



Links Players

AN ORDER TO IT ALL 4: HOW RULES HELP US

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1, NIV)

IN 2019, THE RULES OF GOLF ARE HEADED FOR CHANGE. The USGA and R&A insist that this new version of the Rules will be simpler for the average golfer to understand. So let me ask you, will you be learning the Rules this time around? You will if you believe the Rules can help you.

Most people don't view rules this way, not in golf and almost nowhere. Their thinking: Rules are restricting and rob us of our individuality. If by "individuality" they mean self-rule, then they're right! But sometimes rules are critical not so much for life as for plain living. Consider traffic lights. The rule is that we stop when the light is red. But what if even a small percentage of people decided this rule was not for them? What if only one or two people out of a hundred chose to keep going right through every red light as though it were not there? You don't need me to tell you how badly this would end. I've heard an expert say that traffic laws result in one of the most coordinated agreements that exists among human beings.

The idea of following rules is one thing when our physical lives are on the line. But tell a friend that their soul is in danger if they don't trust and obey their Creator and you just might run into a series of disagreements. Here are a couple:

"The Bible doesn't speak to the decisions we have to make in the modern world. As long as I'm not hurting anyone, I'm sure it's OK with God."

"Who is this God who supposedly tells me what to do? Everybody has a different idea about who God is anyway."

But the Creator of the earth and its inhabitants also knows how it (and we!) work best. And what works best is outlined in his Word. It only makes sense then that we will function best when we function according to his design. His rules are meant to help us.

Eugene Peterson once addressed the idea that the Christian life is difficult. "This is as far from the truth as the east is from the west," he wrote. "The easiest thing in the world is to be a Christian. What is hard is to be a sinner." Throw off restraint, resist correction—these are recipes for true hardship. When instead we take up the disciplinary plan of the Lord, we gain knowledge, wisdom, and a fullness of life.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/a1Elc3yrY04>. Eugene Peterson quoted from *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, 2nd edition ©2000 by Eugene Peterson.

Opening questions Talk about a time when you were helped by the application of a rule in golf. • Are you the kind of person who accepts rules, resists them, or comes up somewhere in between?

READING Psalm 119:33-40; Proverbs 2:1-11; 1 John 3:21-24

Loving the ways of the Lord (Psalm 119)

What was the psalmist's attitude toward God's law/precepts? What was his prayer in this section of the psalm? Would you say your heart is inclined to echo this prayer at this point in your life?

The rewards of wisdom (Proverbs 2)

What conditions of obedience are given in the opening verses? Where does wisdom come from? What rewards does God supply for those who wisely follow his ways?

Obedience and Christ (1 John 3)

What commands of the Lord did John outline here? What is evident about those who obey these commands?
