



Session 3: 1 Peter 2:13–25

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, & doing.

Main Idea: As the people of God, we display the good news of the gospel through submission to the authorities in our lives.

Head Change: To understand that Christ’s example of submitting to God’s will is the prime motivation for our obedience.

Heart Change: To crave obedience to God above our own personal comfort.

Life Change: To reconsider our current attitudes toward authority and bring them into alignment with God’s Word where needed.

OPEN

Have you ever been asked to do something that you didn’t want to do (confront a friend, study on the weekend, complete a frustrating work assignment, etc.)? Looking back, was what you were asked to do something that would harm you? What did your reaction reveal about your priorities?

We’ve all had a time where we know we have to do something that we don’t really want to do. Our spiritual lives are no exception. The Christian life does not come naturally because it’s one in which we are called to die to ourselves. As we study Scripture, we will all find certain portions more difficult to grasp than others, but it’s important that we continue to embrace God’s truth trusting that He has given it to us for our good and his glory.

READ

Read 1 Peter 2:13–25.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Kyle’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

How does Kyle describe the Roman government during the time of Peter? How did it treat Christians?

How does Kyle define “submission”?

What is the reason for why we should learn to submit?

Show Session 3: 1 Peter 2:13–25 (14 minutes)

DISCUSS

Through our first two sessions, we've talked a lot about holiness. We've discussed what it is, why it's important, and how it speaks to the unbelieving world. In general, the idea of walking in obedience to the Lord is an attractive idea. We want to please him. However, obedience becomes much more challenging when brought into the practical realm where it begins to challenge behaviors and impulses that seem right to us. Today's lesson will introduce a relatable example of one of these behaviors, namely, that of submission.

Before we get into our passage for today, someone read 1 Peter 2:11.

What is the main principle Peter commands in this verse?

Obviously, that command can express itself in many ways. We all have different sinful desires, and the Holy Spirit will faithfully bring them to light for our spiritual maturity. But the reason we want to revisit this verse now is because it's going to preview where we're headed for the next few weeks. Starting in 2:13, Peter makes a point to explain to his readers a number of practical ways to "abstain from sinful desires."

Someone read 1 Peter 2:13–17.

How do you react to the Bible's call for submission? What kind of emotions does it spark in you? Why do you think you feel the way you do?

PEEK AT THE GREEK

In verse 13, Peter uses the term *hupotasso*, which is regularly translated "submit" throughout the New Testament. For some time, the idea of submission in general has had to contend with a negative reaction and for good reason. Many throughout history have used biblical calls for submission to abuse women, slaves, and the impoverished in ways that clearly contradict Scripture. And that is not at all what Peter has in view here. The term *hupotasso* is not a synonym for "obey." Rather, it reflects a voluntary decision to honor another in a particular way. In no way does submission suggest inferiority of any kind. It's important to note that Peter's focus here is not concerned primarily with transforming society. Instead, he is focused on transforming individuals in terms of their relationship with Christ. Those committed to a faithful pursuit of Christ will naturally impact society in a positive way.

What reasons does Peter give in verses 13 and 15 for submitting to civil authorities? (It is not because of any inherent goodness in human government, but because of God's sovereignty. We obey God's will when we do so.)

What are some examples of "sinful desires" that keep us from honoring civil authorities?

When we consider Scripture as a whole, it's clear that Peter isn't advocating blind trust in government, as he himself disobeyed religious authorities according to Acts 5:27–32. Rather, his point is that we ought to prioritize obedience to God above our sinful desire to do things on our own terms. We obey because of our relationship with the Lord, not in spite of it. During the session, Kyle said, "As the world becomes increasingly hostile, the Church must become increasingly holy."

In what ways do you see the world acting with hostility toward the Church? What would it look like for the Church to respond in a way that reflects holiness? How could you, specifically, respond to hostility in a way that reflects holiness?

As we learned in the session, Christians during Peter's time were falsely accused of insurrection, atheism, incest, cannibalism, and other forms of immorality. Yet, they continued to faithfully obey God by serving, giving generously, and displaying kindness. Doing so disproved the prejudices of their accusers, even if it did not resolve their suffering.

How do you tend to respond when you are misunderstood by others? Based on your past experiences, what could you do differently in the future to demonstrate love and kindness, even in such injustice?

Again, our obedience is not a blind one. Sometimes, obeying God will mean disobeying civil authorities, but we should be wary of mistaking God's will for our own sinful desires. As Kyle said, our guiding principle should be to follow the ruling authorities in our lives so long as their plans and policies do not oppose God's will.

GO DEEPER

Read more about how to discern God's will in the following verses: Rom. 12:1–2; Heb. 1:1–2

How is God's will described in Romans 12:2? ("Good, pleasing, and perfect")

How do we discern God's will? (Through the renewing of our minds)

What is our primary way of having our minds renewed according to Hebrews 1:2? (Through what God has spoken to us in his Son)

When it comes to the idea of God's will, we often over-spiritualize it looking for a burning bush or writing on the wall. The reality is that God has given us everything we need in his Word. Certainly, He is able to speak in miraculous ways, but He primarily and consistently speaks to us through his Word, which leads to the renewing of our minds and the discernment of his will.

What are some examples of plans or policies that Christians might not be able to follow out of obedience to God?

In Acts 5:27–32, Peter provides us with an important example of faithfulness. Even in his disobedience, he remains respectful while maintaining his commitment to God. He does not disobey simply to rebel, but because his faithfulness to the Lord depended on it. That's an important distinction that must be true of all of our own civil disobedience.

Now, let's take a look at the other form of submission Peter discusses in this week's passage. Someone read 1 Peter 2:18–25.

How'd you react to Peter's instructions to slaves? What emotions or questions does it prompt in you?

Many struggle with instructions like these, as they seem to condone the practice of slavery. But let's be clear that nowhere does Scripture condone the oppressive practice of slavery—not even in these verses. Rather, the New Testament authors wrote with a different focus in mind. Rather than calling for revolutionary actions that would overthrow social systems, they concerned themselves primarily with the heart of Christians and their relationship with God.

In other words, Peter's primary concern is not with the transformation of society, but with the transformation of individuals within that society through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

How should this focus of prioritizing individual salvation and obedience over societal transformation shape the way you apply your faith to everyday life?

Both personal and societal transformation is important, but Scripture tells us that the brokenness of the world does not begin with systems, but with the human heart. That's why the focus starts with individuals. We can reorganize, legislate, and overhaul systems, but they'll still be run by sinners. Only Christ can offer hope for lasting change and through our relationship with him we can choose faithfulness even in oppressive circumstances.

Kyle described biblical submission as a voluntary decision that flows from a joyful spirit. **Do you think of submission in this way? How should it influence the way you think about the impact of your individual faith on others?**

As Kyle explained in the session, biblical slavery differs from American slavery in a number of ways—most significantly in that it was not fueled by kidnapping or based on a particular ethnicity. That said, the Greco-Roman system was no less brutal or oppressive, which makes it somewhat difficult to draw a reasonable application from this text. Likely, none of us exists in circumstances like those of slaves during biblical times. But it's very likely that many of us serve "masters" in the form of supervisors, managers, and bosses. The principle Peter writes to slaves applies in the same way for those of us in the workplace, whether or not we have a respectable employer.

How would you describe your employer? In what ways do you find it easy to submit to him or her? What are some ways you find it difficult?

What's at stake in the way we choose to interact with our employers (see vv. 19–20)?

Before finishing up this session, don't forget the truth we've talked about since day one—who you are determines what you will do. Peter never tells us what to do without explaining why we ought to do it.

According to verse 21, why should Christians learn to submit? (Because of Christ's example)

Based on the description of Jesus's example in verses 22–25, where do you see the most opportunity for growth in your own life?

Impulsive behavior is natural and easy. We've all had times where we have chosen to retaliate rather than forgive, to hurl insults instead of extending mercy. **Where can you choose not to retaliate or get offended by a circumstance in your life? How practically can you demonstrate the example of Christ—displaying grace over getting defensive—in this situation?**

LAST WORD

Peter's teaching on submission in these verses is simple, but nothing about it is easy. Often, it means choosing to follow leaders who abuse their power and create environments of hostility and insecurity. Everything in us cries out for change, for justice. And while there's nothing wrong with that urge, the Bible calls us to give careful consideration to our response. Does it demonstrate the faithfulness of Christ? Or merely our human desires?

Throughout history, the Church has flourished not primarily based on persuasive arguments, but by demonstrating the love of Christ toward its enemies. As He hung upon the cross, Jesus cried out for his Father to forgive his murderers. And Peter tells us that Christ's example is one we are called to follow.

As you go about your week, let this call resonate in your heart. Ask the Lord to help you see opportunities to practice this kind of obedience and courageously follow him as He grants them to you.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: If you find yourself experiencing bitterness or resistance toward the topic of today's session, ask God to soften your heart and give you the ability to see the goodness of his Word and to delight in obedience.

Praise: Take a moment to stop and consider the example Jesus set by coming into this world, subjecting himself to abuse and ultimately crucifixion at the hands of people He created. Praise him for laying aside his own comforts for the sake of our salvation.

Honor: Think of a practical way that you can honor a leader in your government or in your workplace and do so over the course of this next week.