



Obedience

"I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my sight, and chose what I did not delight in."

Isaiah 65:12

My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

John 10:27-30

Our Golden retriever is one of the smartest dogs we have ever owned. He is so smart, that he actually opens doors for our other animals so they can get in or out of the house or the screen porch – even for our cat. We have seen him do this, and even have it on video. He even goes down the street and opens the door of our neighbor's house to let their dog Smokey out so they can play together – they are best friends. But one thing he lacks, and that is obedience. We will call him when he is out in the yard, and he will look at us, and decide whether or not to come when we call him. The more critical it is for him to come, the less likely it is that he will actually do so. He often runs in the opposite direction when we call him, or towards Smokey's house to see if he can break him out. Because of this, what could be the best dog we have ever owned has in many ways become one of the worst dogs we have ever had, because he is so consistently disobedient.

Looking at the verses above from Isaiah and John, we see that obedience is not just important to dog owners, but is also important to God. In the Isaiah passage we read about the demise of those whom God calls, but they do not come to Him. They go the other way, so to speak, like our dog does when we call him. Just as we are calling our dog to keep him out of the street, God is calling us to keep us out of sin. In the John passage we read that the sheep hear His voice when He calls, and they come, they follow Him. And just as we give our dog a treat when he comes, God says He will reward us with eternal life if we will only answer His call. We might sum up these two passages by saying; obey God, live forever....disobey God, perish. It is as simple as that.

God desires obedience, maybe more than any other thing. When we ask ourselves what God wants, often our tendency is to think that God wants us to make sacrifices in our life for Him, to give things up for Him, and so on. But in 1 Samuel 15 verse 22 we read that God desires "obedience rather than sacrifice". God is more concerned about us obeying Him and His word more than just about anything else. Obedience to God and to His word is one of the great keys to successful Christian living. So what does it mean to obey God?

In James chapter one we learn that obedience to God can also be called doing good works, being a "doer of the word and not just a hearer who deludes himself". Jesus also said this in the parable of the two foundations in Matthew 7:24-27. Jesus likens obeying His words with building your house on a solid foundation, and He likens not obeying His words to building your house on sand. When asked by the people around Him what it means to do the works of God, to be obedient to God, Jesus answered in John 6:27-29 that we are to "believe in the one whom God has sent" – we are to believe in Jesus. Our first act of obedience to God's call is faith in His Son, Jesus.

God is calling us to himself, and we are to come to Him through His son. Jesus told us that He is "the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Him" (John 14:6). If we obey God, and come to Him when He calls us, instead of running the other way like my dog does, God promises to give us eternal life. Once we have

answered God's call, and come to Him through His Son, what does it mean to live an obedient Christian life? Is there more, or is Christianity just about answering God's call to faith in His Son?

When Mary and I were first married, we had another dog, an obedient dog, a Labrador retriever. And we often took him camping and hiking, and that dog was glued to the back of my knees the whole way, everywhere we went. He followed me like his life depended on it, bumping into the back of my knees the whole way, to the point that he would almost knock me down. He "followed" me, quite literally. This is what Jesus says in the John passage – to obey God is to "follow" Him, to "follow" His Son. The second component of true obedience is to follow Jesus. Jesus' life serves as an example for us to follow. Christians are called "followers of Jesus" for this reason. This is not some hidden secret, but is such common knowledge that we have bracelets with WWJD written on them, to remind us to think about what Jesus would do in any given situation, and to follow His lead.

The obedience that God wants is faith in Jesus, and for us to follow Jesus' leading. We receive Jesus' leading by reading the Bible, and by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Again, not rocket science - it is simple enough that a five year old can understand it. Obedience means we obey God's word, His commandments, etc., and we obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. This is what it means to be an obedient Christian. We become a Christian by obeying the call to come to God through His Son, Jesus the Messiah, by believing in Him. And we live as a Christian by obeying God's word and by obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit, by following Jesus in how we live our lives.

Can we do one without the other? James clearly tells us that faith without works is dead (James 1:22-25). And the Pharisees' demise in the New Testament clearly illustrates to us that works without faith is also dead (Matthew 23:27-28). So the answer is that we need both. We must be obedient and answer the call of God by believing in His Son. And we must be obedient and follow Jesus in how we live our lives. Good stuff.

So which dog are you? Are you the Golden or the Labrador? Are you following God so closely that you are bumping the back of His knees, or are you running away when He calls you, disregarding His call? What about in the little things, when the Spirit leads you to not say a certain word, do you say it anyway? Or maybe He leads you to share with someone or reach out to someone in need – do you do it, or do you chicken out? Do you spend time putting God's word into your heart so you can obey it, or is this something you have just never gotten around to doing? Have you answered God's call? Are you following Him? The choice is yours to make.

Making it more specific, what are some things that God is calling you to do right now? What is His Spirit prompting you to do in your life today? This week? At work? At home? In your marriage? With your children? What in God's word is hard for you to hear, hard for you to obey? What sins are you struggling with these days? This year? What is holding you back from answering God's call? What in God's word are you having trouble obeying? I encourage you to take a step of faith and begin to obey Him, in whatever way He is leading you. His promises to those who obey Him are great. And the results of disobedience are beyond tragic. Chose to obey God today, to follow him in all that you do, and I promise you it is a decision you will never regret.

Lord God Almighty, we come before You in Jesus name, and confess to you that we have not always been obedient to You. Often we have ignored Your call, been disobedient to the promptings of Your Holy Spirit, have disregarded your word, have chosen sin over obedience to You. We ask that You would forgive us, and that you would work with us to help us become more obedient followers of You. Give us a hunger to know and do Your word. Give us ears to hear the promptings of your Spirit. Lead us in the everlasting way. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

John 14:15

Other Verses to Consider

*“And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.”
Deuteronomy 28:2*

*“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.”
1 Samuel 15:22*

*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”
James 1:22*

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”
Matthew 7:24-27*

*“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 6:16*

*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”
Matthew 7:21-23*

*“With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”
Psalm 119:10-11*

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
John 3:16*

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
1 John 1:9*

*“Jesus answered and said to 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 abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.”
John 14:23-24*

“So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba!

Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

Romans 8:12-17

"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

John 6:27-29

"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. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Joshua 1:8

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1 Peter 1:13-16

"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

Exodus 19:4-6

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."

1 John 5:1-4

"So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.""

John 8:28-29

"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."

James 2:26

"But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.""

Matthew 22:34-40