

DID GOD REALLY SAY?

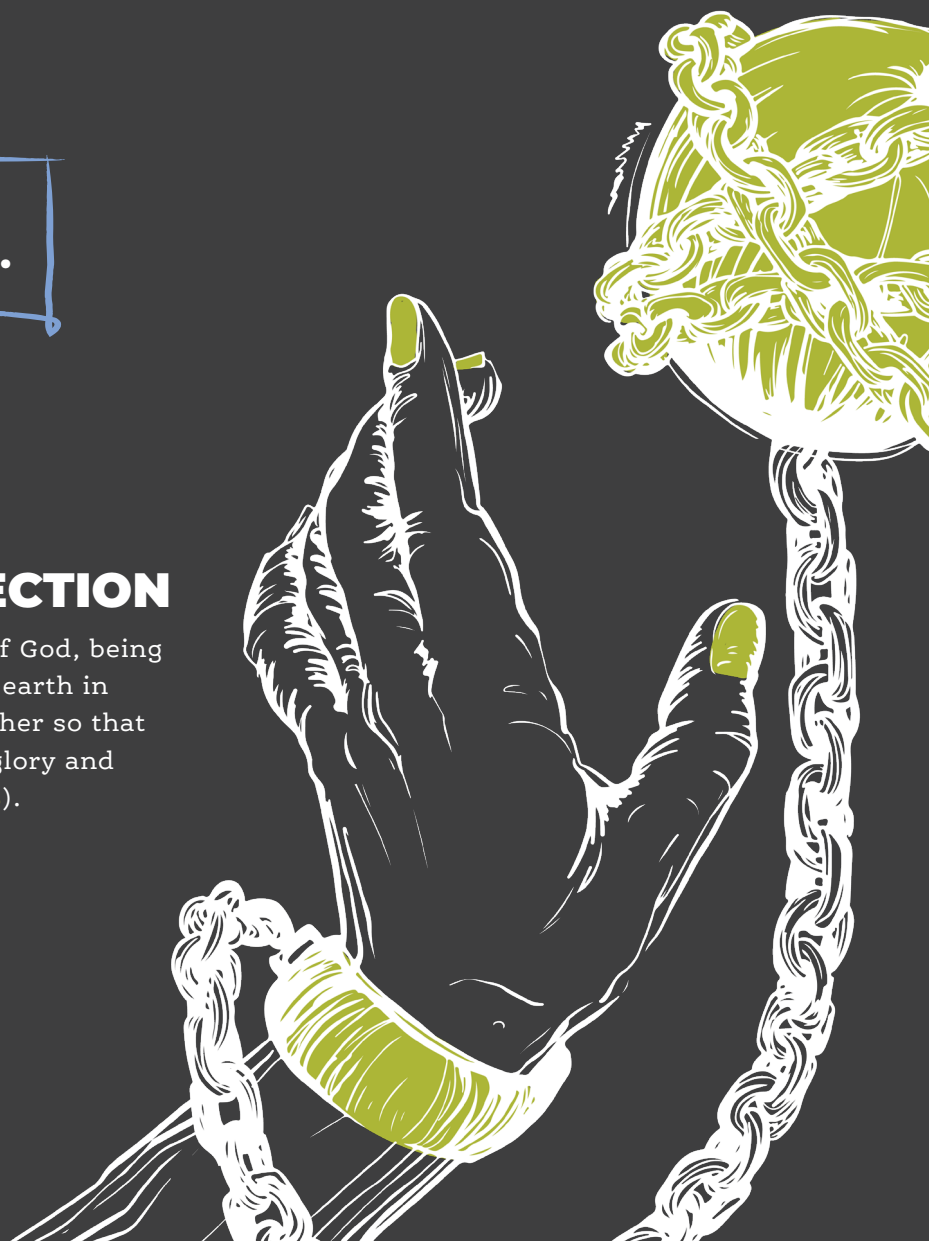
MAIN POINT.

We can **trust** God's
boundaries are **good**.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus is the perfect image of God, being God Himself. Jesus came to earth in perfect obedience to the Father so that He might bring God all the glory and honor He deserves (**Heb. 1:3**).



FREEDOM IN THE BOUNDARIES

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. We encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Genesis 2:8

Genesis 3:7

GOD'S BOUNDARIES ARE GOOD

GENESIS 2:8-9,15-17

8 The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed.
9 The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . .

15 The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."

BELIEVING GOD'S WORD HELPS US AVOID SIN

GENESIS 3:1-7

1 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. 3 But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "No! You will certainly not die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God's Word. As you do, may He teach you new and wonderful truths (Ps. 119:18).

We can **trust** God's
boundaries are **good**.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

GOD'S BOUNDARIES ARE GOOD

GENESIS 2:15-17

"The instruction of the Lord is given as a positive expression of God's goodness rather than a harsh restriction (v. 16b). . . . This generosity is heightened by the following Hebrew construction translated 'you are free to eat,' which could also be translated 'you may eat freely' (NRSV). This strong affirmation indicates that the provision of God for the first couple is plentiful and to be enjoyed liberally by them. But freedom has no meaning without prohibition; the boundary for Adam is but one tree. This prohibition, however, is stated in the strongest terms, as was the provision. . . . The preemptive warning is necessary because, unlike the other members of the created order, mankind alone has the potential for crossing moral boundaries. Out of God's goodness and mercy he informs the man that the consequence of disobedience is death; what is at stake is whether he will choose to trust God's words."⁵

BELIEVING GOD'S WORD HELPS US AVOID SIN

GENESIS 3:5

"In this verse the Evil One questioned the goodness of God when he declared, God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Satan had already hinted that God must not be good if he had restricted mankind in any way. His next attack was consistent with what he had already implied. God reveals his character through his Word. When the serpent questioned God's word, he questioned God's goodness. When he questioned God's goodness, he questioned God's word."⁶

GENESIS 3:6

"Failure to appreciate God's goodness leads to distrust of his goodness. Distrust leads to dissatisfaction and finally to disobedience. God's prohibitions as well as his provisions are for our good. But mankind wants to be independent, to go his own way, to be subject to no one. God has always asked people to believe and trust his word. God has always asked people to believe that he is sovereign and good. His desire is that we trust him so we will live abundantly (John 10:10; 17:3). God has always asked people to believe that true satisfaction comes by obeying him and respecting his prohibitions—to live by faith, not by sight."⁷



CONTEXT

At this point in the biblical narrative, we've already seen that God is good and everything He does is for our good. He established Eden and placed man there to live and work, giving him authority over the plants and animals. God's words, "**you are free**" (Gen. 2:16), tell us something critical: **the boundaries God puts in place are for our freedom**. We see humankind's first boundary: not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We don't know how much time had passed since God created humans in His image, but things took a tragic turn when the serpent asked Eve a simple question: "**Did God really say?**" Satan still uses this tactic today.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



the goodness of creation

In Genesis 1, God repeatedly affirmed that all of His creation was good, even "very good" (1:31). It is good, in God's judgment, because He created it for a purpose it fulfilled—to reflect and display the **good character of the Creator**. Therefore, sin and evil should not be seen as a foundational part of the creation but as a corruption of it. While the creation has been marred and distorted because of sin, it is still good in the hands of God and serves His purpose of proclaiming His glory in the world. God's people should affirm and seek to preserve the goodness of God's creation (Gen. 2:15).

PRAY

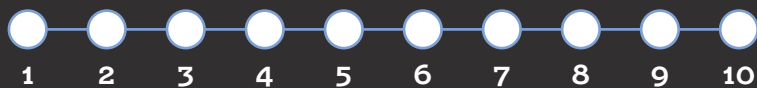
LORD, HELP US DISPLAY WHAT IT LOOKS
LIKE TO LIVE IN FREEDOM AS WE POINT OUR
STUDENTS TO FREEDOM IN YOUR SON.



KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

On a scale of 1-10, how difficult is it to obey those who are in charge in your life?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

MY RULES

SUPPLIES LIST: NOTE CARDS, WRITING UTENSILS, DRY ERASE MARKER

Give each student a note card and writing utensil. Invite them to think of a simple rule they would create if they were in charge. Remind students that these can be silly, but they must be appropriate. Collect the notecards, read them aloud, and allow students to vote for the ones they agree with. Tally the marks for each rule and discuss at the end why the most popular rules are things students actually want.

Here's the thing: Right now, you mostly follow rules other people have made because you're not in charge. Sometimes this can make you feel like you don't have freedom, but the truth is that good rules are in place to protect us and help us live well. God's rules keep us safe spiritually and help us live for Him.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Sometimes the church doesn't talk enough about doubt or treats it like it doesn't exist. Maybe if we ignore our doubt long enough it'll go away, right? No. Here's something that needs to be said: Believers can struggle with doubt. Why? Because we're imperfect and vulnerable. Struggling with doubt doesn't mean we don't love God. So, what do we do when we feel the crack of doubt beginning to form concerning who God is or what He has said in His Word? We take it to Him. Adam and Eve didn't do this. They gave in to the doubt and allowed Satan to twist God's truth. But you can take your doubts to God because He can handle them. It's okay to ask questions. So, ask God to show you what's true. Instead of ignoring your doubt, wrestle with it to work through it.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

We can **trust** God's boundaries are **good**.

GOD'S BOUNDARIES ARE GOOD

READ GENESIS 2:8-9,15-17



WHAT'S THE POINT OF BOUNDARIES? WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD THAT HE GIVES US BOUNDARIES?

Boundaries usually keep us safe—physically and emotionally. God is our heavenly Father. Earthly fathers give boundaries to their children, disciplining them when those boundaries are crossed. God loves us infinitely more than our parents do. God wants His children to live abundantly (John 10:10). In His perfect wisdom, God knows what will rob us of this abundant life—what will draw us away from Him. **Because He loves us and He is good, God gives us boundaries to protect us from spiritual harm and to help us live in a way that glorifies Him.**

WHY IS IT SOMETIMES HARD TO OBEY GOD INSTEAD OF GOING OUR OWN WAY?

Obedying those in charge, or submitting to authority, isn't always fun, right? Things unraveled in Eden because people disobeyed God. And honestly, we've struggled with authority ever since. Because of sin, we don't like the idea of someone telling us what we can or can't do. Some of us don't like it because we've been hurt by bad examples of authority. It may feel like we don't have freedom, and we want to choose our own way. This could look like choosing to give in to sexual temptation, lying, or gossiping. We fall into a trap of believing we're entitled to live the way we want to live. **While we do have free will, we'll never have authority.** Even when we choose to disobey God, we're not in control.

HOW CAN BOUNDARIES ACTUALLY LEAD TO FREEDOM?

Godly boundaries do not equal restriction. The boundaries God gives us in His Word are designed to help us enjoy the freedom found by living according to the Spirit. Instead, **real restriction is found in living outside of God's Word.** Biblically, bondage (restriction) means living according to our sinful nature (Rom. 8:2). Sin is like a cage that holds us captive to our own desires. When we commit to living according to God's Word and following Him in obedience, we find true freedom from our sin nature.

BELIEVING GOD'S WORDS HELPS US AVOID SIN

READ GENESIS 3:1-7

HOW DID SATAN DISTORT GOD'S WORDS IN VERSE 1?

The serpent used doubt as a weapon against Eve. He asked, "Did God really say?" (Gen. 3:1). With these words, **the serpent planted a seed that led Eve to question God's words and His character.** God was clear in His command: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But the serpent twisted God's words, prompting Eve to doubt what she'd heard. She even exaggerated God's command, making it seem much harsher than it was.

HOW DO PEOPLE DISTORT GOD'S WORD TODAY?

WHY DO YOU THINK SO MANY REJECT ITS AUTHORITY?

Culture often twists God's Word. People—even believers—will take Scripture out of context to justify certain behaviors. For example, there is currently an attack on the Biblical views of gender, sex, and identity. Unbelievers don't want to submit to God's authority because the Spirit isn't living within them (1 Cor. 2:14). As believers, we must always defend God's Word as truth and allow it to have authority in our lives. **We must also know God's Word in order to detect when it's being distorted.**

WHEN HAS SATAN CAUSED YOU TO DOUBT ONE OF GOD'S COMMANDS?

Maybe you think some of God's commands are outdated. Culture dictates what is "normal." For example, profanity seems widely acceptable. We hear it everywhere, but God is clear about using language to glorify Him and build others up (Eph. 4:29). We allow what's "normal" for society to make us doubt the relevance of God's Word. **But God's character and His Word are steady. We can depend on Him to lead us to truth and freedom.** Instead of relying on society, we must look to God's Word for guidance.

WRAP-UP

✝ **DOES YOUR LIFE REFLECT THAT YOU BELIEVE GOD'S WORD? EXPLAIN.**

If we look to God's Word as authority—if we really believe it—then the way we live will look different from the way the world lives. This might mean we make different choices, like glorifying God with our words, having godly standards in relationships, or sharing the gospel. This will mean we love people—even those rejected by society. God's Spirit living within us will draw us to the Lord. Here's the deal: living under God's authority is a good thing! God's commands and boundaries come from His goodness and His love, from His holiness and His desire for us to be holy and experience freedom. **God is worthy of our obedience.** His authority is pure and trustworthy. When we surrender our will, we show the world how to follow Christ. Sometimes this obedience will go against the flow of society, but the Holy Spirit gives us the power to live out God's Word.