

DEEP PREP GUIDE

RULES | FEBRUARY 1 | BIG GOD STORY

SCRIPTURE | Luke 6:1-16

BOTTOM LINE

Jesus disrupts the day by showing that He rules over it.

MEMORY VERSE

“The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” Luke 6:5

LIFE APP

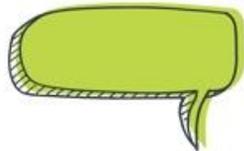
How is Jesus impacting your decision-making about something big in your life?

We don't talk about rules much anymore. Or do we? Rules have more to do with our lives than we probably care to think. Rules of the road, unspoken “social rules”, office rules, school rules, family rules, and who can ever not think of the “golden rule” in thinking about the specific rules that help us live life day to day. Practically all communities and places are managed by a set of rules, whether spoken or unspoken, shared or not shared.

So then what happens when rules are broken? How is existence changed? How are relationships changed? What happens when the very rule that was meant to protect a community actually gets in the way of community being able to be enjoyed? We're not just talking about the potential exceptions, we're talking about the nitty gritty norm for why these rules should exist in the first place.

We encounter a dynamic story in Luke 6 that I hope you experience in a fresh way this week. You've maybe read it, or maybe you've never heard it. But look at the story through the context of an observer. You've seen these rules followed time after time, then a man who has been talked about and rumored to be the Messiah walks into the situation, and breaks the rules by doing something supernatural and life-changing for everyone.

Who gets upset? How does Jesus respond? How do we respond? Those are the questions.



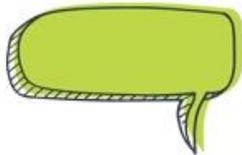
TENSION

We can all come up with a myriad of rules that were tossed our way as we were growing up. Perhaps as you were growing up compared to now (depending on your age), you see how rules have changed; adapted, and evolved as time has changed. One rule that I thought about growing up that was embedded into what we learned especially as young kids was very basic, “don't talk to strangers”. Pretty basic, right? Well fast forward to 2017. In some ways, not necessarily in really young kids, kids talk to strangers all the time via video game worlds, the internet, in texts, and on social media. Not to belabor a point about this rule evolving, but the bottom line is that there is tension between society and rules at any given time period. How we approach rules is always best understood in the

context of what tension we see between how we actually behave and what the spoken/unspoken rules we follow each day.

In many ways, our students are growing up with an idea of a “liquid morality”. We could phrase it differently to call it a “relational morality”. Towards the end of the 20th century, our society (and even in the church) started to question some basic social and moral norms of how the world operated. While I see this a positive challenge for the church to think about, it’s easy for us to think rules can’t be challenged. The tension that many students experience is that students’ lives are sometimes governed by rules that may contradict how many students actually behave in their “relational morality”.

The beauty of this passage for students is that Jesus came to disrupt rules that prevent us from becoming alive in Him and returning the focus to Jesus. All rules and no Jesus makes the Christian faith very cold, and frankly, not Christian. The way of Christ is not the way of rules; it’s the way of seeing who rules over the rules as our norm/center.



TEXT [CONTEXT]

The Pharisees have been misunderstood and maligned by the church at least since the Jerusalem Temple fell in the year 70 and the church found it in direct competition with Pharisees (as opposed to the priests, Sadducees, or Essenes) as heirs to Israel’s traditions in a post-Temple age. Pharisees were the liberal, mainline Protestants of first century Judaism. While other Jewish sects claimed the people needed the priesthood and the temple to mediate between them and God, the Pharisees democratized religious experience.

Often described by Christian preachers as jot and tittles of rules and regulations of religious observance, the Pharisees offered to people modes and means of devotional practice that could be followed anywhere by anyone without direct oversight or mediation by religious leaders (clergy). This means that we can assume the challenges which the Gospel writers present them as having to Jesus’ actions are sincere concerns about the welfare of the people and the shared ritual practices available to them.

To move from the ancient to the contemporary and build on the interest created by reshaping a congregation’s view of the characters in the ancient text, preachers will do well to ask why the Gospel writers included these Sabbath controversies in their narratives in the first place. Luke did not include the two scenes in this section in order to make Pharisees and their fellow religious leaders look bad. He included the story because Sabbath observance was an in issue for the early church.

As the church began to include more and more Gentiles, the question of the faith’s relation to its Jewish roots evolved. Clearly, the early church considered the Hebrew Scriptures (which included the commandment to keep the Sabbath) to be its scriptures. What was less clear was how those scriptures (along with its commandment to keep the Sabbath) were to be interpreted in light of the Christ Event.

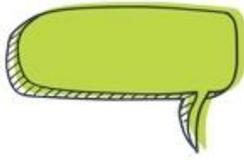
It is important to note that Luke does *not* present Jesus as claiming no importance of the Sabbath. Instead, each story makes a different but related claims concerning the importance of the Sabbath *for the church*. The first is that Christ is lord of the Sabbath (verse 5), not the other way around. This justifies that

Sabbath observance be kept but also be modified. The second is an ethic that doing good on the Sabbath is lawful, that it is in accordance with scripture.

These two claims in and of themselves will likely still hold little interest for most people in a contemporary context. But what is at stake underneath them should. The question lying under the Pharisees challenge to Jesus, underneath Jesus' answer to them, and underneath Luke's decision to include these stories in his narrative concerns faithful identity to a community's tradition in light of ever-changing circumstances.

While some feel that the fabric of our society is being ripped in two, it is perhaps more accurate to recognize that we live in a day when that fabric is being re-dyed. Some experience this with joy and hope and others with fear and pain. As part of this process, the church's identity and mission is also in flux. Denominations battle and split over issues like homosexuality. Worship leaders are challenged to embrace contemporary methods of entertainment and technology to reshape the liturgy.

What does remaining faithful to Christian tradition and practices mean in such a day? Maybe Sabbath controversies are not just an ancient concern after all. (Excerpt taken from www.workingpreacher.org)



TRUTH

My challenge for students is to begin to seeing Jesus as the norm and not rules. What are the rules that are holding students back from seeing Jesus? How does Jesus start to shape the ways students live their lives, make decisions, and move them into hope and wholeness? Decision making processes are an easy place to start with setting Jesus as our "center" instead of the rules. The goal is not to convince students that rules are evil or bad, but rather that when we don't have Jesus as our center or norm, the rules doesn't lead us into a deeper relationship with God and others. It just leads us into ruling following. That doesn't sound very adventurous.