

After years of living with a set of religious demands that he could never live up to, Fil Anderson found himself spiritually bankrupt and emotionally drained. Following a crash-and-burn in professional ministry, he found relief in learning to be with God rather than doing for God. Instead of desperation, he found healing, and a rich new life with God.

## Interview with Fil Anderson, Author of *Breaking the Rules*

### What prompted you to write *Breaking the Rules*?

**Fil Anderson:** The first “nudge” came shortly after the release of my book *Running on Empty* during a visit with a close friend. Having read about my three decades-long pursuit of the Christian life and the painful realization that my pursuit wasn’t taking me where I longed to go—deeper into a nurturing and life-giving relationship with God—she graciously wanted to thank me for telling my story. Yet it was apparent that she also wanted to hear more. So after describing how my religious striving had left me spiritually bankrupt and emotionally drained she leaned forward and posed a simple question: “Have you told me the whole story, or is there more?”

My stunned silence must’ve implied to her an answer. “Fil, if there is more of your story than you’ve told, for your own sake and for the sake of others, I hope you’ll dig deeper and tell us more.”

Looking back, I guess it was my friend’s urgent plea to dig deeper that prompted me to write *Breaking the Rules*.

### How have you struggled with religion? And what did you mean when you said religion lied to you?

**Fil:** I’m convinced that everyone enters life with a proud, natural, uncontrollable urge to make their own life better. And so at an early age I became convinced that religion’s self-salvation blueprint provided the best plan for satisfying that urge. Thus, swallowing it hook, line and sinker, religion became the center of my life. It was a brilliantly designed and seductively attractive marketing program whereby following Jesus was reduced to following doctrinal beliefs and morals commandments while promising me a better life.

Religion introduced me to a pared down god who was obligated to provide the things I yearned for as long as I held up my end of the bargain by conscientiously *believing* and *doing* the required things. This vision of God appealed to my desire to remain in control of my life. Like a “must have” consumer product, it promised to enable me to reach my potential, gain others’ admiration and respect, develop my God-given gifts and talents, and provide me with the life principles necessary for successful living.

Believing that I was getting something that I couldn’t live without, religion was getting me and before long, religion was in charge. It used rules to force my steps, guilt to keep me in line and rituals to remind me of my failure to keep the rules. Meanwhile, shame and guilt

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compelled me to strive to improve my performance, while hidden feelings of failure led me into a private storm of weariness, hopelessness and despair.



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—Fil Anderson

What I meant when I said religion lied to me is precisely what I said; it lied. Recognizing religion’s origin I’m not surprised. I’m convinced that religion was invented in the devil’s workshop and is the most deadly source known to humankind. Thus it’s no surprise that the primary mission of Jesus is to tear down religion as the foundation for people’s connection with God and to replace it with himself.

My greatest struggle with religion lies in the fact that it kept me from seeing Jesus as he truly is. Jesus is scandalously unruly and appears dangerously out of control (especially to followers of religion). Thus, it’s no wonder that religious forces would conspire to domesticate Jesus and herald him the founder and president of a global religion. But religion is wrong and foolish to use the devil’s tricks, because all attempts fail. Jesus refuses to be boxed, caged, captivated, tamed or temple-broken. Jesus is the challenger and corrector of all religions. He’s a subversive, anti-institutional revolutionary who exposes religion and it’s institutions as an even greater threat than the devil.

### **Describe the significance of the title *Breaking the Rules*.**

**Fil:** Although Jesus never made breaking the rules a worthy goal in and of itself, he made clear the point that rule keeping is pointless if it’s not an expression of something deeper. Jesus said, “I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners” (Matthew 9:13 NLT). *Breaking the Rules* invites you to quit trusting in your own ability to live for God, and simply trust in God instead.

There’s an ancient story about a person whose deepest longing was to live in intimate union with God, and thus he wished to know what habits of the heart and mind were essential. One day he approached a wise and holy hermit and posed a question to him. Without hesitation the hermit replied, “If you wish to live in intimate union with God, there are two things you must know: The first is that all of your efforts are of no avail.”

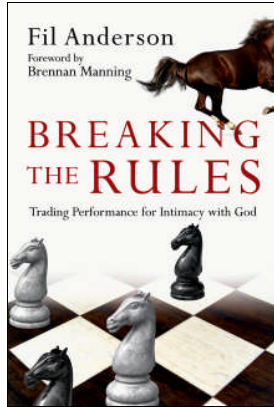
“And the second,” the disciple insisted.

“The second is that you must live as if you did not know the first.”

I truly believe that the secret of the spiritual life is to live it until it becomes real. It’s a way of living, an attitude our mind adopts, and an orientation our soul adapts itself to. And especially important for us to understand is that this life is obtained by walking with Jesus and watching how he does it until no rules remain necessary. That’s right, until there is no need for any rules.

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*Breaking the Rules: Trading Performance for Intimacy with God*, 220 pages, hardcover, 978-0-8308-3537-9, \$22  
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### Who is *Breaking the Rules* written for?

**Fil:** *Breaking the Rules* is written for anyone who longs to be loved. For this reason, I believe this book was written for everyone...

- Tired & weary souls burned out by the demands & pressures that unbending rule-keeping religion requires.
- People sick and tired of religious hypocrisy.
- “Churched” people frustrated & disappointed that their life hasn’t been transformed.
- Religious people needing encouragement or permission to trade the rigors of religious performance for intimacy with Jesus.
- People that religion tells its followers to avoid.
- People being destroyed by their mistakes and foolish choices.

*Breaking the Rules* truly is written for everyone...prostitutes and Pharisees, rich and poor, porn stars and preachers, gays and straights, Republicans and Democrats, head cases and scholars, adulterers and saints, losers and successes of all kinds. It’s written for people who need to quit trusting in their own ability to live for Jesus, and simply trust in Jesus instead; whose astonishing invitation is simply “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you” (John 15:4)

### What do you hope readers take away from *Breaking the Rules*?

**Fil:** The first step to a richer, fuller life is giving up the lie that living in intimate union with Jesus depends on you. The life God uniquely designed for us to live and for which our hearts naturally yearn cannot be achieved by means of our own effort, no matter how disciplined we may be. Instead it comes only by way of a few prepositions, *with*, *in* and *for*, what Eugene Peterson calls “prepositional participation.” These prepositions join us to God and God’s action. They are essentially the ways and means of being in on and participating in what God is doing. *With*, *in* and *for*. These are the authoritative connecting; enabling, relationship-forging words that set us on the course God designed us to follow.