

● Lesson Title: When You Get Tired of the Rules

Age Group: Preteens (Ages 9-12)

Theme: Understanding the purpose of God's rules and choosing obedience from the heart

Memory Verse: *"Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome."* - 1 John 5:3 (NLT)

● Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Understand why God gives us rules.
- Learn how rules help us grow in love, safety, and freedom.
- Reflect on their attitude toward obedience.
- Choose to follow God's ways from a heart of love.

📖 Bible Passage

Exodus 20:1-17 - The Ten Commandments

Matthew 22:36-40 - The Greatest Commandment

● Story Title: *The Fence That Saved the Sheep*

●●●● For Ages: 9-12

Theme: God's rules are like fences that protect and guide us

Core Message: God's rules are loving boundaries, not burdens

● Story:

Once upon a time, on a peaceful hillside, there was a little farm where a shepherd named Eli took care of his sheep. Eli loved each one of them, and he knew them all by name—especially a curious young sheep named Toby. Toby was full of energy and always exploring. But one thing bothered him: **the fence**. It was tall, wooden, and surrounded the pasture where all the sheep grazed.

"Why do we even need this fence?" Toby grumbled one morning. "I want to see what's beyond the hill. I bet it's way more fun out there."

The older sheep warned him, "That fence is there to protect us. Outside, there are steep cliffs and wild animals."

But Toby wasn't convinced.

That night, while the others were sleeping, Toby found a small gap in the fence. Quietly, he squeezed through and ran up the hill. The moon lit his way as he explored the open field. "Finally! Freedom!" he bleated, bouncing happily through tall grass.

But the joy didn't last long. As Toby wandered farther, he didn't notice how steep the hill had become. Suddenly, the ground beneath his feet crumbled, and he slipped, tumbling down the rocky slope. Bruised and frightened, he landed at the bottom—lost, cold, and alone.

Meanwhile, back at the farm, Eli noticed Toby was missing. Grabbing his staff and lantern, he rushed into the night, calling, "Toby! Toby!" After hours of searching, he finally heard a faint, frightened bleat.

“Toby, there you are!” Eli cried, scooping him up gently. “You’re hurt! But you’re safe now. Let’s get you home.”

As Eli bandaged Toby’s scrapes and laid him in soft straw, he whispered, “That fence isn’t there to trap you. It’s there to **protect you**—because I love you.”

Toby understood now. The fence wasn’t mean. It was mercy. From that day on, he stayed close to the shepherd and trusted his boundaries.

● **Tie-In Discussion:**

Ask the preteens:

- Why did Toby not like the fence?
- What changed his mind?
- How is that like us when it comes to God’s rules?

▣ **Main Point:**

Sometimes we think God’s rules keep us from having fun. But really, they are like fences—loving boundaries from a Shepherd who wants to **protect, guide, and care for us.**