

## How do you leave father and mother? Go shopping!

“Family rules” or norms are “the way we do things in our family.” Often, they are unconscious, unspoken, understood, and contradictory. We don’t think about them, we don’t talk about them, but if you break one of the family rules, you’re in trouble. Some of our rules are contradictory, which brings stress to the family. Different families have different rules. When a couple is married, the different family rules conflict. Family rules often take precedence over the Bible, even in strong Christian families. These norms are often elevated to the status of 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’s the way we do things in our family.”

- **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, and church?

How was this applied to curfew?

- **MONEY**

How was money managed and spent?

How did money reveal what was important in your family?

- **SPIRITUALITY, GOD**

How vital 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, and at home?

- **DRUGS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND ELECTRONIC DEVICE RULES**

What were your family rules concerning the use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and viewing TV, phones, and iPads during family time and meals?

- **AUTHORITY**

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

- **CHILDREN**

How were children valued? Were they the center of family, burdens, blessings, or 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 “fussing fair?”

What would have been considered “not fussing 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?

- **FEELING RULES—FEELINGS OF 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?