

**AN ORDER TO IT ALL 2: CONSTRAINED BY RULES**

*“Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7, NIV)*

**I**N THE BEGINNING, there was only one rule. For humanity, that is. “You may eat of any tree in the garden,” the LORD told Adam and Eve, “but do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” That’s it. One rule. They could not keep it.

We often discuss the motivation of Eve’s sin. She was allured by the look or the smell of the fruit. She was swayed by the deceptions of the serpent. She wanted to be like God. Whatever it was, Adam followed her down this path. What we do not explore so commonly is their justification. But if it went like so many lines of justification we hear today, it went like this: “Oh, this can’t hurt anyone. It’s only a piece of fruit.”

The Rules of Golf, as Jeffrey Cranford and Matt MacConnell discuss so clearly in today’s accompanying video, are put in place not only to constrain one player but to protect the whole field. We don’t follow the rules only for our own sake; we follow them because without them the competition would be ruined for all. Adam and Eve apparently did not understand life like this. But God did. And he followed the rules for our sake as much as for his.

*How is this so?*, you might ask. Let’s begin with the fact that by the time Adam and Eve came onto the scene, the universe was ticking like clockwork. The rotation of Earth on its axis and its revolution around the sun, in addition to the location and gravitational pull of Earth’s moon—these made Adam and Eve’s lives possible. After our planet was set in place like this, God did not allow himself to “get creative” and randomly tweak the factors sustaining life. He adhered to the rules.

Likewise, God established consequences for that first sin—a sentencing law, if you will. Despite his love for Adam and Eve, God cast them from the garden and their bodies began aging toward death. Again, he followed his own rules.

Finally, there is this: God ordained the rule that only the blood of an unblemished lamb could undo the sins that Adam and Eve committed, that you and I would commit. And God adhered to that rule, sending his only Son to die on our behalf. Everything in us may rebel against the constraint of rules, especially the rules of God. But if we can remember that God constrained himself for our sake, we may stop justifying our sins and obey the Lord instead.

**Opening questions** When have you felt constrained by a rule of golf? Did you think of the field when you followed it, or did you have some other motivation to maintain the game’s integrity? Did you?

**READING** Amos 3:7; Isaiah 53:7-11; Romans 14:19-21; Philippians 2:5-11

**God’s boundaries (Amos 3 & Isaiah 53)**  
How did God “lay down the law” for himself? How does this understanding cause you to see the ancient prophecies in a fresh light? What do the verses in Isaiah 53 mean to you today?

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**Submitting to the consciences of others (Romans 14)**  
If we recognize the hesitations of others, how are we to respond? Does it pain you to constrain yourself for others in this way?

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**The glorious example of Christ (Philippians 2)**  
This passage tells us that Jesus was “obedient unto death.” What does this bring to mind for you as you consider your own sacrifices for others?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: [https://youtu.be/jgr-rA\\_aeAGY](https://youtu.be/jgr-rA_aeAGY)