

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Obeying God

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 5:7-8 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Joshua 1:7-9 | Psalm 32:8; 62:1-2, 5; 119:105
John 4:34; 6:38; 8:28-29 | Romans 10:9 | 2 Corinthians 6:2 | Philippians 4:19 | Hebrews 11:8

SUMMARY

The most important issue in life is whether we're obeying God.

It won't happen automatically, but it must be learned and put into practice in both our attitudes and actions. Hebrews 5:8 shows us that even Jesus "learned obedience from the things which He suffered." This doesn't mean that He sinned at one point, and therefore, had to learn to obey. He always did His Father's will (John 6:38). However, in His humanity, He learned from experience the costly impact of full obedience when He went to the cross.

SERMON POINTS

Obedience is doing what God says, when He says it, how He says it, for whatever reason He says it, or with whom He says it.

There's no room for passivity when it comes to obeying the Father. This level of commitment requires an active choice.

Partial obedience is the greatest enemy to obedience.

If the Lord gives instructions, He expects us to do exactly what He has said. Yet, some believers choose to obey only when it's convenient. Going to church, reading the Bible, and praying are all good, but if we're allowing things in our lives that don't fit our identity in Christ, we're only partially obeying Him. God loves us unconditionally and has amazing plans for our lives if we follow Him wholeheartedly.

The Garden of Eden was God's first classroom to teach obedience.

The importance of doing what the Lord says is demonstrated in the story of Adam and Eve. He didn't talk to them about faith or humility, but only about obedience. He gave them permission to eat from all the trees in the Garden—except one. When they failed the test, sin and its consequences entered the world.

All of us have failed the same test because we naturally want our own way. The Lord has given us so many blessings, but if He wants us to release one thing in our lives, we're quick to rationalize why we should keep it. Or sometimes we excuse our rebellion by claiming that situations, needs, and hurts are legitimate reasons for disobedience. But in doing so, we forget that the Lord is engineering our circumstances and working them all out for our good. He's never promised that life would be free from pain and hardship, but He's committed to blessing those who obey Him.

Jesus is our pattern for obedience.

When He was talking to the Samaritan woman, He explained that, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). Jesus was basically saying that obeying His Father brought Him fulfillment. It wasn't the approval of the crowds who came to hear Him speak, but the joy of pleasing the Father that satisfied His soul.

We're always happier when we obey, yet oftentimes we struggle, thinking we'll miss out on something good or experience hardship if we follow the Lord. It is possible that we might be misunderstood, lose a job, or be rejected by friends.

However, if we'll obey His instructions, we'll experience His best and enjoy the satisfaction of pleasing Him.

How do we learn to obey the Lord?

No one comes into this world knowing how to obey. Every parent must invest time and effort in training their children to follow instructions. Learning obedience with God works in a similar way. We can obey our heavenly Father if we:

- **Choose to trust Him.** If we don't trust the Lord, we won't obey Him. Anytime we're tempted to disobey in a particular area, that's the point at which we don't trust Him. The solution is to actively choose to believe that God is who He says He is, and that He will do what He has promised.
- **Determine to wait upon the Lord in prayer.** The first step in making sure that we're walking in God's will is to ask Him to show us what He wants for our lives. While seeking the Lord, we should also search the Scriptures for passages that clarify His will and give us guidance. Then we must wait for His instructions and timing. Even when we can't figure out what God is doing or why He delays, remembering that He knows every aspect of the situation should bring us assurance.
- **Meditate upon His Word every day.** We'll never live obediently with a closed Bible because that's God's primary means of leading us. Within its pages are the answers to whatever situations we're facing. When Joshua needed guidance, the Lord told him, "Be careful to do according to all the law ... meditate on it day and night" (Josh. 1:7-8). Today we have the entire written Word of God, and the Lord promises to bless those who do what it says.
- **Walk when the way is not clear.** We'll miss the Lord's will for our lives if we refuse to take steps of obedience until we know what's going to happen. None of us can foresee what He will do. Our responsibility is simply to obey Him today, knowing that He holds tomorrow. By faith, Abraham obeyed God's call even though he didn't know where he was going (Heb. 11:8). And that's exactly how

we should walk with the Lord. He doesn't reveal the entire path because with each step into the unknown, He's strengthening our faith.

- **Decide to experience possible conflict.** Anyone who obeys the Lord will encounter conflict. First of all, there will be inner discord when what God is calling us to do seems humanly unreasonable. Furthermore, obedience might also result in relational disharmony if others don't understand or agree with what the Lord is telling us to do.
- **Leave the consequences to God.** When He challenges us to obey, our minds could fill with doubts: Suppose He can't fix this situation. What if He doesn't provide enough? When these thoughts come to mind, we must remember that the Lord is always sufficient and adequate for every issue in our lives. Our job is simply to obey Him and then watch Him work out His will in our lives in surprising ways.
- **Accept divine chastisement in response to disobedience.** Every child of God experiences His discipline. The question is: how will we respond? If we resist His chastisement and blame Him for all our troubles, we're demonstrating that we have not learned obedience. However, if we have an obedient spirit, we'll recognize our heavenly Father's discipline as a loving act of protection and respond with gratitude.

RESPONSE

- In what types of situations have you found it to be most difficult to obey God?
- Can you think of a time when the Lord's instructions were made very clear to you? Did you respond in faithful obedience to Him?
- How has God taught you to trust that His plans are best for your life?

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