

SESSION 3

ENDURING FAITH



What are your best tips for enduring a long road trip?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLenduring

THE POINT

Trust God in every circumstance.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Have you heard of the Ironman race? It's a grueling event where participants swim 2.4 miles, bicycle 112 miles, and finish up by running a marathon (26.2 miles)—all in less than 17 hours. Many people describe the race as the ultimate test of physical endurance.

You may never run the Ironman, but you've gone through your own tests of endurance. And you've got more tests coming.

As followers of Christ, difficult situations can test our endurance when it comes to trusting God. Maybe we can trust Him during the first few days after a traumatic experience, such as losing a job. But what if those stressful days stretch out to weeks or months—even a year? It's harder to endure in our trust when we can't see the finish line.

In this session, we'll explore Peter's encouragement to put our trust in God—even through hardship—because He is worthy to be trusted. The apostle gave us a reason to endure and continue to do what is right: because God is good.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 Peter 2:13-23 (HCSB)

13 Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor as the supreme authority

14 or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good.

15 For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.

16 As God's slaves, live as free people, but don't use your freedom as a way to conceal evil.

17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.

18 Household slaves, submit with all fear to your masters, not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel.

19 For it brings favor if, mindful of God's will, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly.

20 For what credit is there if you sin and are punished, and you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God.

21 For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps.

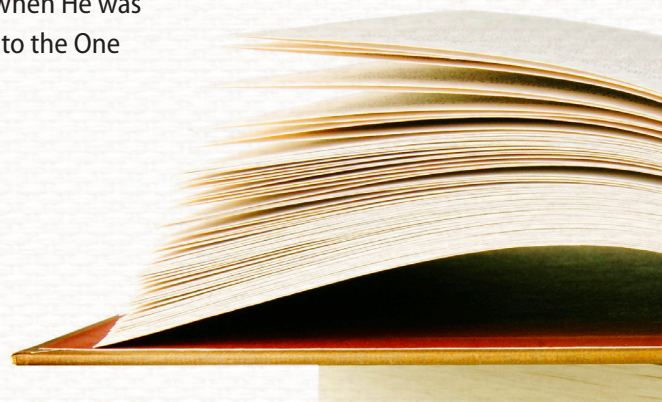
22 He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth;

23 when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.

Key Words

Submit (v. 13)—A military term indicating subordination to or ranking beneath another. It does not indicate slave but rather the acknowledgment of authority.

Honor (v. 17)—To esteem, respect, value, or treat another with graciousness. Honor expresses value and recognizes others as important and of worth.





1 Peter 2:13-17

How do we demonstrate our freedom in Christ? One way is to honor those who have authority over us—including governing authority.

This seems like an odd command, given that Peter was writing to persecuted Christians. Why should these people give honor to a government that violated their freedom of religion? The answer is that showing honor proved they were truly free in Christ—they were free *not* to sin against others. They didn't need to agree with the governing authorities' views or actions. Yet, in their own freedom from the slavery of sin, the early Christians were not enslaved to hateful attitudes, words, or actions toward those authorities with whom they disagreed.

This is a picture of true tolerance.

Christians are not supposed to use their freedom in Christ to tear others down—not even in elections. If we truly trust God to care for our needs, even an unwise ruler cannot harm us in the ultimate sense. So, while citizens of the United States have the freedom to speak their minds, citizens of heaven have the freedom to do good and must avoid the slanderous tongue of the evil one. Wise servants of God are those who trust Him as the protector of freedom, and they will not return to the slavery of fear. We are to continue to do what is right and good as members of God's family.

In our desire to control our reputations and social status, we might be tempted to attack those who insult us. But Peter stated that the way to silence ignorant people is by doing good.

How do we submit to and honor leaders we disagree with?

QUESTION #2

We express faith in such circumstances by continuing to act uprightly. Furthermore, our upright actions are grounded in these confidences:

- ▶ Confidence that God will bring truth to light.
- ▶ Confidence that, even if God permits falsehoods to be spoken about us, nothing will change the truth that there is no condemnation in Christ and we belong to Him forever.

AUTHORITY ISSUES

Choose two.

What are the implications of Peter's instructions in verses 13-14 for how you respond to the following areas of authority?

- Federal government
- Local government
- Traffic laws
- Copyright laws
- Taxes
- Other

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1 Peter 2:18-20

We sometimes bring suffering on ourselves through our own thoughts and actions. Other times our suffering comes from the unjust hands of others. Consider Peter's example of slaves. He encouraged them to trust the Lord not just in their daily circumstances, but even under the ruthless rule of cruel masters.

How is it possible to persevere under such hardship? Peter wrote that we can endure when we remain "mindful of God's will."

- ▶ It's not God's will that there be any evil done under the sun.
- ▶ God is the righteous Judge, and no act of injustice will go unnoticed by the Lord of heaven.
- ▶ God is faithful to judge both the righteous and unrighteous.

As Christians, what can we offer to those who are suffering injustice or persecution? We can point them to the only good that is worthy of our trust—we can point them to God. He will require an account for our actions since He is a perfectly good and righteous judge. As the perfectly good God, He always does what is good for humankind.

Remember, God knows firsthand about injustice and persecution. Jesus was cursed, spat on, beaten, and put to death to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus then defeated death by rising from the grave, demonstrating that we can have hope through faith in Him.

God punishes evil, but He also provides hope for us. He doesn't leave us to face the dire consequences of our sin.

Furthermore, there is hope even in the midst of injustice. God honors the one who has suffered. God doesn't forget His people, nor does He allow evil to ultimately go unanswered. Because we trust in God and know His nature, we are called to act as those who truly believe God is the real Lord and Savior of the universe.

How can we understand and apply God's command to submit in these verses?

QUESTION #3

When have you endured persecution or hostility because of your faith?

QUESTION #4

"Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time."

— OSWALD CHAMBERS

1 Peter 2:21-23

We *can* endure hardship without sinning, and our example is Jesus. Peter quoted from Isaiah 53, the prophetic "suffering servant" passage that points to the Messiah. Peter referred to this passage because he wanted us to see that even in the most unjust suffering, Jesus did not sin.

Consequently, when we suffer, we are not to sin.

Someone might say, "Jesus didn't sin because He is God. But I'm only a human!" Yes, Jesus was fully God, but He was also fully human. He chose obedience, and so can we. God knows we will not be perfect in our reaction to unjust suffering, as Jesus was, but Christ's response is our goal and our target. His goodness makes it possible for us to do good, even in the face of great darkness and pain.

So what was Christ's example? **Jesus Christ exemplified perfect trust in the only One who judges justly.** Whether you're dealing with a routine situation, your worst suffering ever, or something in between, God can be trusted because He is good. In fact, it's the hope of God's goodness to us that sustains a forward-moving attitude. It's the reason we can endure—because we really do find something better in God.

Ultimately, God will put an end to all suffering and injustice. He has already shown us that He will do so by defeating death and eliminating the major consequence of sin. God raised Jesus from the dead not only to defeat death, but also to restore all that is good. And when we stand with Christ in His goodness, we will stand forever.

What are your best tips for enduring our culture's hostility against Christians?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

What steps can you take to trust God in every circumstance?

- ▶ **Get educated.** Research your local and regional politicians as preparation for engaging your governing authorities in a way that honors Christ.
- ▶ **Choose freedom.** To be a Christian is to be set free in Christ. Choose to exercise that freedom by not retaliating when someone wrongs or insults you this week.
- ▶ **Care for the persecuted church.** Connect with a ministry that serves as an advocate for churches and individuals undergoing persecution. Support that ministry through prayer; consider giving financially, as well.



Never lose sight of the goodness of God. Even in the midst of difficult situations, choose to bring honor and glory to Him before the world by enduring with Him in complete trust.

Traveling Light



The airplane cabin was almost completely quiet, except for the occasional clicking of a flight attendant's heels, responding to a passenger's call for hot tea or a pillow. Night had fallen across the vast expanse of sky somewhere between London and Johannesburg—at whatever point along that trajectory we were. And as my husband, Jerry,

finished the last sip from his coffee and leaned back against the headrest, I turned to gaze out the window at the thick, velvety darkness, studded everywhere with tiny sequins of starlight.



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My group's prayer requests

A series of 15 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

My thoughts