

## The Obedience of Jesus

**John 6:38; Heb. 5:7-10; 12:2-3; Phil. 2:5-8**

Arabian horses go through rigorous training in the deserts of the Middle East. The trainers require absolute obedience from the horses and test them to see if they are completely trained. The final test is almost beyond the endurance of any living thing. The trainers force the horses to do without water for many days. Then he turns them loose and of course they start running toward the water, but just as they get to the edge, ready to plunge in and drink, the trainer blows his whistle. The horses who have been completely trained and who have learned perfect obedience, stop. They turn around and come back to the trainer. They stand there quivering, wanting water, but they wait in perfect obedience. When the trainer is sure that he has their obedience, he gives them a signal to go back to drink.

This may be severe but when you're on the desert of Arabia and your life is entrusted to a horse, you had better have one that is trained and obedient. We must accept God's training and obey Him.

Obedience is defined as carrying out instructions or orders; submitting to the control of someone in authority.

To me, that definition leaves the possibility that you may do what you're told but not do it willingly, you may do what you're told but not do it wholeheartedly, or you may do what you're told but not in the way it was supposed to be done.

A little girl was told repeatedly to sit down in the car and put her seatbelt on. She finally did as she was told but told her mother that she may be sitting down on the outside, but she was still standing on the inside.

I wonder how many times we may have the same attitude? We'll do it, but not willingly. We'll do it, but not right away. We'll do it, but not in the way we should.

As you would imagine, the Bible has some things to say about obedience. We'll look first at **Jesus as our example of obedience**. Then we'll consider **Jesus as our enabler for obedience**. As the John

W. Peterson song goes: **Our example is He and like Him we should be.**

With Bibles open, let's first read the passages that give us a glimpse into the example of Jesus and His obedience followed by how we are to do the same.

### I. JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE

**John 6:38**

**John 8:27-29**

**Hebrews 5:7-10**

**Hebrews 12:2-3**

**Philippians 2:5-8**

From what the Bible has to say about obedience, we come to understand that true obedience is a willful and joyful submission to given instruction. It is doing what you are told to do, doing it how you were told to do it, and doing it when you are told, without complaining.

In 1971 Roger Staubach led the Dallas Cowboys to the Super Bowl but later admitted that not being able to call his own plays as quarterback was a source of contention for him. Coach Tom Landry sent in every play telling Staubach when to pass, when to run and only in extreme emergency could he change the play, but he better be right. Even though he considered Landry to have a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy, Staubach wrestled with pride, thinking he should be able to run the team when on the field. When he faced up to the issue of obedience and learned to obey the coach, there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory.

Three things stand out from the passages we just read in regard to Jesus' obedience. We see **Jesus' surrender as a Son**. We see **Jesus' submission as a servant**. We see **Jesus' sacrifice as the Savior**.

Obedience requires humility. Any ounce of pride means we will always resist some part of what we are being asked to do, but not Jesus. **Philippians 2** says He humbled Himself. Any act of obedience requires a surrender of our will to do what is being asked of us. Jesus came to do the Father's will.

Before the creation of the world, during the counsel of Father, Son, and Spirit knowing omnisciently what would happen with the creation of mankind in their fall, they planned the path of redemption that would require the Son to become a man and die for the sins of the world. As the Son, He surrendered and submitted Himself to the will of the Father in every area. His incarnation, His rejection, and then His crucifixion.

Even though He was God, He set aside His divine prerogative by refusing to assert His rights as God in order to live as and identify with man.

Ralph Martin wrote **“His obedience is a sure token of His deity and authority, for...only a divine being can accept death as obedience.”**

It says in **Philippians 2:7** that He took the nature of a servant, and He did so in complete and willful obedience to the Father. He didn't alter or deviate from the plan. And **verse 8** says that in this act of humility, He became obedient to death, even death on the cross.

**II Corinthians 5:21 “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, (WHY?) so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

**I Peter 2:24 “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree...”**

Let's think about that for a moment. His act of willful obedience became the means by which we could become righteous, the means by which we can stand in God's presence without fear of His judgment because Christ took it for us. We call that imputation. The sin of Adam was imputed or attributed to each of us. But the righteousness of Christ has been imputed or attributed to us through our faith. The active part of His obedience was living a perfect life to be the perfect sacrifice. This meant He had to be obedient in everything He did, not only in what the Father asked of Him, but also everything His parents asked of Him or any other authority. He lived perfectly obedient to the Law.

The passive part of His obedience was in enduring the public ridicule, the beatings, and then the

crucifixion where He willingly hung there until He died. He could have saved Himself, but He chose to remain there because that was what the Father deemed necessary to obtain our righteousness, imputed to us through Christ.

To put it another way, in Adam's disobedience we all became sinners, but in Christ's obedience we were made righteous, and we receive that righteousness through faith.

**Romans 5:19 “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”**

Looking again at **Philippians 2**, by submitting to the Father, we see that Jesus came to be a servant. Jesus said of Himself in **Mark 10:45** that He didn't come to be served, He came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.

When you think about the position or role of a servant, we think of someone who does what he is told. The master says do this and the servant does it. The master says I want you to do it this way and the servant does it just as he was told. The master says he needs something done by a certain time and the servant does it by the time specified.

Jesus didn't come to command, He came to serve, to do whatever the Father said. He didn't come to do His own will but everything the will of the Father demanded.

**John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me.”**

**Now what was the will of the Father?** The will of the Father included the cross, but **John 6:40** tells why it was necessary to go to the cross. **“For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise Him up at the last day.”**

Jesus willing fulfilled the Father's will which we learn from **II Peter 3:9** that He wants all to be saved and none perish. To make that possible, God's will was for Jesus to die on the cross.

His obedient sacrifice is depicted in this hymn:  
 For such a cruel death He died,  
 He was cast out and crucified;  
 Those loving hands that did such good  
 They nailed to a cross of wood.

Think about what Jesus was being asked to do on behalf of you and me.

He was asked to set aside His glory and come to earth.

He was asked to become a human and experience everything we do, things like pain, thirst, hunger, rejection, temptation, and death.

He was asked to become a man, but not just any man, a servant instead of the Sovereign ruler He was.

He was asked to become payment for our sin debt when He had no debt to pay.

He was asked to die in our place, the sinless for the sinner.

He was asked to die in the most humiliating and degrading fashion on a cross, which to the Jew was considered a curse.

A servant is someone who obeys and as we see in both the gospels and the writings of Paul and Peter, Jesus obeyed the Father for our benefit. His obedience was for us. He obeyed to bring glory to the Father and good to us.

Warren Wiersbe writes something worth our consideration both in how it relates to Jesus, but also for us to apply ourselves: **“The test of the submissive mind is not just how much we are willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much we are willing to give in terms of sacrifice... The person with the submissive mind does not avoid sacrifice. He lives for the glory of God and the good of others, and if paying a price will honor Christ, and help others, he is willing to do it.”**

Jesus gave His very life as a sacrifice out of obedience to the Father. **What does our obedience cost us?**

Paul spoke about his own sacrifice in obedience to following Christ for the benefit of the Philippians when he wrote **“Even if I am being poured out**

**like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.” (Philippians 2:17)**

He then spoke about the obedient sacrifice of his friend Epaphroditus who **“almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give.” (Philippians 2:30)**

In their definition, GotQuestions helps us to understand the depth and breadth of Jesus’ obedience to the Father when they say it is **“dutiful or submissive compliance to the commands of one in authority.”** **“Dutiful”** means it is our obligation to obey God, just as Jesus fulfilled His duty to the Father by dying on the cross for our sin. **“Submissive”** indicates that we yield our wills to God’s. **“Commands”** speaks of the Scriptures in which God has clearly delineated His instructions. The **“one in authority”** is God Himself, whose authority is total and unequivocal. For the Christian, obedience means complying with everything God has commanded. It is our duty to do so.

We could change the last sentence to say that **“for Christ, obedience meant complying with everything God commanded Him to do.”**

That beautifully describes the way in which Jesus obeyed the Father. In everything He was asked to do, He willingly and joyfully complied with the Father’s will in every detail.

**Hebrews 12:2-3 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”**

In other words, when we begin to have second thoughts about what God is asking us to do or we become tired from what He has asked us to do, or when we’d rather do something else than obey God, take a good look at Jesus and how He joyfully went to the cross and endured its shame in complete obedience to the Father and then follow His example.

The psalmist includes a verse that can easily be applied to Jesus in regard to what the writer of Hebrews says. **Psalm 40:8** **“I delight to do Your will, O God; Your law is within My heart.”**

Or how about the words of Job in reference to how Jesus felt in doing the Father’s will.

**Job 23:11-12** **“My feet have closely followed His steps; I have kept to His way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread.”**

Jesus said His food was to do the will of the Father. (**John 4:34**) His soul was nourished by doing what the Father asked of Him.

**Is that our attitude in what God asks us to do? Do we delight to do God’s will? Do we find joy in obeying His commands?**

Jesus didn’t obey the Father out of duty, He did so out of delight because of His love for the Father. That’s why Jesus could say that He had done everything the Father asked of Him and why the Father could say this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Loving God with all our heart means we love doing what He commands.

Now, let me add one more thought about obedience. Its root meaning is the same whether you look it up in Webster’s or in a Bible dictionary. It means to hear, not just in the sense of acknowledging what someone has said, like “I hear what you’re saying”, but hear in the sense that we act on what was said. It means to listen and then obey what was said. God reveals Himself to us in His Word, words are intended to be heard (obeyed). We hear, understand, and then act on it.

In both **Matthew 11:15** and then in **Revelation 2 and 3** Jesus says **“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”** That doesn’t mean we just go to a lecture to hear someone speak on a topic of interest. The word means to act in some way based on what you heard spoken. A lot of people have gone to see the movie Sound of Freedom, which shows the atrocity of child human trafficking. **We have heard**

**the message, now what will we do about it?**

We can translate what Jesus says this way: **“He who has ears to hear, let him obey.”**

**Revelation 1:3** **“Blessed are those who read the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and *take to heart* (heed – KJV) what is written in it.”** Blessed are those who obey.

**Matthew 7:24** **“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.”**

**John 10:27** **“My sheep listen to (hear) My voice; I know them, and *they follow Me.*”**

The word ‘follow’ implies obedience. It doesn’t mean to follow out of curiosity, or to follow until something better comes along. It means to follow in complete surrender and total commitment in doing what is asked of a genuine disciple. Jesus did that in following the will of the Father, acting on what the Father said. He did what pleased the Father out of love and continual obedience, doing so all the time.

John Phillips writes **“There was not a moment in the life of Jesus when He did not bring joy and delight to His Father’s heart...Everything He did was motivated by one sovereign principle: He was here to please the Father.”**

Jesus did not come independent of the Father’s will, but always to do the Father’s will. As we see from **Hebrews 12:2**, the Father’s will was not a burden to Jesus, it was a joy. He surrendered Himself as a Son, He submitted Himself as a servant, and He sacrificed Himself as a Savior. His perfect obedience is our example.

As Jesus is our example of obedience, so is He our enabler for obedience.

## **II. JESUS AS OUR ENABLER FOR OBEDIENCE**

We need to keep in mind that our obedience to the Lord is not simply a matter of duty or obligation and neither is it something we can do on our own. We are not robots that act because we are programmed to always do as He says. In some

ways, that would be a lot easier, but we weren't created that way. God made us with a will to choose to obey or disobey. **How can we choose to obey?** We need to live by the Word of God.

### A. Live By the Word of God

It began in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were given a choice to obey the command of God not to eat of just one tree.

Abraham was given a command to obey God by taking his son Isaac up on the mountain to offer him as a sacrifice. He could have reasoned that this was the son of promise and not trust God, but instead he heeded the word of God and went in obedience believing that God could raise him to life again.

True obedience has everything to do with trusting in God, having faith in God. **Are we going to trust God's plan and path to be the right one, or are we going to choose to do what we think is best?** That's the point of **Proverbs 3:5-6** **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”**

We could just as easily insert the word obey for the word trust and have the same meaning.

Maybe you remember this children's song:  
 Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.  
 Doing exactly as the Lord commands, doing it happily.  
 Action is the key, do it immediately, joy you will receive.  
 Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.  
 O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E.  
 Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.

The same message is also evident in the song we sang earlier: *Trust and Obey*. It tells us how we are enabled to obey. **When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word**, neither of which are mutually exclusive. We cannot live by the light of God's Word, if we are not walking with Him. We can't walk with Him if we aren't living by His Word.

If someone is going out in a national park to do some hiking and the Ranger tells them to stay on the path and follow the signs, trouble generally follows when they decide to wander off the path and go a different way other than following the trail.

**Psalm 119:105** says that God's Word is our map to help us navigate the trials and temptations of life. We do well when we hear and obey what that map says and not deviate from it.

**Why do some people get fired from a job?** Because they haven't heeded the written company policies.  
**Why do people get a ticket for speeding?** Because they failed to obey the posted signs.  
**Why do people end up with a piece of Ikea furniture that looks like it came from Picasso rather than the picture?** Because they failed to follow directions.

We need to trust and obey the Word given to us by the Lord. His directions will never lead us wrong. The Word is necessary as a way of obeying the Lord.

**Psalm 119:9, 11**

**“How can a young man keep His way pure? By living according to, by obeying, God's Word.”**

**Joshua 1:8**

**“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you will meditate on it day and night, that you may observe (not just see, but obey) observe to do according to ALL that is written in it, then you will make your way prosperous, and you will have good success.”**

We need to live by the Word of God.  
 We need to love the Word of God – Jesus.

**B. Love the Word of God – John 1:1  
 John 14:15, 21, 23-24**

To love the Word of God speaks both to Jesus who is the living Word (John 1:1) and the written Word.

**Why do we obey the Lord?** Certainly not out of duty. Just as Jesus loved the Father and did what He asked of the Son, so we obey the Lord because we love Him and love His Word and want to please

Him, which means without hesitation or deviation.  
Jeremiah 15:16

Thomas a Kempis said that **“Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience.”**

I think people can tell when we are obeying the Lord out of duty versus out of love. If you want to see the difference between someone who obeys out of duty and someone who obeys out of love, then just compare the Pharisees with Jesus’ disciples. They had all the right actions, but they didn’t have the right heart. But in Acts, we see the disciples affectionate obedience.

Or consider the Apostle Paul who endured physical attacks, prison and even death faithfully obeying the Lord by doing what was asked of him. Like Christ, we could say that Paul endured everything with joy, doing it out of love for his Savior.

Chuck Swindoll paraphrases a story Jesus told about hearing and obeying God’s Word. Imagine, if you will, that you work for a company whose president found it necessary to travel out of the country and spend an extended period of time abroad. So he says to you and the other trusted employees, "Look, I'm going to leave. And while I'm gone, I want you to pay close attention to the business. You manage things while I'm away. I will write you regularly. When I do, I will instruct you in what you should do from now until I return from this trip." Everyone agrees.

He leaves and stays gone for a couple of years. During that time he writes often, communicating his desires and concerns. Finally he returns. He walks up to the front door of the company and immediately discovers everything is in a mess--weeds flourishing in the flower beds, windows broken across the front of the building, the gal at the front desk dozing, loud music roaring from several offices, two or three people engaged in horseplay in the back room. Instead of making a profit, the business has suffered a great loss. Without hesitation he calls everyone together and with a frown asks, "What happened? Didn't you get my letters?"

You say, "Oh, yeah, sure. We got all your letters. We've even bound them in a book. And some of us have memorized them. In fact, we have 'letter study' every Sunday. You know, those were really great letters." I think the president would then ask, "But what did you do about my instructions?" And, no doubt the employees would respond, "Do? Well, nothing. But we read every one!"

**What are we doing with the instructions given to us by the Lord? Do people see that we obey Him out of love for Him or do they see that we largely ignore His commands? Or is it merely out of duty with no heart?** Oh, we’ve read the letters, but we haven’t done a thing with them. James tells us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, otherwise we only deceive ourselves and others. (**James 1:22**)

We are enabled to obey Christ when we love Him and love to keep His Word, even though it costs us something, even though it means giving up our will for His.

**Luke 9:23 “Then He said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’”**

Finally, we need to live by the Spirit of God.

### C. Live By the Spirit of God

The Lord has given us something else along with His Word to enable us to obey and that is His Spirit. **Galatians 5:16 “Live by the Spirit and you won’t gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”**

To **“live by”** is in the present tense and means to keep on living or better put, it’s a continual way of life, something that is habitual. If we want to obey the Lord, we not only need the Word of God, we need to be walking right behind the Holy Spirit who is leading us. Like the Word of God, the Spirit of God will always lead us on the right path. **Is it our habit to stay in step with Him?**

To **“live by”** also means that we yield to Him. We become like Roger Staubach and allow the Holy Spirit to call the plays and we do them as they are called in by Him, to do exactly how He says, when He says. Paul gives us a whole list of things we

should do or not do if we are living by the Spirit.

Obedience is an essential characteristic of the Christian faith. If we love God, we will obey Him. We won't be perfect, but when we submit to Him out of loving obedience, we will be an example to others to see.

Jesus is our example of obedience.

Jesus is our enabler for obedience.

Can it be said of us that we delight to do the will of God?

When we walk with the Lord

In the light of His Word,

What a glory He sheds on our way!

While we do His good will,

He abides with us still,

And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.