

Obedience or Biddability

Oct 12, 2026

Summary

Bidability: More Than Obedience

Big Idea: God is not looking for reluctant rule-keepers but for “biddable” sons and daughters—people so eager to please Him that they respond to His slightest whisper.

Overview

After returning from a national sheep-dog trial, the speaker used the breathtaking teamwork between handler and Border Collie to picture the kind of relationship God wants with His people. In sheep handling, bidability means an innate eagerness to look to the master, receive subtle cues, and work in joyful partnership. Many believers settle for cold, calculated obedience, but God invites us into wholehearted responsiveness. By contrasting Jonah's grudging compliance with Mary's immediate “yes,” and by reflecting on Psalm 32, the sermon called listeners to cultivate soft, teachable hearts that move at the Holy Spirit's gentle nudge rather than waiting for a crisis or a “bit and bridle.”

Key Scripture

- **Psalm 32:8–9** — The foundation of the whole message: God prefers to guide willing hearts, not force stubborn ones.
 - **Luke 1** — The positive example: Mary's instant “Let it be to me” embodies true bidability.
 - **Jonah 4** — The negative example: Jonah obeyed outwardly but, with a bitter heart, missed the joy of partnership.
 - **Matthew 5:5** — The theological anchor: meekness—power under control—positions us to inherit what God entrusts.
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Main Points

1. The Sheep-Dog Picture: Bidability Defined

- At the trial, 150 elite dogs were whittled to 17 finalists through tasks requiring total focus and trust.
- Every whistle carried meaning— “away,” “lie down,” “look back” —yet the dogs were not driven by fear but by relationship.

- Key traits: engagement, receptivity to soft cues, choosing the handler's agenda over self-reward.
- Spiritual parallel: believers should naturally “check in” with the Lord, tune out distractions, and prefer His will to their own.

2. Obedience Alone Can Mask a Hard Heart

- “You can take the trash out and hate every minute of it.”
- Cold compliance asks, “Did I keep the rules?” while harboring grumbling like Israel in the wilderness.
- Jonah illustrates this: he finally preached, yet exploded in anger when God showed mercy.
- Obedience without joy forfeits intimacy and blunts our witness.

3. Bidability Welcomes God's Whisper

- Mary's response to the angel— “Behold the maid-servant of the Lord” —shows eagerness before she counted the cost.
- Psalm 32 contrasts two ways of being led: with the Lord's eye or with bit and bridle.
- True meekness (Matthew 5:5) is not weakness but “power under control,” like a dog that can freeze mid-sprint at one whistle.
- The Holy Spirit still trains us moment by moment; nothing He asks is meaningless.

4. Growing a Biddable Heart

- Bidability is learned, not innate; we are born self-centered.
- Draw close daily: tune your ear each morning, glance back often during the day, repent quickly when He nudges.
- Yield your gifts and passions to God's direction so they gather rather than scatter.
- The default answer God seeks is “Yes, Lord,” before the full explanation arrives.

Application

The call: Move from mere rule-keeping to joyful responsiveness—listen for the Spirit's whistle and say “yes” at once.

Head — Grasp the difference between grudging obedience and eager bidability; acknowledge God's promise to guide with His eye.

Heart — Ask the Spirit to replace any stony, resistant places with softness and meek power under His control.

Hands

1. Begin each day by pausing to ask, “Master, what are today's cues?”
 2. When you sense a gentle prompt—give, forgive, speak, or be silent—act immediately.
 3. Practice quick repentance: if you miss a cue, stop, listen again, and realign without quitting.
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Reflection Questions

1. When did you last obey God but with a Jonah-like attitude? What was lost in that moment?
 2. Which trait of bidability—engagement, responsiveness, or focus over self-reward—needs the most growth in you?
 3. How do you normally hear the “whistles” of the Holy Spirit, and what competes with that voice?
 4. In what daily situation is God inviting you to show meek, power-under-control obedience this week?
 5. What practical change tomorrow morning will help you “look to the Master” before acting?
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Prayer

Father, forgive us for the times we have been stubborn mules instead of willing partners. Soften our hearts, tune our ears to Your quiet whistle, and fix our eyes on Your loving gaze. May our strength, gifts, and passions rest under Your perfect control, so that our first response is always “yes.” Teach us to walk so closely with You that even the lightest nudge moves us in step with Your Spirit. In Jesus' powerful and gentle name, amen.