

Obedience

The Challenges We Face Today

One of the challenges that followers of Jesus face is being able to walk in complete obedience to His teachings. His last command to His disciples was for them to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything He commanded.

- We may not believe we can be obedient to everything Jesus commanded.
- Often we do not know where to begin because there are so many commands and teachings of Jesus in the New Testament.
- We are trying to live the standard Jesus taught through our own strength and we get frustrated and discouraged because we often fail.
- We cannot teach others to obey if we ourselves are not obeying.

We must take time to examine and understand what obedience is and how we, as His disciples, can live in complete obedience to everything Jesus commanded.

Lesson Truth

Everything about living the Christian faith hinges on obedience. Without obedience our faith will unravel and our Christian life will disintegrate into worldliness. Apart from obedience to Jesus, it is impossible to be Christian in our living.



Matthew 28:19-20 ESV “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is for you to choose obedience to God as the highest calling of the Christian life and to walk in obedience to all His commands and teachings.

Lesson Discussion

Called to Obedience



Romans 1:5-6 ESV “...through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,”

It is a wonderful thing to receive God’s salvation and eternal life. Once we do that, we must then enter a life of obedience to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master.

It would seem if God really loved us, He would give us a lot of freedom to live as we want. Certainly we are mature enough to make our own decisions and do things the way we think they should be done.

Fortunately, God knows better than we do and He is keenly aware that, left to our own devices, we can make a mess of our lives, even if our intentions are good.

As we follow Jesus by obeying His Word, we find that our lives fall into place exactly as God intended. We will also find peace, joy, and contentment, and will be equipped for every good work that He leads us into.

What Is Obedience?

Obedience is simply the act of obeying. To obey is to do what one has been instructed or commanded to do.

We are going to look at four characteristics of obedience:

- Willingness to obey.

- Understanding what you are to obey.
- The ability to obey
- Obeying.

We don't normally think of these four aspects every time we do something we are told to do, but each one is necessary.

Before we look at these four characteristics of obedience, let's learn why obedience to God is so important and why we should obey Him in everything.

Why Should We Obey?

Why is it so important to God that we obey Him? What value does God find in our obedience? Many people on the earth seem to do fine without obeying Him or even knowing Him.

God created us and knows what is best for us. He always wants the best for His creation, but His creation, left to its own means, tends toward self destruction.



1 John 5:3-4 ESV “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

God values the love of His creation. When we obey God, it is a demonstration of our love for Him. If we are not interested in obeying God, it is an indication that we do not really love God.

There is another reason why we should obey God. Why do we teach our children to obey laws, rules and parental expectations? We know, left to their own means, they will do harm to themselves and others.

When our children disobey us, we discipline them so they will understand the importance of

obedience. We do this because we love them and we want them to live good, productive lives.

The bible can be viewed as a sort of owner's manual for life. If you follow its guidelines and instructions, it will ensure the product works as intended and will not be harmed by misuse.



2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God^a may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Ungodly, unholy, and wicked behavior is the result of disobedience to God. These behaviors are contrary to God's nature and can never be part of His eternal kingdom.

God disciplines His children because He loves them and knows that if they continue to pursue disobedience, they will soon turn their backs on Him.

When we are disciplined by God, it is hard for us to see God's love, just like when we were children and could not see our parent's love when they disciplined us.

So why should we obey God? Because it demonstrates our love for Him and it will ensure we experience life as God intends for us to experience it.



John 14:23-24 ESV “Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.’”

John 14:15 ESV “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

When we choose to follow Jesus Christ, we walk in obedience motivated by love. Our desire is to please our Lord and to live our lives exactly according to His will.



Romans 6:16-18 ESV “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”

Obedience is not something that comes naturally. We must discipline ourselves for righteousness so that we remain slaves to righteousness not slaves to sin. It is often a painful process, but the resulting benefit is more than worth the effort.

When we are born again and receive the Holy Spirit, we need not sin anymore. You can still submit yourself to sin and stay a slave to sin, but you need not. You can just as easily not sin and submit yourself as a slave of righteousness.

Attitude of Willingness

The first characteristic of obedience is an attitude of willingness. When we were little children, there were times when we were happy to do what our parents asked of us. However, along the way something changed and all of a sudden we became independent and began challenging our parents’ commands.

We have to become little children again in our attitude of willingness to do what God tells us to do, because we want to please Him. This shift in thinking is not easy after having been an adult for so long and being used to doing things our own way.

Having a willing attitude to obey God is critical if we are going to live in obedience to Him. If we have chosen to follow Jesus by giving up the right to ourselves and have submitted to His will, we will have a willing attitude of obedience. We will want to obey and our intent is to obey.



Luke 8:19-21 ESV “Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.’”

If you have a sense of not wanting to obey or do not intend to obey in one or more areas of your life, you have a relationship problem with Jesus. You have not given up the right to yourself to Him and have not submitted your life to Him in those areas.



1 John 2:3-6 ESV “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

Anytime you sense an attitude of unwillingness to obey God, stop everything, and take a prayer break with the Holy Spirit. Having to deal with the guilt of disobedience is a lot harder than choosing to be obedient in the first place.

God’s Expectation

The second characteristic of obedience is that we understand what is expected. In order to obey a command or instruction, you need to know what it is that you are to do.

There must be a standard so you can know if you were obedient or not. God does not allow

each person to have their own standard. He sets the same standard for everyone, and that standard is clearly identified in His Word.

If you do not read and study God's Word, you cannot know His standard. Not knowing His standard is not an acceptable excuse with God for disobedience. He has made His standard readily available to all believers.



Matthew 7:24-27 ESV "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Unless we actually live the commands of Jesus and put them into practice through obedience, we are building our spiritual foundation on sand and it will come crashing down.

Spiritual laziness in prayer and in reading the Word leaves us wide open to be deceived by Satan. If we do not know God's truth, we cannot live it. If we are not living His truth, then by default we are living Satan's lies.

The last command of Jesus to His disciples was to go and make disciples, teaching them to obey everything He commanded. That is exactly what they did and that is exactly what we must do. But we cannot teach someone to obey if we are ignorant of His commands or are not living them ourselves.

We must soak ourselves in the Word of God so that we know God's standard and are living it. Apart from this we cannot follow Him as His disciples and we cannot lead others to become true disciples.

As you spend time in prayer with the Holy Spirit and as you read the Scriptures, you will become aware of any disobedience in your life.

Some of the common sin areas where we demonstrate disobedience to Jesus include: unforgiveness, sensuality, impatience, pride, inappropriate anger, selfishness, lack of self control, rudeness, harsh joking, too much time spent in personal pursuits, worry, doubt, little time spent in prayer and in the Word, and uncontrolled thinking.



Romans 6:12-14 ESV "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

Ability to Obey

The third characteristic of obedience is having the ability to obey. There is only one question to ask in regards to the ability to obey God: would God command us to do something that was impossible for us to do?

It would be a pretty cruel and unloving God that would expect us to do something we were incapable of doing. God's standard is a standard that anyone who has been born again and has received the Holy Spirit can and must live.



1 Peter 1:1-2 ESV "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you."

Sometimes we feel like it is impossible to obey God in a particular area and we would like to believe we cannot, but the truth is, we can.

God can free us from anything that has a hold on our lives if we are willing to see such things as a deadly enemy that we absolutely cannot continue to put up with. If we let the Holy Spirit help us overcome that enemy, we will find freedom.

However, if we long after that behavior and the circumstances surrounding the behavior, God will not deliver us from it. He only delivers us from our enemies, not our friends. When we choose to terminate a friendship with sinful behavior, God can help us get free and stay free.

Here is the bottom line: We *can* obey everything God commanded. If we are not obeying God in a particular area, it is because we do not intend to obey God.

We must see through Satan's lie that we cannot obey God. We must challenge that lie by knowing the truth in God's Word, listening to the Holy Spirit, and constantly giving up the right to ourselves to Jesus. Then we can beat Satan at his own game.

The Act of Obeying

The fourth characteristic of obedience is the act of obeying. When we have a willingness to obey, when we know the standard that we are to obey, and when we know that we have the ability to obey, the only thing left is to obey.



Revelations 3:3 ESV "Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you."

We often argue with God and justify why we cannot do what God says. There is no arguing with God. The second you begin to justify your

own view, you have taken the first step toward disobedience.



1 John 2:3-6 ESV "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

When you know the right thing to do in a situation, it doesn't matter if it is the most unreasonable or even foolish thing to do, you do it without question. That is the only safe position to be in. Anything else is disobedience and will immediately put you out of relationship with God.

When we chose to follow Jesus, we made Him our commander. His orders are firm and must not be questioned. If we give up the right to ourselves in abandonment to Him, we have no right to do or say anything except what He shows us to do.

You might think that sounds a little unreasonable. But think about this. If you do something your way, you are responsible for the outcome and result. If you do something God tells you to do, He is responsible for the outcome and result. How good is that?



Philippians 2:12-13 ESV "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

If you do it God's way, no matter what the outcome is, good or bad, God is pleased with you and you don't have to worry about what will happen as a result.

It is entirely in His hands, and that is where you leave it. All you have to do is the next right thing He shows you to do, and leave the outcome to Him.

When we choose to follow Jesus Christ as His disciple, we will still be confronted with the temptation to disobey God and do things our own way. Because we are born again, we have supernatural power to obey God.



1 John 3:21-24 ESV “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

Self-dependence will still want to dominate our lives and we will discover areas we have not given control of to Jesus. The Holy Spirit will work through your conscience to identify these areas.



Galatians 5:7 ESV “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”

Obedience is a choice. We must discipline our lives to choose righteousness (doing what is right) over sin (disobedience). If we do not discipline ourselves for obedience, we will soon stop following Jesus as His disciple.



John 15:9-11 ESV “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These

things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

As a disciple and follower of Jesus, we have no option except to obey everything Jesus commanded. We cannot be independent and captains of our own ship. If we do, we will end up going down with our ship.

We must have a willingness to obey, we must know what it is God expects us to do, we must remember that we can do everything God's says, and then we must simply obey.



One Step for Living This Truth

The foundation of the *One Step* series you have been reading is to be able to live God's truth, one truth at a time, one step at a time.

Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to allow the truth taught in this lesson to be lived in your own personal life.

You only have to do this one step to master this lesson. Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do the one step as directed below.

You must learn to walk in obedience to God consistently. You can never teach others the teachings and commands of Jesus if you are not living them yourself. You will never be able to carry out God's call to make disciples if you are not His disciple through trust and obedience.

ACTION STEPS

Continue to spend at least 30 minutes in prayer and in the Word each day. During this time reaffirm your desire and intent to walk in obedience to

everything He shows you, because you love Him.

You will not obey God unless you love Him. If you are not obeying out of love for Him you will find it difficult to overcome disobedience in your life.

Use your quiet time to focus on your relationship with Him and what He has done for you to deserve your love.

During your prayer time ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify those areas in your life that are your biggest challenge in regards to obeying the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ. Write them down.

Work on one area of disobedience at a time beginning with the one that you feel is having the greatest impact on your relationship with the Lord

You must intend to overcome in these areas of disobedience. You must understand that you do not have an option to continue living in disobedience. As a disciple of Jesus, you must choose to walk as He walked.

You do have the potential to obey everything Jesus taught or else Jesus would not command obedience. Once you have victory over disobedience in at least two areas of your life, you will have completed this lesson.

However, you must continue to work on additional areas of disobedience that the Holy Spirit shows you as you

continue to follow Jesus and as you continue with the One Step study.

Read a chapter in the Gospels each day. Write down thoughts or Scriptures that relate to obedience.

As you continue to practice living this truth, you may need to come back to this lesson often. Don't be in a rush to start the next lesson.

Even if it takes several weeks to get this truth integrated into your life, keep it as your primary focus until you feel you are living this truth.

Remember, the most common problem with Christians today is that they know many truths about the Christian life, but are not able to live them. Make sure you are solidly living this truth before attempting to tackle the next truth.

Bumper Sticker Summary

Obedience is simply living your life according to God's standard. You will obey Him when you truly love Him and trust Him. Your love for God will be demonstrated through your obedience.

Illustrations for Living This Truth

Todd was raised in church and attended church most of his life. He knew all the bible stories and many of the truths of the faith. Yet there were many areas in his life that he knew was not right with God's standard. He noticed that most Christians had similar challenges in their lives as well.

Todd did not like the word obedience because he was taught that grace covers everything and therefore believed that obedience was an outdated concept. He did not realize that his disobedience was a barrier between him and God. He thought that it was not a big deal with God because grace covered the areas of disobedience in his life.

Things like sensuality and worry; a hot temper; being rude and unkind, being selfish and self-seeking; acting in an unloving way towards others; being judgmental and critical; grumbling and complaining; as well as impatience were some of his shortcomings.

He never really had any peace or contentment, and was frustrated and upset a lot about things in his life. He thought that was the normal Christian life because so many others also had those shortcomings. He figured he was no worse than others in the church.

Todd had just begun a relationship with a girl named Tami. He liked her because she was different. She did not seem to have many of those shortcomings in her life and one day he asked her about that. She had also been raised in a Christian home and was active in the church they were attending together.

She shared with him that several years ago she realized that the shortcomings in her life were displeasing to God and they were not in accord with God's standard. She began to read her bible so she could know for herself what the real Christian life should look like. She had never been taught and had never realized the importance of obedience to God.

As realized that obedience was only possible when trust was there. She also realized that her level of love for God, God measured by her obedience to Him. And she worked on trusting God and loving Him more, obedience became a delight because she knew it please God.

She told Todd that she still have areas in her life that God was helping her to get better at. She told him it takes a long time to work our wrong beliefs, wrong attitudes and develop a devotional life that encouraged her in her obedience. That made sense to Todd and he asked her if she would study the bible together with him so he could learn to please God through learning to trust and love God in the same way. After several months he had more peace and contentment that he had ever had.

Scriptures on Obedience



John 14:15-17 ESV “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

2 John 1:4-6 ESV “I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. And this is love that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.”

1 Peter 1:22 ESV “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,”

Philippians 2:12-13 ESV “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Romans 6:16 ESV “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness”

Romans 16:25-27 ESV “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience

of faith— to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

Hebrews 5:7-9 ESV “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,”

1 Peter 1:3 ESV “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:”

1 Peter 1:22-23 ESV “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;”