

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



The Requirements of Obedience

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 32:8-11 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Joshua 1:9; 6:1-20 | Psalm 119:105 | Proverbs 3:5-8
Isaiah 64:4 | John 16:13 | Acts 5:28-29; 16:5-10

SUMMARY

We all need guidance now and then, but whom are we allowing to influence us?

There are many strange voices in the world clamoring for our attention and offering to help us with whatever concerns us. However, all these voices could lead us astray. The only one who can give us perfect guidance is our heavenly Father. But to receive His instructions, we must listen, trust, and obey Him.

SERMON POINTS

Obedience can be defined as doing what God says, how he says, and when He says to do it.

All three of these aspects are required, or it's disobedience. To intentionally ignore what the Lord says and do what we desire in the way we want and according to our time schedule is outright rebellion. In essence we are telling Him that our way is better, and we want control of our lives. Now, we might try to excuse our deliberate disobedience by claiming it was just a mistake, but in reality, we are rebelling against almighty God.

Life at its best is only found in obedience to the Lord. He created us, loves us, and knows exactly how we should live and what we should do. Therefore, to turn our backs on His plans for our lives is equivalent to rejecting the best He could possibly give us. The wisest thing we can do is to submit to the Lord and learn what is required to live in obedience to Him.

Obedience requires that we . . . “not lean on your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5).

- **Meditate upon God’s Word.** Since the Bible is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, we need to carefully consider what it says so we won’t stumble or lose our way in life (Ps. 119:105). Meditation includes reading the Word, thinking about it, and asking God questions regarding its meaning and application. The world constantly bombards us with messages designed to lead us astray, but when we make the Scriptures a vital part of each day, our hearts and minds are protected and tuned in to the Lord so we can discern His guidance.
- **Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.** God has given us the awesome gift of His Spirit who lives within us. He’s the one who convicted us of sin and opened our hearts to accept Jesus’ wonderful offer of salvation. Now one of His jobs is to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). When we read the Bible, He helps us interpret it. Then throughout the day, He reminds us of those truths or convicts us if we sin. No one can live the Christian life without Him. Only as we listen to the Spirit will we become Christlike and accomplish what God desires.
- **Be sensitive to God’s timing.** Whatever the Lord tells us to do is to be done according to His time schedule, not ours. Isaiah 64:4 says that the Lord acts in behalf of those who wait for Him. If we’re consistently listening to God through His Word and His Spirit, over a period of time, He will train us to discern not only what He’s saying, but when He wants us to act. Since God is omniscient, He

knows the perfect timing for every situation. If we get ahead of Him or lag behind, we'll miss what He had in mind. To help us, He's given us an internal timer in the person of the Holy Spirit. When we're sensitive to His voice, He shows us when to move ahead.

■ **Walk where the way is not always clear.**

Obedience would be much easier if we knew exactly where we're going, but sometimes God calls us to step out in faith when the way is not clear. When doubts arise, we should remember that the sovereign God of the universe gave us the assignment. Proverbs 3:5 reminds us to trust in Him and not in our own limited understanding. If He chose the path, He will reveal the way as we move forward in obedience.

■ **Follow God's instruction even if it seems unreasonable.**

The Lord might ask us to do something which seems illogical or beyond our ability. Even if we feel unqualified, afraid, and resistant, instead of making excuses or denying that God could have possibly said that, we should be like Joshua. When the Lord told him to conquer Jericho by marching around it seven times, he must have thought it was the strangest battle plan ever devised. But God knew exactly what He was doing and secured the victory through Joshua's trusting obedience. We can never put the Lord in a box by confining Him to what seems reasonable to us.

■ **Have courage.** When God called Joshua to accomplish the gigantic task of leading the Israelites, He told him, "Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (v. 1:9). And the same is true for us today. Courage is essential for obedience in the Christian life. If we're afraid of the challenges God places before us, we need to keep listening to Him and move ahead believing that He will be with us every step of the way.

■ **Accept conflict.** Sometimes obedience to the Lord results in conflict with others. This is what happened to Peter and the apostles when they

were preaching about Jesus in Jerusalem. When they were confronted by the Council, they replied, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). If we stop doing what God says every time someone objects, we'll never fulfill His will.

■ **Be willing to be corrected by God.** There may be times when the Lord alters our course. During Paul's second missionary journey, he was redirected several times until he finally perceived where God wanted him to go (Acts. 16:6-10). We should always hold our plans loosely so the Holy Spirit has our cooperation when He wants to change them.

Our responsibility is to obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.

Since the Lord has promised to guide us, we have nothing to fear if we're following His leadership. He is sovereign over everything and controls all the consequences. There is nothing He cannot handle or will not provide for us if we'll listen, trust, and obey Him.

RESPONSE

- Think of a time you disobeyed the Lord by either not doing what He said, not doing it the way He desired, or doing it at the wrong time. What happened as a result? What lessons did you learn?
- Have you ever sensed the Lord calling you to something that seemed unreasonable? How did you respond? Looking back, what have been the results of your choice to either obey or disobey?
- Look at the list of requirements for obedience. Which ones have you done or experienced? Which ones do you need to work on?

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