

Being obedient is not something our culture strives for, or understands. In fact, talking about obedience in a positive way is seen as something very strange and even cult-like. The funny thing about this situation is that it doesn't have much consistency to it. In the 60's, the mantra was "turn on, tune in, and drop out", made famous by Timothy Leary as he spoke to 30,000 hippies at the "Human Be-In". The drop out part was an especially important aspect of the hippie ethic, as all authority was to be rejected, or at least questioned. The problem was, Timothy Leary was a Harvard Professor, and as much as he tried to be like the cool kids in his classes, he was obviously trading on authority as a professor. Most people who tell you to question authority do not like it very much when you question their command to question authority. We want to live in the illusion that complete freedom is possible, but we are all servants of some master, it's just a matter of picking the one with the best future. When you find that master that brings you the best possible future, you follow Him as closely as possible, being obedient to the best of your abilities. In order to further that goal, we will spend some time this week looking at obedience.

Day 1

Show Respect

Obedience flows out of respect. Make this a day of meditating on all the reasons Jesus deserves your respect. See how many you can come up with. You may have come to these devotions hoping to be told something that would make obedience easier, some magical piece of information that would inspire you and change your life. Have you been inspired before? I once had a relative that would often change churches, and whenever she started a new one, she would talk about how the sermons were so inspiring, and yet I never really noticed any changes in her over the years. How many times have you felt inspired, and what changes in your life were permanent because of those moments of inspiration? The reality for us is that we most often pass up on the opportunity to change that inspiration brings us because we do not follow the inspiration with work and discipline. In fact, inspiration isn't even always a necessary step for change, if work and discipline are present, change occurs in time. Cut to the chase today, and begin the process of gaining new respect for Christ by doing the work to think through all the reasons for respect that you can come up with in this 24-hour period. How long can you make the list? How much work can you do to make it as complete as possible? How can you show more respect for Christ? How could you show respect in the middle of difficult times? When you run into commands that are difficult or unpleasant, how could you handle that in a respectful way? How does the treatment of others show respect for Christ? How does respect lead to obedience? Spend some time today working through these questions, and see what happens as a result.

Verses: Psalm 33:8, Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 9:28, Colossians 1:16

Prayer Topics: Gratitude, Reverence, Awe

Day 2

Do Your Chores

Where the rubber meets the road in obedience is in the department of work. Whenever the issue of obedience comes up in churches, there is always the issue of grace vs. works that will be introduced into the discussion. It is important to understand that when we talk about being obedient, we are not intending obedience to be a pathway of salvation, but a result of it. Salvation is a new relationship with God, where we have moved from rebellion to sonship, and obedience is a result of the work of Christ in our hearts. Our sanctification, the movement towards being like Christ, is a movement that involves changes in knowledge and wisdom, changes in our hearts, and changes in behavior. One of the changes in knowledge that occurs is coming to an understanding of the importance of obedience, and that the

real difficulty in obedience is our feeling of the burden of toilsomeness that we find in labor. Doing our chores was difficult as children, and it can be difficult as adults. Most Christians are content to go to church to be entertained and inspired, but many will never see any changes in their lives because they look at calls to obedience and dislike the difficulty they see in them. Any call to evangelism, loving your neighbor, helping in the nursery, giving, or joining in on a church work day will bring some to the work, but many will go home, hoping for greater inspiration next week. When Jesus called the disciples, he called them to be fishers of men. Fishing was work, and the disciples knew this. God is calling you to be a prophet, priest, and king, and all of these offices involve work. What work are you aware of being called to that you are not doing? Why have you put it off? What will be the consequences of not doing it? What will happen if you give the excuse to not work more power in your life? What will the reward be for being obedient in the work that you are called to? How can you move forward today towards fulfilling your calling? Take some time today moving toward the obedience that you are being called to.

Verses: Colossians 3:23, Proverbs 16:3, Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

Prayer Topics: Work, Skills, Humility, Willingness

Day 3

Consider Why

We often rebel at commands we do not like without thinking about why we might be called to obedience in that way. To give just one example, I was watching a documentary about the crises going on in New York City because of the convergence of two seemingly generous and compassionate decisions by both the local and national government. First, New York has a right to shelter, which means that any person has the right to a place to live, no matter if they have money or a job. This sounds like a paradise on earth, and most would applaud the good intentions behind this policy. Second, unlike in previous times when asylum seekers had to wait in their own countries to be granted asylum, the decision has been made to let them wait in the United States for their cases to be heard. The result is that, because while waiting the months for their cases to be heard, asylum seekers cannot work, they have flocked to New York where housing is guaranteed. This has overwhelmed the city's ability to pay, resulting in the eviction of the asylum seekers, which creates incredible problems as a change in address means that the paperwork must be refiled and the asylum process restarted. Now they are homeless and jobless in a city with incredibly high rent, all of which was unforeseen by leaders. The problem is that doing good is harder and more complicated than it seems, which is why God's commands to us are often misunderstood or even despised. On a universal human scale, things look much different than they do on an individual scale, and the time between planting and harvesting means that we often do not understand the effects that our ideas would have if lived out in human history. Before becoming upset or disillusioned with God, try to understand why he might have commanded the things he did, by looking at the universal implications over time. God is great, and his perfection is absolute. While worthy of praise, this perfection is also stark, because over time the results of imperfections multiply in ways that we lack the wisdom to understand.

Verses: Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Matthew 4:4

Prayer Topics: Motive, Trust, Confidence

Day 4

Actively Worship

Celebrating God through worship is being obedient, because we are commanded to worship Him. Almost every week we discuss some aspect of worship in our conversations with God, because worship is vital to our lives as believers, and to our sanctification in Christ. When I was a young Christian, I especially disliked the command to worship, and truth be told, disliked worship as a practice. I found the worship services that I attended as a kid very boring, didn't understand the songs, and would never have dreamed of doing any kind of worship on my own. I find that I am not alone, and there is a great divide among believers in the area of worship. The divide I am talking about is not the divide that exists over style of music, that is alive and well but is also well known. The divide I am talking about is between those who worship and those who don't. In our modern church culture, many find worship to be what draws them to church every week, and find it to be a source of unspeakable joy and inspiration, while others just don't "get it" and feel very awkward or just don't like the experience. Having been on both sides at various points in my life, I can understand each point of view. The point of worship is not the style of music or the nature of the presentation on the stage, whether traditional or modern. The point of worship is not even having any kind of music at all, as music is not completely necessary to have worship. Worship is the enjoyment and celebration of God, and corporate worship draws us together as a body, which is why it has been a part of being in the church for thousands of years. Can you learn to celebrate God even if you don't celebrate the style or presentation of the music? Can you learn to find ways of celebrating and enjoying God at home on your own? Can you see the importance of learning to celebrate God corporately, as some form of communal celebration is the foundation of every group? Spend some time today pondering the importance of celebrating and enjoying God, of declaring his worth, and see how you can make it a habit in your life.

Verses: John 4:24, Psalm 95:6, Hebrews 13:15

Prayer Topics: Joy, Peace, Comfort

Day 5

Get a Heart Transplant

True, lasting, full obedience is only possible when we get a heart transplant. We must, if we are going to be obedient for long, and if we are going to include our minds and hearts and not just our bodies, learn to take on the heart of God. This is the point of speaking of salvation in relational terms. We will, when we are fully sanctified, be given a heart of flesh to replace our heart of stone. Our hearts will be the same as His, and we will find obedience nothing but joy and delight. This transplant does not just occur at our death, with our new body, but begins to happen now as we grow in Christ Jesus. In what areas are you aware that you need a heart transplant? What is keeping you from full obedience? What is keeping you from full joy in that obedience? How can you start to transplant your heart of stone? How can you use today to the fullest extent possible to do just that?

Verses: Ezekiel 36:26, Proverbs 3:5-6, 1 Samuel 16:7

Prayer Topics: Attitude, Demeanor, Spirit