

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



What Does Obedience Require?

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 103:19 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Genesis 12:1 | Joshua 1:8-9; 6:1-20 | Psalm 27:14 | Isaiah 64:4
Matthew 26:39 | Mark 4:24 | Luke 22:42 | Acts 5:29 | Ephesians 4:25-32 | Hebrews 11:6 | 1 John 1:9

SUMMARY

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

We might prefer to define it in another way, but this is exactly what the Lord expects of us. Furthermore, He always enables us to do whatever He requires. Yet there may be times when we're afraid to obey Him because we don't know what will happen as a result. Sometimes obedience is costly. However, if we know that He's our loving heavenly Father who always does what's best for us, we'll be able to trust Him and leave all the consequences to Him. Obedience is not always easy, but it's essential if we want to live in accordance with God's will.

SERMON POINTS

Obedience requires the following characteristics. We must be willing to ...

- **Recognize that God is the sovereign ruler of the universe.** Because He allows human beings the freedom to make choices that sometimes result in heartache, suffering, and even disaster, it may seem like He's not in control; however, Psalm 103:19 assures us that "His sovereignty rules over all." When we acknowledge His right as the Creator to reign over the earth, we also recognize our responsibility to submit to Him as our authority.
- **Have faith.** If we're going to obey God, we must believe what He says. Hebrews 11:6 says, "He who comes to God must believe that He is and that

He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." The Lord loves us and has chosen the best path for our lives if we will follow Him. But unbelief is the enemy of obedience, and the consequences of rebelling against Him are terrible.

- **Be courageous.** When the Lord picked Joshua to lead His people into the Promised Land, He told him, "Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9). God knew that as Joshua obeyed, he would face all kinds of difficulties and challenges that required confident boldness. This has been the common experience of all the Lord's prophets and apostles, and it will be the same for us as well. We must be careful not to let fear stop us from fully obeying the Lord.
- **Wait upon the Lord.** God's timing is always perfect, but from our perspective, it may seem slow. If we focus on the circumstances or the advice of others, we may be tempted to jump ahead of the Lord, but Isaiah 64:4 says that God "acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him." When we wait for the Lord, we are not sitting idle but are being sensitive to His direction before making decisions. He knows all the facts and the perfect timing for every situation.
- **Meditate on God's Word.** To obey, we must first know what the Lord wants us to do. That's why He told Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" (Josh. 1:8). To meditate means to mull something over in our minds and reflect on it. If we desire to follow the

Lord, the Bible must fill our minds and hearts and become our text for living. Meditation helps us thoughtfully consider His directions, promises, and truths and apply them to our lives. As we read and meditate on His Word, it will challenge us to examine ourselves, and if necessary, change our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

- **Learn to listen to the Lord.** Since so many voices could lead us astray, we must be careful what we listen to (Mark 4:24). God wants to speak to us if we're willing to listen quietly for the Holy Spirit's inaudible voice. Sometimes during prayer, He may lay something on our heart or give us a sense of direction regarding a decision we must make. However, the Lord never tells us anything that contradicts His Word. That's why meditation on the Scripture is essential. It's our source of guidance, comfort, and strength. If a particular passage grabs our attention, we should pause and ask the Lord if He's trying to tell us something. Then as we meditate on those verses, God will begin to shape our minds to think the way He does.
- **Suffer a head-on collision with the world, if necessary.** When Peter and the disciples were told by the Sanhedrin not to preach the gospel, they said, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This is the same choice we may be called to make as we live in this world. For example, on the job we could be asked to do something that is contrary to our faith or told not to do something that God commands. There may be times when we have to go against people and their expectations in order to be obedient to the Lord.
- **Forsake any and all sin.** There is no way to walk obediently with God while tolerating sin in our lives. According to Ephesians 4:25-31, we are to lay aside all our sinful practices. This doesn't mean we have to be perfect, but when the Holy Spirit convicts us of a particular sin, our first response should be confession and repentance. And if a sin keeps cropping up, we must

continually deal with it until it ceases to have a hold on us.

- **Surrender our will to the Lord.** When it comes to obedience, we should have the same attitude as Jesus, who said, "Yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Each morning, we need to yield everything to the Lord, wanting only what pleases and honors Him. However, if we don't yield to His will, we'll follow our own desires and eventually suffer the consequences of our disobedience.
- **Walk where the way is unclear.** God doesn't always give us full understanding of the path He wants us to walk. When He called Abraham, He told him to leave his country and go to the land He would show him (Gen. 12:1). Abraham didn't know where he was going, but God faithfully led him each step of the way. And sometimes that's the way the Lord works in our lives. He doesn't show us the entire picture up front, but promises to guide us if we'll take one step of faith at a time.

RESPONSE

- Read through the requirements of obedience again. Which ones are the hardest for you? Which are the easiest?
- How is your obedience affected by your level of trust in the Lord? What circumstances or outcomes cause you to doubt that His way is the best way? What can you do to increase your trust in Him?

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