

Welcome to Digital Discipleship, a weekly video teaching from Pastor Shawn and a downloadable weekly devotional guide. We pray that you will grow stronger in your walk with Jesus as you lean into these teachings and devotions.

DIGITAL DISCIPLESHIP – LESSON 8 –

Jesus Expects Us to Obey

Day 1

Renew the Mind

Obedience is the measure of one's Love for God

1. There's some preaching and writing online, even from popular authors and teachers, suggesting that talking about obedience is unhelpful, or even harmful. However, the Bible is FILLED with verses on obedience – both Old and New Testament. In fact, it's not an overstatement to conclude that to be a follower of the Way is to obey. Put another way, you're following someone, with specific commands!
2. Whether you're seeking God and his will through the Bible, by getting advice from others, or by hearing personal words for you from God (rhemas), obedience is a very important issue.
3. Earlier we introduced you to the SMORP Acronym:
Scripture – Refers to reading and memorizing Scripture
Message – Refers to anything the Lord may be saying to you
Obedience – Refers to obeying what God instructs you to do
Repentance – Refers to sin the Holy Spirit requires you to confess and repent of
Prayer – Refers to your prayers to God
4. It can be easy to make huge announcements – “I love God so much!” But what is the real test of this? What you say with your lips, or what your actions are?
5. In the Bible, David is called a man after God's own heart. For example, in the New Testament, it states, **Acts 13:22 (NIV) After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'**
6. Did you observe what is highlighted about David? It says he is a man after God's own heart BECAUSE of what he was willing to do; everything God wanted him to do. This is not an impossible requirement for perfection, but a clear expectation to AIM for obedience. This is the goal; to be a person who is ready to honor God, to have enthusiasm for him and his ways!
7. In the New Testament, a Pharisee (a religious leader) asked Jesus which of the commandments in the Law was the greatest. Was he curious? Was he trying to trap Jesus? Either way, Jesus was clear with his

answer, **Matthew 22:37-38 (NIV)** *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.*

8. Can a person measure this love for God? What does it mean? Jesus answered this question as well when he said, **John 14:21 (ESV)** *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. You see that your love for Christ is measured by your obedience!*
9. Now this is a sobering thought because many people think that loving God is about becoming emotional during a personal or corporate worship time. Now there is nothing wrong with emotion but love for God is ultimately measured to be TRUE love if it is linked to obedience!

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What is a person after God's own heart focused on?

Life Application

1. There are different types of people when it comes to obedience:
 - a. those who obey, but do so reluctantly
 - b. those who obey joyfully
 - c. those who are stubborn, and don't care
 - d. those who want to do right but struggle consistently to do so.Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which one describes you best.
2. Write down an example of when God asked you to obey something in the past, and you followed through.
3. Write down an example of when God asked you to obey something in the past, and you disobeyed.
4. Please read Matthew 21:1-17. 2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
 - a. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 2

Renew the Mind

A. True Faith Leads to Obedience

1. Today, you'll look at a story from **Luke 17**. Jesus had instructed his disciples (another way to say, "followers") that if a brother or sister sinned against them and then repented, they were to forgive, even if it happened seven times in one day (*see Luke 17:3-4*). What is the disciples' reaction to this incredible teaching? It's recorded, **Luke 17:5** (NIV) The apostles said to the Lord, "**Increase our faith!**"
2. In **verse 6**, Jesus tells them what they could do if they acted on the faith given to them. He is highlighting that faith IS powerful! However, he then goes on to explain, through a parable, a key part of faith. Don't rush through this – it can be hard to understand but is vital to grasp! **Here it is:**
 - a. **Luke 17:7-10** (NIV) *Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, "Come along now and sit down to eat"? Would he not rather say, "Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink"? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty."*
3. What's going on here? The disciples were upset at the hard things Jesus was requiring of them, such as radical forgiveness. So, they demanded: "*Well then, increase our faith because such forgiveness is too hard!*" In other words, they were "lippping off" to Jesus.
4. Jesus' telling of the parable in response to the disciples' reaction was his way of setting the matter straight. He was saying to them that when a master tells them to do something, they don't need more faith. What they needed was to obey – to act on what he had already said! The proper response would have been not to "lip off" as the disciples had just done; but to simply say, "**Yes, sir!**" **Jesus was saying: "One of us here is Lord; and it isn't you."**
5. For his readers, Luke pressed the point further, sharing a story from Jesus' ministry, which illustrated what a proper response to Jesus would look like. It's found in **verses 11-17**. In the story, ten lepers cried out to Jesus, begging him to have mercy on them and to heal them. Jesus could have simply given a word, and they would have been healed on the spot! Instead, he tested their obedience, telling them to go and show themselves to the priest.
6. It's unmistakable what he was doing: if the lepers went, they would be healed; if they refused, demanding instead that he heal them instantly, they wouldn't be healed. The response of these lepers to Jesus' command stands in complete opposition to the disciples' response. The verse simply offers: "*As they went, they were cleansed.*" That's it! They didn't bargain; nor offer alternative suggestions. Nothing! They just went!
7. The disciples didn't need more faith; they simply needed to obey. This is true faith! And this is a reality for all followers of the Way.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What is taught about obedience in today's reading?

Life Application

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything that you are asking God to do in your life, YET is being held up because you have not obeyed something he has previously commanded (either through the Word or prayer).
2. Take your answer from question 1, and share it with someone else.
3. Review **John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1.**

4. Memorize **Colossians 3:2**.
5. Read **Matthew 21:18-32**
 - a. Write down 1 or 3 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
 - b. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 3

Renew the Mind

Obedience is better than sacrifice!

1. The life of King Saul provides us with a vivid and sad picture of what happens when a person disobeys. The prophet Samuel was sent to Saul with a very specific command, **1 Samuel 15:3 (NIV) *Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.*** What does Saul do after Samuel leaves him?
2. **First:** he immediately gathered his army and attacked Amalek, killing everyone ... EXCEPT, he spared the King of Amalek. Perhaps he was conforming to the culture? In that day, if you conquered a nation, you often took its leader alive – a trophy of sorts.
3. **Second:** Saul also slaughtered thousands of animals ... BUT he spared the best of the sheep, oxen, lambs and all that was good, and gave it to his people so they could sacrifice to God! People must have thought they had a godly king – putting the Lord first! But here's God's reaction, **1 Samuel 15:11 (NIV) *I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.***
4. God saw partial obedience as disobedience, calling it rebellion (verse 23). Samuel returned to meet Saul again, and when Samuel reached him, Saul gave an enthusiastic greeting, **1 Samuel 15:13 (NIV) *The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions.***
5. But Saul was fooling himself; he had only obeyed the instructions to a certain point! The warning found in the book of James is relevant here, **James 1:22 (NIV) *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.***
6. Here's what Samuel states in response to Saul's excitement, **1 Samuel 15:14 (NIV), *"What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" Quickly, Saul shifted the blame to the people: 1 Samuel 15:15 (NIV) *"The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."**** What a character!
7. Saul further tried to excuse his disobedience, saying the animals were for sacrifice. This is a caution - when you suggest that your disobedience could be an acceptable sacrifice or service to God, it's called deception! **1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV) Samuel, of course, got to the heart of the matter: *"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice."***
8. A follower of the Way must not forget that obedience is the highest form of worship there is! You WILL be called to sacrifice for God, but it needs to be rooted in obedience. With such strong roots, you'll find yourself with a beautiful harvest of godly fruit in your life.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. Why were Saul's actions considered disobedience?

Life Application

1. The story of Saul is very striking. Partial obedience is disobedience. Therefore, do not rush on this next question. With a humble and soft heart, ask God – “**God, reveal any area of my life where I am partially obeying you?**” When God reveals something (most of us struggle with this), confess it.
2. Next, based on what was received in Question 1, ask God to show you what obedience would look like.
3. Finally, ask him for any promises that he wants to give, in response to your desire to completely obey him.
4. Take your answers from Questions 1-3 and share them with someone.
5. Review **Colossians 3:2**.
6. Read **Matthew 21:33-46**.
 2. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
 - a. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

RESOURCE: If you ever wondered why God would command the death of entire families (including children) take some time and listen to the series THE BLOODY BIBLE that Pastor Shawn preached. You can find it here - <https://subsplash.com/mainstreetchurch/media/ms/+cf4bf34>

Day 4

Renew the Mind

Disobedience opens us up to demonic influence

1. Returning to the story of Saul and Samuel, consider this very serious statement, **1 Samuel 15:23** (NKJV) ***For rebellion [is as] the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.*** It's important to know that the phrase, "is as," did not appear in the original text. It was added later by translators. Instead, the verse should read: "For rebellion is witchcraft."
2. Of course, witchcraft brings up all sorts of images of witches dressed in black, saying spells and declaring curses, etc. But this is noteworthy: the actual practice of witchcraft opens one directly to the realm of demons (which are very real!). Further, the goal in witchcraft is to control circumstances, situations, or people, often without the participant's understanding of what is happening in the spirit realm. In fact, in witchcraft, the participants are taught that the more they rebel, the more they give access to demonic powers to influence and control them. Scary!
3. When you consider this, it now makes sense when Samuel warns Saul about rebellion and its connection to witchcraft. And the Bible sadly reveals that not long after his rebellion, an evil, tormenting spirit did come into Saul's life to trouble him, **1 Samuel 16:14** (NIV) ***Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.***
4. Saul became a very different man from this point onward. He had been a modest young man, who obeyed his parents, the prophet Samuel and God. If you had predicted in his early years that the day would come when he would kill 85 innocent priests, their wives, and their children in a fit of rage, no one would have believed you. But the sad truth is – he did just that! (**1 Samuel 22**).
5. The evil spirit manipulated Saul into a life of jealousy, anger, hatred, strife, murder and deception. At his lowest point, just before his death, Saul even consulted a witch! Of course, he could have made a change by admitting what he had done, and by turning back to a life of obedience. But he didn't.
6. Sadly, when demons begin to deceive someone, due to disobedience, they are moving down a pathway that can even lead to abandonment of the faith. Of course, moments of weakness do not automatically lead to this place! But caution is needed.
7. It's a sad journey: a person refuses to obey; they are deceived more until they cannot hear God's promptings about their sin anymore; they open themselves up to demonic influence and do things no one could have imagined they would ever do; and finally, they abandon the faith!
8. People like Saul can start off well – but along the way they became disobedient.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What is taught about disobedience in today's reading?
3. If a person continues to disobey, are they able to sense the Holy Spirit's conviction as easily? What begins to happen over time?

Life Application

1. Make a list of other believers that you know – from your family, or small group, or friends. Spend some time in prayer for them. Pray that God would help them to take obedience seriously in their lives. This is not a time for judging others, but to lovingly pray for them. You can even ask the Holy Spirit to give you specific things to pray for— specific things they may struggle to obey. But this is between you and God – don't share it with them.

2. Of course, if you sense that you have opened the door to the demonic in your life through disobedience, confess and walk away from this. Because of the seriousness of this, you may want to find someone to help you.
3. **Review Colossians 3:2.**
4. **Memorize Psalm 39:4**
5. Please read **Matthew 22:1-22.**
 - a. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
 - b. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind

Day 5

Renew the Mind

Obedience Helps People Experience God's Friendship and Love

1. Listen to this promise, directly from Jesus, **John 15:10** (ESV) *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.* (see also 1 John 2:4-6) Abiding in Jesus' love – what a beautiful thing! But notice that it's conditional – **IF!** You can experience greater amounts of God's love IF you obey him!
2. Friendship with God is also connected to obedience. Jesus also said, **John 15:14** (ESV) *You are my friends if you do what I command you.* Too many believers quickly declare their friendship with God, while living in disobedience to him.
3. Of course, friendship with God is worth it! Jesus describes it when he says, **John 15:15** (ESV) *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*
4. When you become a friend with God, it means that he will reveal things to you! This is incredible! Or as Proverbs, the primary book of wisdom affirms, **Proverbs 3:32** (NIV) *For the LORD detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence.*
5. You can see this in the life of Abraham, who was called a friend of God (see Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). For example, before God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, he told Abraham about it (Genesis 18:17). What a privilege!

Stories of Obedience

6. **Story 1: The testing of Abraham.** This test began with God's call for Abraham to follow him. You can read about it early in the Bible, **Genesis 12:1** (NIV) *The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."* There were three things that Abraham was to leave: his country; his people; his father's household. Did Abraham do this? Not exactly...
7. He left his country and his people, yes, but what about his father's household? If you go back two verse, you'll see what happened ... **Genesis 11:31** (NIV) *Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.*
8. Evidently Terah talked Abraham into going along and they set out for Canaan. However, they never got past Haran, where they stopped and settled. Abraham's father Terah died there, and THEN Abraham continued on to Canaan. And did he go alone at this point? NO. He took along his nephew Lot and what a disaster that ended up being!
9. Abraham placed family before God, when God had clearly told him not to; it was an idol in his life. Therefore, it isn't surprising that he again would be tested, through this command, **Genesis 22:2** (NIV) *Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."*
10. Thankfully, Abraham passed this test. Now, God would come before family, even before his one and only son, Isaac, the son of promise!
11. It is one thing to obey when the command is logical. It is quite another when obedience calls for something that doesn't make any sense.

12. **Story 2: Pastor Ray Duerksen** (A mentor of Pastor Shawn)

13. One day I was praying in the basement, when the Spirit spoke to me, asking me to double the amount we were giving to the church. It didn't make any sense, as I was a student at the time, and was just barely able to keep my young family fed and clothed. With EVEN less money, I didn't know how we'd be able to survive. I told my wife, Fran about it and she replied, "If that's what God is asking us to do, then we better do it." For two weeks we gave the agreed 20%. But only two weeks later the bottom dropped out. The company I was working for announced that due to the staggering interest rates of over 20%, it was shutting down its operations, and all employees would be laid off. When I got home that night, I informed Fran of what had just transpired. Her first response was: "But what about the 20% we promised to give God?" I replied, "I think God knew I would lose my job when he asked us to double our giving." It was a test.
14. We held to our end of the bargain. Of course, 20% of nothing, is nothing! But money and food did in fact begin to come in, without us saying one word to anyone! For the next two months, though we had no savings, no income, no support from churches or individuals, and NO money coming from the government, we lived at the same level we had before. And when I finally got another job, our giving had not dipped at all! God requires unconditional obedience. Our responsibility is to obey; God is responsible for the results.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down in your own journal something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What is taught about obedience in today's reading?

Life Application

1. Spend some time praising God for his desire to be your friend, and to reveal things to you! Perhaps write down your praises.
2. If you feel like you have a story that relates to obedience, write it down, and share it with as many others as you can. Remember to keep the emphasis on God's blessing, not on you.
3. Review **John 15:5-6, Romans 12:2, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 5:8, John 10:27, James 1:22, Psalm 1, Colossians 3:2, Psalm 39**
4. Read **Matthew 22:23-46**.
 - a. Write down 1 or 2 verses from the passage that stuck out to you.
 - b. Take time to quiet yourself before Jesus and meditate on the verses. Write down any thoughts that come to mind.

Day 6

Obedience

1. You've now completed 8 Digital Discipleship Lessons! Congratulations! Spend some time considering where you are on your journey with God. Have a conversation with him. Ask him what he is pleased by in your life. Also ask him what he desires to change.
2. Take some time and work on memorizing the verses given in this lesson.