



02/12/2023 "Is God Cruel"

Christianity has often been boiled down to a set of rules that, when followed, please God and result in our acceptance or access to heaven. When interpreted this way, it becomes easy to depict God as harsh, demanding, manipulative and cruel. However, not all boundaries are cruel. In fact, for relationships to thrive boundaries have to exist.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word "boundaries"? Where have you seen examples of good boundaries? What about examples of bad boundaries.
2. Have you ever thought of the laws in the Bible as a set of healthy boundaries? What are the similarities or differences?

In Luke 3:19, John the Baptist confronts a well-known leader named Herod. Luke places this confrontation directly after the crowd's question, "What should we do?" in Luke 3:3-14. John draws on a long history of biblical boundaries that were intended to restore humanity's relationship with God and others.

Read Psalm 19:7-8

1. What four words does this Psalm use to describe boundaries? What connotations do these different words have? What do the words have in common or what differences do you see in the terms?
2. What pictures come to mind when you think of God giving out commands or boundaries? What has your experience with church been like when it comes to boundaries and laws?
3. In Psalm 19, the author describes several positive outcomes. Which one is most intriguing to you or sought after right now? Can you think of a few boundaries or biblical commands that you could see resulting in these positive outcomes?
4. Read Galatians 5:13-18. It seems that Paul places a boundary on freedom, what does he say should be the boundary?
5. How does serving others impose a boundary on those who are serving?
6. Pastor John concluded his message talking about how boundaries need to be placed around the pursuit of power and the pursuit of love. What would it look like to place a boundary around each of these? What can you do to pursue each of these in a healthier way?
7. What areas of your life right now are suffering because you have ignored boundaries? Take time to pray for that area of your life as a group.
8. What is one boundary you would like to partner with God to implement?