

Family Rules



“Family rules” or norms are “the way we do things in our family.” Often they are unconscious, rarely discussed, seldom decided by discussion. Different families have different rules. When a couple is married, the different family rules conflict. Family rules often become more important than the Bible—even in strong Christian families. These norms are often elevated to God’s truth. They are not just the “way we did things in our family,” but that is the way things “ought to be done.”

Think about your home when you were growing up. What were your “family rules?” They were probably not stated as rules, but everyone in the family knew “that is the way we do things.”

- **ROLES**

What was “women’s work?”

What was “men’s work?”

- **TIME**

What was your family’s rule for being on time?

How was this applied to work, school, church?

How was this applied to curfew?

MONEY

How was money managed and spent?

Who decided on the use of money?

How did money reveal what was important in your family?

• SPIRITUALITY, GOD

How important was God in your family?

How was this expressed in worship, Bible study, use of time and money, and ministry?

Who was the spiritual leader of your family?

• HOLIDAYS

How did your family celebrate Thanksgiving?

How did your family celebrate Christmas?

When did you open gifts?

How did you open gifts?

What were other important holidays, birthdays, family reunions and how did you observe these?

• DRESS

What were the dress codes in your family?

What dress was preferred for church, school, public, in the house?

- **DRUGS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO**

What were your family rules in relation to the use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco?

- **AUTHORITY**

How did your family view people in authority such as police, public officials, elders?

- **CHILDREN**

How were children valued—center of family, burdens, blessings, inconveniences?

What speaking privileges did children have?

How were children taught and corrected?

How were different children treated?

- **PETS**

What kind of pets did your family have?

How many pets did you have?

Where did they stay?

Where did they eat?

Where did they sleep?

- **CONFLICT**

How did your family handle conflict?

What was considered “fighting fair?”

What would have been considered “not fighting fair?”

With whom could you disagree?

With whom could you not disagree?

What topics could not be discussed?

- **FAMILY SECRETS**

What were some family secrets that your family had that were not to be discussed with people outside the family?

What were some family secrets that your family had that you knew about but were not to be discussed—even in the family?

- **FEELINGS—SADNESS, JOY, FEAR, ANGER**

What feelings were acceptable to have and to express?

What feelings were unacceptable and not to be discussed?

- **OTHER RULES**

What other rules did your family have?

- **CHANGE OF RULES**

Were your family rules ever changed?

What was the occasion for the change and how was it done?