? One man took what he wanted, and we say that he did right. Another man did the same, but we say that he did wrong. Were rules important here?

Why Laws Are Necessary

When the pioneers left the coast of Virginia and started across the Allegheny Mountains into the Ohio Valley, they went into a land that had no laws. Here they had to take care of themselves. There were no policemen or

soldiers to protect them from enemies. Soon they found that they needed a leader, so they chose someone to be their leader. They had to tell him what his powers were, so they gave him certain rights and authority. One of their first projects was to build a stockade around their settlement to protect them from Indians and other enemies. Some refused to help with the work. They called the leader and together they made a law. Everyone must either do his share or get out of the settlement.

Then, more problems came day after day. How would they take care of their property? How could they be sure they could keep their land if someone else should want it? If two people wanted the same piece of land, how could they decide to whom it should go? They met and made some rules to make their property safe. Some of these rules may have been such as these: everyone must register at a certain place, stating the date he came and the location of the land he desired. Another may have been, no one shall trespass on another man's property without his consent. So there came into being a long list of regulations regarding property rights.

Another problem was that of the conduct of the people. But someone says, "Are we not to be free to do as we please away out in the wilderness?" We can never be entirely free to do as we please as long as there is another person near us. The law may state that the gates would be closed at a certain time and anyone not in by that time would not be permitted to enter. As more people came, the laws became more numerous, and someone had to enforce the laws. That is how we began our system of having policemen to enforce the laws made by the people. Why were these rules necessary? They were necessary that everyone might enjoy the greatest freedom and happiness possible. Without them no one was safe.

As our Scripture lesson for today shows us, if everyone would obey the rules of right living, there would be no need for swords or weapons of warfare. We could use them all in making things for peace and happiness. There would be more plows and pruning hooks instead of swords and spears. There would be no need of armed men using force to make people respect the rights of others. All would love each other and do what is right.

Rules in the Game

We know that in order to play a game there must be certain rules, or no one will know how to play. If in a baseball game, every player went out and started to do as he took a notion, without any idea of the rules, what kind of game would you have? When all play by the rules, we are much happier and play together with greater ease and better results. Try to think what your life would be like without rules.

Rules in the Home

Perhaps the first place where we run into rules is in the home. Here we are always hearing "Don't do this" and "Do that." When we do not realize the reason for these statements, we are likely to dislike them. How would you like to live in a home where there were no rules? Everyone may do just as he pleases, when he pleases.

Let us imagine that we are living there for a day. Mother gets up a little tired and decides that she will not get breakfast at seven, but will wait until she feels like it. Father has to go to work without his breakfast. You have to go to school without your breakfast. When you come home that night, you expect to find things in order, but Mother has not yet recovered, and everything is topsy-turvy. When you go to your room to get some of your possessions, you find that your sister or brother wanted them, and you cannot find them. Someone has decided that your bed is more comfortable and has moved it out of your room and brought in another. You decide to curl up on the couch with a good book and spend a pleasant time reading, but someone takes the light and leaves you to read in the gloom. Someone else turns on the radio as loudly as possible. In despair you retire to your room to go to bed, but even there you are disturbed by your brother making a lot of noise. When you complain, he says, "Well, I've a right to do just what I want to do." Are you not glad that there are some rules in your home upon which you can depend? How could you help to make the home happier by your attitude toward the rules?

Rules in the Community

John Jones told his mother all about how very unhappy he was. Nobody liked him. He had no friends. He was always getting into trouble. He had run across the neighbor's newly planted flower bed and spoiled several valuable plants. He was out with a group of boys who made a lot of noise and frightened some of the elderly citizens of the neighborhood one night last week. He had taken Henry's ball and bat, but Henry left them out in the yard. Are not "finders keepers, losers weepers"? Why should the grocer have been so upset when John had spoiled the signs that he had made so carefully? Why should everyone be so angry about John marking all over the walls in the community recreation center? What would you say was the cause of John's unhappiness? What would you tell him if you were his mother? How could John regain the goodwill of these people?

JUST A THOUGHT

It is extremely difficult to express love with a clenched fist.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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