

Rules vs. love

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The household I grew up in did not have a lot of rules. My parents were first-generation immigrants who worked 12 hours a day, six days a week. So even if we'd had a lot of rules, they would not have been home to enforce most of them.

When I began high school, I treated anything resembling a rule as more of just a general guideline. My parents expected me to regulate myself, and often they were too tired and too busy to be strict.

After I got my driver's license, however, my parents did ask me to do one thing: call if I would be home after 10.

I distinctly remember one weekend when I lost track of time as I hung out with friends. As I drove home, I steeled myself, preparing to get in trouble and for the punishment that would follow.

But when I walked through the door, my dad was so relieved he began to cry. I could see in his face all the worry that had built up each minute I was late. His love, turned from concern to relief, was palpable. And it was that love, not any rule, that made me strive to be a better daughter and a better person.

In Romans, the Apostle Paul says that "love is the fulfilling of the law." When we allow God's love to encompass us, and then share that love with others, we are able to give even beyond the generosity, care, and concern for neighbor that the laws were set up to cultivate. In fact, the call to love is not an escape from our duties to one another. It's a call to live with even more intentionality and attention to the needs of others.

We do so not because some rules or laws tell us we have to but because we have experienced that radical and welcoming love ourselves, and that love compels us to strive to be better.

We are not called to be rule followers. We are called to experience and understand the deep love that undergirds and upholds the commandments of God—and by intimately being known and loved by our God, to then extend and share that love with the world.