

Obedience

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Introduction

What does the soldier do once he has his armor on and is ready to move out?

He waits for orders! He listens to those orders; then he obeys them!

The doctrine of obedience contains the marching orders for the child of God.

God loves you; His love is expressed in His plan for you. Obedience is one of the key means of fulfilling the plan of God.

The purpose of this doctrinal study is to show you what the Bible says about obeying God and living in the Plan of God. God knows our problems, and He knows His plans for us; He has provided in advance for both the problems and the prosperity!

Three Areas of God's Plan Three areas of God the Father's plan for each believer are:

Relationship

Fellowship

Fulfillment

Relationship Our relationship to God begins when we are saved. At the moment of salvation, God does many wonderful things to create our new relationship with Him. You should study the topic Salvation Doctrine to become familiar with all the "transactions" that take place when we become members of the family of God.

Fellowship Fellowship with the Lord is established and maintained by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit. This fellowship can be interrupted, and our relationship hindered, by personal sin. Through Confession of Sin a Christian can be restored to fellowship, as we see in 1John 1:9. A

believer can have victory over sin, which allows him to maximize his time in fellowship, and minimize the time that he spends in a state of carnality.

Fulfillment Fulfillment is "God's Provision for Every Need". God the Father provides in advance for everything a Christian needs in life, including protection from hardship. There are two types of provision in God's plan.

1. Preventive Provision – allows for dealing with a problem in advance so that the hardship does not occur, and
2. Emergency Provision – rescue; the Lord pulls us out of the fire.

Here are some examples of hardships that we can anticipate. By God's grace provision, we can anticipate these hardships, and either prevent them entirely, or overcome them.

The Hardship - The Provision

Confusion - - Discernment

Ignorance - - Wisdom

Chaos - - Order

Conflicts - - Peace

No Money - - Hard Work, or Emergency Grace

Family Issues - Principles; Love, Training

Satanic Attack - - Armor of God

Temptation - - Obedience

Despair - - Encouragement

Depression - - Joy; Relaxed Mental Attitude

God's Plan includes:

Maximum Joy - Minimum unhappiness

Maximum Control - Minimum chaos

Maximum Stability - Minimum confusion

Maximum Relaxed Mental Attitude - Minimum neurosis, psychosis

Bible Illustrations – fulfillment is seen in the names of God.

Jehovah-Jireh, The Lord Will Provide**Genesis 22:14**

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

Jehovah-Nissi, The Lord My Banner**Exodus 17:15**

And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi

Jehovah-Shalom, The Lord Send Peace**Judges 6:24**

Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-Shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord is There**Ezekiel 48:35**

It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.

Jehovah-Tsidkenu, The Lord Our Righteousness**Jeremiah 23:6**

In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.

Implement the Plan of God The doctrine of God the Father is a great study; so much of this teaching is of practical benefit to the believer who wants to know the Plan of God and how to profit from it.

One approach to getting up to speed in these studies is to take the following steps:

1. Start a crash program to read the Bible through. You can read it straight through from Genesis to Revelation, or you can use a Bible that presents the scriptures in chronological order. Make your first reading a fast pass, try to finish in three months. On your second reading, start keeping a notebook.
2. Watch for, and make note of, each instance of God's provision for people: hard work provision; grace emergency provision; protection provision.
3. Use your reading to make yourself familiar with Bible facts, people, and events.
4. Take note of each command that you come across. Try to decide if the command is meant for you, or if there is a principle you can apply in some way.
5. Identify the places where the doctrine of Grace is either taught or illustrated.
6. Examples of learning points:

The "giving" section of Exodus 35 and 36. Read especially **Exodus 36:4-7**

"Success" teaching in Joshua, especially chapter 1

"Obedience" vs "works" in **1 Samuel 15:22**

"Protection from enemies", **2 Chronicles 20:20; 31:20,21**

If you are consistent with this, you will learn the practical principles which are vital to Christian living. Couple this study with the categorical doctrine you are learning and you will advance very rapidly in your understanding of the Plan of God.

Now – What About Obedience? The subject of obedience is one of the most often recurring themes in the Bible!

God the Father requires absolute obedience, instant obedience, unwavering obedience, unquestioning obedience.

“Be ye perfect ...”

“Be ye holy ...”

“Thou shalt not...”

“Thou shalt ...”

“But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out.”

“If any man keep the whole law, yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

“My little children, these things write I unto you that you sin not!”

Consider the century (military company) in the Roman army. The troops are completely outfitted with their armor and weapons; they are ready to march; they are ready for action.

Now, the centurion (think “Cornelius”) starts giving orders. Is there any doubt that he demands absolute, instant, unwavering, and unquestioning obedience?

Very often, the Roman soldier who was slow to obey was assigned to the forefront of the battle; quite simply, if he survived, it was a lesson learned.

Obedience is God’s preventive medicine! Father knows best!

Sometimes commands are hard to swallow. But obedience is Grace provision; we are privileged to obey.

It is not legalistic to obey God. By obedience you are taking advantage of Grace provision in order to avoid suffering and hardship, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and to have a productive Christian walk as a mature believer.

Deuteronomy 28:1

“Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

By all means, read the rest of Deuteronomy 28.

Homework: here are some commands from the Bible. See if you can find any reason why a person would be justified in not obeying these commands.

Servants, obey your masters!

Be anxious for nothing!

Love thy neighbor as thyself!

Bless them which persecute you!

Children, obey your parents!

Train up a child in the way he should go!

Husbands, love your wives!

Forsake not the gathering of yourselves together!

What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder!

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s!

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

“See, I am setting before you today a **blessing** and a **curse**:

the **blessing**, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today;

and the **curse**, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.

Read all of Deuteronomy 11. It is an eye-opener!

Also, consider the contexts of the following verses.

Deuteronomy 26:16

“This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Deuteronomy 32:46

He [Moses] said to them, “Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 5:29

Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!

Question: what is the expectation of those who do not keep all God’s commandments?

Deuteronomy 7:12,13

“Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His loving-kindness which He swore to your forefathers.

He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you.

Question: what is the expectation of those who hear God’s “judgments” and do not do them?

Principle and Practice in the Christian Life Read Ephesians 6:1-19

The principles of Christian living are easy to understand academically, but often they are quite hard to do.

Faith For example, the exercise of Faith. Growing in faith sometimes looks like this:

First, tentative belief in a few facts.

Then, as one steps out onto the ice, a little more confidence.

In the meantime, many doubts. Will it work? How much faith does it take? How much is enough? Can I really believe these things?

As Christians grow in faith, they first become **encouraged** and **delighted**.

Then, they become **confident**, walking erect, moving forward.

Finally, they becomes downright **bold**. Bold in asking God for things; Bold in expecting answers. Bold in facing danger, testing, or temptation. Bold in obedience!

But this is a learning process; faith requires progressive training.

Love Love, too, is a characteristic of Christian growth. It is a learning, training process to grow in love.

Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5), and so love is a potential characteristic. Love matures with spiritual growth.

Human love is only given in exchange for something.

From Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, “...I want to be paid at once. I want to be praised, to be paid for love with love. Otherwise, I’m quite incapable of loving.”

Christian love must be learned from the Scriptures.

The love which is the subject of 1 Corinthians 13 is the “professional” love of the mature believer who has a love for someone that does not depend on that person’s personality, character, or behavior. This love does not look for love in return.

How can we love the unlovely?

From where do we obtain a true burden for souls?

Some say there is no such thing as altruism. Is it true that people will only perform for rewards?

How can we operate on other than selfish motivations?

But as a believer grows in his ability to love, his whole life takes on new meaning, new direction, new purpose. He has new relationships with his family, friends, community.

The young woman of Titus 2:4 has to be taught to love her children, her husband. Wait, I thought she already did love her family!

You wonder why a young woman has to be taught to love her own children. But for Christians, due parental concern goes far beyond natural maternal love (which does not have to be taught).

The idea in Titus 2:4 takes into consideration all of the child's life and concerns itself with everything that is associated with bringing him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Obedience Obedience is also a learned response. Obedience is a product of mental attitude and training. Every day the decision must be made to obey, then to participate in the training.

From Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*

“Recruits and novice soldiers are trained morning and afternoon in types of arms; but veterans and trained soldiers also exercised with their arms once a day without fail. For length of service or number of years does not transmit the art of war, but continual exercise. No matter how many years he has served, an unexercised soldier is a raw recruit ... technical skill is more useful in battle than strength. **If training in arms ceases, there is no difference between a soldier and a civilian.**”

The apostle Paul continually refers to himself as (slave). Get up, slave, get to work! Obey God today, *doulos*; He's the Master, you're the slave!

Paul was trained in the principles of obedience from his birth. His mother trained him from birth to age five. His father took him in hand from age five to thirteen. Then, from age 13 to 30, Paul was under strict authority in the rabbinical school in Jerusalem. He obeyed his parents, the religious principles of Judaism, his school authorities, and the leaders of the Pharisees.

It was no problem, then, for Paul to recognize the authority of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. He immediately placed himself in a life-long position of servitude to the ultimate authority of God.

Child Training Begin at birth. Train a child to respond properly to all types of authority. Set standards. Hold the child to the standards. Train the child to acknowledge sin and to confess sin.

Use every opportunity with your child, every detail of life, to train in faith, love, and obedience, and in making use of the Father's grace provision.

Academics – Hold to schedule. Maintain high standards of performance. Obey teacher without respect to the teacher's personality or methods.

Sports – The coach is the authority. An umpire or referee is an authority. No alibis; no making referee, coach, or teammate the patsy for errors, poor play. Take your own responsibility.

In martial arts, the sensei is the authority. The child is being trained to have a strong mental attitude in victory or defeat. Sports are useful in bodily development and in having a mental attitude of courage.

Music – a different type of obedience; a different set of standards. In fact the discipline required may be more difficult than that in sports.

Examples What keeps you going in hard times? The grace provisions of God the Father, faith, and obedience.

“How can I know that I will obey under severe test; when I am physically weak; when I am depressed and vulnerable; when I am sorely tested in my areas of weakness; when I want to throw in the towel; when I'm tempted to quit the whole thing?”

Answer: When your habits are the result of the fear of God plus your spiritual training.

Joseph obeyed because he had made up his mind in advance that he would be honorable. He had a life pattern of obedience, long before he met Potiphar's wife. He won the battles and he won the war. **Genesis 39:7-12**

Solomon disobeyed because his mind strayed from the Lord. He won a few battles, but he lost the war. **1 Kings 11:1-14**

Both Joseph and Solomon were tempted; one refused, the other yielded. The difference? Mental attitude and training.

The Christians on Crete Paul's letter to Titus is a textbook on the doctrine of obedience. We learn from this short letter that obedience is learned, that it must be taught and trained, by example, inculcation, warning, exhortation, admonition, and rebuke.

Titus 1:1-3 – Paul, a servant of God, is obedient to the call of God.

Titus 1:4-9 – Titus' job was to find obedient men

Titus 1:5-9. Obedient men are useful in this life.

Titus 1:10-16 – there were many foolish, disobedient, deceived Christians. The disobedient are to be bridled, rebuked.

Titus 2:1 – Titus himself was to obey

Titus 2:2 – Mature men were to obey

Titus 2:3 – Mature women were to obey.

Titus 2:4,5 – Younger women were to be taught to obey.

Titus 2:6 – young men, likewise, were to obey

Titus 2:7,8 – Titus, again, was commanded to obey

Titus 2:9,10 – servants were to obey

Titus 2:11-15 – all of us are called upon to obey.

Titus 2:1-5 shows obedience in a different light. Women have a profound responsibility to act in such a way that God's reputation is not damaged. This is much greater than simply the responsibility to please one's husband. The wife's purpose in life

is directed toward her service to God; she focuses on her husband so that her response to her husband reflects on the character of God.

In Ephesians 5:25ff we see that the husband focuses on his wife, so that she might be presentable to God. He must make it as easy as possible for her to obey her own commands from God.

We know that if the husband fails to love his wife, he will be her stumbling block, he may cause her to disobey God, thus the Word of God will be slandered when people see her disobedience. Titus 2:5.

So, why must we love our spouses? That the Word of God be not disrespected. How do people love their spouses, even when they think the romance has gone out of their marriage.

Answer: the fruit of the Spirit, Love, and Obedience.

Training + Mental Attitude = Habit

Adultery begins long before the physical act. It begins the moment a person loses the focus, refusing to obey the command to love one another.

When the focus on God's plan is lost, other options swim into view: job; hobby, sports, ideas, and other people that take the place of the spouse in the person's mind.

It may be a long time before even mental adultery is entertained; but adultery begins with the first disobedience, the first negative volition to God's Word.

Further Bible Teaching on Obedience David prepares for the building of the Temple.

1 Chronicles 22:13

Then you will prosper, if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed.

Saul disobeyed and did not kill Agag, and he kept spoil from the Amalekites.

1 Samuel 15:22,23

Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

“For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.”

Jehoshaphat, invaded by the Moabites, proclaims a fast, he prays and exhorts his people, his enemies are overthrown.

2 Chronicles 20:20

They rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.”

Uzziah, succeeding Amaziah, reigns well, in the days of Zechariah.

2 Chronicles 26:4,5

He [Uzziah] did right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him.

The report on Hezekiah, a faithful king. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked; an angel destroyed the Assyrian army; the people were protected by their faith in the Lord.

2 Chronicles 31:20,21

Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah; and he did what was good, right and true before the Lord his God.

Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered.