

TOUGH LOVE

“If you love me, keep my commands.” —JOHN 14:15

God expresses His love in many ways; goodness, compassion, patience, forgiveness, but perhaps the most challenging for us is through obedience. Many Christians will attest to their darkest times being when they had stepped out of the will of God. It may have been tough, but it can also be a turning point in which our best lessons are learned.

In addition to loving God, our obedience to Him is a condition of experiencing God's love. Jesus said, “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them” (John 14:21). The love God has for us becomes experiential in the context of our obedience to Him. That may sound legalistic, but our obedience to God is saying, “Lord, I want to live in such a way as to please and honor you.” And as we do, God says, “I will show myself.” That is experiential.

In the parable Jesus told of the ‘Prodigal Son’, the son was disobedient in dishonoring his father by asking for his share of the inheritance. In Jewish culture, this was greatly offensive as it implied the son wished his father dead, but at very high risk, the father gave his son his share of the estate. In a foreign land, the son squandered his money, and found himself feeding pigs, and longing for the pods he fed them. He then came to his senses. “I will set out

and go back to my father, and say to him: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son’” (Luke 15:18-19). The father joyfully greeted him, and said to his servants, “Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found” (15:22-24).

God will take the same risk with us. If we persist in disobedience, He will let us go, but nothing changes in His attitude toward us. He never ceases to love us, and in tough love, He waits patiently for a change of heart. Wherever we are, God will meet us. The father in the parable paints a beautiful portrait of our heavenly Father. He gets the robe, the ring, the sandals, and welcomes us back with open arms. It is in humble obedience to God that we greatly experience His love.

PRAYER: Your grace is amazing, Lord. Thank You for loving me even in my disobedience and most of all, for bringing me back into your fold.

TO REFLECT UPON: Has disobedience brought me back to God in a deeper way?