

DAY 15

Rules... What comes to mind when you hear that word? Maybe you think that you are a rule-follower (or a rule-breaker). Maybe you think of all the dumb rules in your house or school. Maybe you're thankful that there are rules to keep us all from going over the rails. Whatever your thoughts are, there is an inescapable truth that there are rules in the world. Most of these "rules" are actually boundaries, meant to protect us from doing stupid things that could potentially harm us or others.

There are boundaries in the Bible... lots of them. Sometimes we hear that and say, "here we go again," with a slight eye roll, but God created boundaries for our good. He loves us and always has our best interests in mind; he wants to give to us, not take from us (Matthew 7:7-11). So, when we live outside of the boundaries that God has established, we miss out on the blessings that he desires to give to us.

This passage lists several boundaries that should be applied to the life of a believer. What is your attitude towards the commands in the Bible? What comes to mind when you think of the boundaries that God has given us? Do you have a joyful attitude of trust or a rebellious attitude of pride? Do you believe that his laws are in your best interests? As you read today's passage, pray and ask God to give you a willing spirit to hear and obey his commands.

Prayer:

"God, thank you for your laws and your commands. Help me to love them with my whole heart. Give me the strength to follow your ways. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Read:

Read 1 Peter 3:8-12
Read Matthew 7:7-11

DAY 16

Have you ever played the game, Follow the Leader? Or maybe Simon Says? I know these are old games, but most of us probably know what they are. In each of them the goal is to mimic the leader's actions. Even though these games are simple, they give us a picture of the Christian life. As Christians, we are called to imitate Jesus in everything he does.

If you haven't already noticed, the words "suffer", or "trial" are used a lot in the book of 1 Peter. We can learn how to act and endure these trials as we look to understand how Jesus dealt with them.

Most of the time, we suffer because we sin. This is called "self-imposed suffering," which is the result of our own actions. Other times we suffer because of things outside our control (like bullies, hurricanes, or diseases). Jesus suffered at the hands of others and because of our sin. Jesus never did anything to deserve suffering, and yet he suffered. We suffer justly because we are the ones who are messing up, but his suffering was unjust because he was sinless, Jesus didn't do anything to deserve what He got.

Thankfully, God doesn't hold a grudge against us! Even though we sin, God pours out grace because Jesus suffered in our place. As you read these verses, thank God that he doesn't hold your sin against you, but forgives you because of Jesus.

Prayer:

"Father, thank you for forgiving me. Thank you that you do not hold my sin against me, but that you pour out your love on me through Jesus. Amen."

Read:

Read 1 Peter 3:13-22

DAY 17

Yesterday we talked a little bit about suffering. Have you ever really thought about the price that many Christians around the world pay just because they said "yes" to Jesus? Following Jesus comes at a cost, but how often do we really think about that?

Did you know that one in nine Christians around the world experience high levels of persecution? To put that in numbers, that's about 245 million Christians around the world who endure suffering because of their faith in Jesus. Of these people, 4,136 of them were killed because of their faith in 2018 alone. This info comes from a study called "Christian Persecution by the Numbers."

As we are on this journey called life, we are certain to face opposition simply because we follow Jesus. How do I know that? Well... Peter tells us to expect it in today's Scripture. The thing is, it is difficult to live in a godly way while we are experiencing suffering.

God calls us to "rejoice" when we suffer for his name. But why? We read in Romans that we can rejoice in suffering because it brings endurance, which then produces character, which leads to HOPE! When our perspective shifts our suffering is never the end of the story.

Today, think about how you might respond to suffering. Whether it is a bully at school, losing a couple friends because you follow Jesus, or someone trying to kill you because of your faith. Does your reaction align with what we see in Scripture?

Prayer:

"Father, I know that trials are never easy, but I pray that you would help me to respond like Jesus did when he suffered. I also pray for the Christians around the world who are suffering for your name. Please be with them and give them courage. Amen."

Listen:

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19
Read Romans 5:3-5

Link to article:
<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/christian-persecution-by-the-numbers/>

DAY 18

Have you ever seen the way that sheep run to their shepherd when he calls? If you haven't, stop right now and watch the video attached below. Pretty cool, right? The sheep only listen to their shepherd's voice because they know that he is there to take care of them. He will feed them, give them shelter, and do almost anything to keep them safe.

Today's passage of Scripture gives us a picture of the leaders in the church as shepherds. What does this mean? Try to follow this: God has appointed (or put in place) some people to watch over the church, these people are shepherds who ultimately point us to Jesus, the Good Shepherd. That means that our church leaders are chosen by God to be shepherds over you and over me.

Now, it could be easy to get nervous about something like that. What if the leader abuses his power? What if he takes advantage of the people under his care?

Luckily for us, today's passage gives very **clear instructions** to church leaders. They are to lead after Jesus' example—full of humility and love.

Maybe you want to be a leader in your church someday. Maybe you are already a leader in your youth group. God wants you to lead leadership to be humble and loving. He wants you to lead after the image of Jesus, who never abused his power

Action Steps:

Those around him well and how you can lead those around you closer to Jesus?

Prayer:

"Father, I thank you that my identity is secure because of Jesus! Forgive me for trying to find my identity in other things. I receive your love and acceptance. Amen"

Read:

Read 1 Peter 5:1-5

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e45dVgWgV64>

DAY 19

Have you ever had a bad day, went home, went up to your room, and called a friend to vent? Most of us have. Sometimes we just need to talk about our lives, problems, and what's going on in our heads. Whether we are extroverts or introverts, we need to share the things that are weighing us down.

Maybe you don't think that's a very good strategy for releasing stress and anxiety, but according to these verses, that is exactly what God wants us to do. The only difference is that God wants us to cast our anxieties **upon him**. When we give our concerns to God, our hearts respond in humility. In other words, God wants to rid you of having to carry the burden of anxiety and worry! He wants to take the pain that you have and trade it for joy, the anxiety for peace. This transaction with God not only allows us to breathe again but grows our dependence and trust in him through the process. It does not matter what the hurt, pain, or frustration is, God wants you to turn over control to Him and trust that he truly wants what is best for you.

What fears and anxieties do you have today that you need to give to God? Don't ignore them but allow God to speak and begin to bring life into your situation. Try this exercise, close your eyes, and picture yourself holding all your pain, frustration and anxiety in the palms of your hands. Now imagine you're kneeling, holding all your pain and worries before a beautiful and glorious cross where Jesus is standing. What does it smell like, what's the temperature and the feeling of the ground beneath your knees? Now in your mind, lay them down at the feet of Jesus, in the process, telling Jesus that you can't handle them and need him to take them away. Allow him to respond with "Oh weary one, I died on this cross for your pain and sin so that you don't have to carry them. I will always be here for you." Know that he will take them from you 100% of the time because he loves you and cares for you. (If you are artistic, try drawing out this scene!)

Prayer:

"God, I give you my worries and my fears. Please allow my heart to see your glory and your plan in the midst of my pain. Amen"

Read:

Read 1 Peter 5:6-7
Read Isaiah 26:3
Read Philippians 4:6-7

DAY 20

The way that Peter ends this letter is an intense warning but also an incredible encouragement. Along this journey, Peter wants us to know two things:

First, that Christians have an enemy: The Devil. Our enemy is trying to destroy us. He wants to harm us in his way he can but know that he is limited in what he can do. His only tactics are to try and produce fear and intimidate us. Be reminded that Jesus is stronger, Jesus is better, and Jesus is victorious.

Second, that it won't be easy to resist him, but we must. Sometimes resisting the devil means putting restrictions on your laptop, sometimes it means confessing sin to a parent or a pastor, or in extreme circumstances it might mean holding onto Jesus through persecution.

This journey that we are on is not easy. It is not full of rainbows and unicorns, but God has given us all that we need in Jesus and in his Word. We can **always** find hope in God through his Word!

Prayer:

"Father, I know that the Devil is real and that he wants to destroy me, but I also know that you are good. I pray that you would give me the strength that I need in the moments I need it. I trust that you are strong where I am weak. Amen."

Read:

Read 1 Peter 5:8-14

DAY 21

Yesterday's verses were probably a little bit daunting, but today's verses are full of hope! Peter does not end his letter on a sad note. Think of the best news that you've ever heard. Got it? Okay, now triple that! Now you've got your head around the news that Peter is giving us at the end of his letter!

After writing a whole book about the trials and suffering that Christians are going to experience in their lives, Peter wants to tell us that **God is going to come to our rescue**. Verse 10 says that he will personally "restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." It's not like he is going to send someone else to come do his job. He is going to help us himself! If that doesn't give you hope, then I'm not sure what will! Be reminded that you are never alone, even when your mind space is dark, and you can't see the end of your journey, know that Jesus is with you. He sees your pain and your struggle and wants to enter in with you on your journey.

Prayer:

"God, I thank you that no matter how dark things get that you will always come to my rescue. That you will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish me. I trust your plan and your promises. You are good and your word is true. I love you. Amen."

Read:

Read 1 Peter 5:10-14

Take some time to wait and write out some of the things that stood out to you during this study.