

GODLY OBEDIENCE

The Foundation of the Christian Life

Godly obedience is what separates Christ-followers from the world. It is the mark on their lives that identifies them as having been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. True godly obedience stems from a heart attitude of humility and submission to the will of God the Father, the commands of Jesus, and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

HEART-DRIVEN ACTION

True obedience is not following a list of rules for the sake of outward appearance. Rather, it is driven by a heart filled with humility which recognizes the authority of God and responds with humility, submission, sacrifice, and obedience.

PERFECTION IS THE END-GOAL

Jesus called upon His disciples to be "Perfect, even as your Heavenly Father is perfect." While not attainable in this life, Christ-followers must have their eyes set upon the goal of perfect obedience by focusing on the example of Christ's perfect life.

OBEDIENCE OVER ADHERENCE

Adherence to rules is not the same as obedience. It is possible for a person to modify their outward actions to give the appearance of obedience while still having sinful heart attitudes.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs 21:2-3 tells us that God desires obedience that is centered in our hearts, rather than empty actions, even if they give the appearance of obedience. God's focus is always on the heart behind the actions.

JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of how His followers should live their lives. His complete obedience to the will of God the Father led to His perfect life and set the tone for all believers who were to follow Him.

MINISTRY'S FOUNDATION

Obedience is the foundation of all ministry. Since the work of ministry has been prepared beforehand by God, all ministry is His ministry. We have no claim to ministry as our own work. We are called to join God in His work.

PROVERBS 21:2-3

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the heart.
To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice."

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Practical Application

Believers are called to lay down everything and follow the example of Christ in sacrificial obedience. Believers must take active steps to lay down their will and their lives to serve Christ. This starts by having a humble attitude of obedience that is rooted in submission to God.

STEPS TO GODLY OBEDIENCE

- Be humble and confess your sins to God - [James 4:6-10](#), [2 Chronicles 30:6-9](#)
- Submit your will to God completely - [Hebrews 12:1-11](#), [Romans 6:16-18](#), [Proverbs 3:5-6](#)
- Bring your flesh under control - [Romans 12:1-2](#), [1 Corinthians 9:27](#), [James 1:22-25](#)

EXAMPLES OF OBEDIENCE

- Jesus submitted to the Father's will in everything - [Luke 22:41-42](#), [Matthew 26:52-56](#), [Philippians 2:1-11](#)
- David recognized God's Sovereignty and was content to wait for God's timing - [1 Samuel 24:1-10](#)
- The Apostles rejoiced in their persecution because it was the evidence of their obedience - [Acts 5:40-42](#)

EXAMPLES OF DISOBEDIENCE

- Trading the eternal for the temporal - The Rich Young Ruler - [Matthew 19:16-30](#)
- Doing the right thing with the wrong motivation - Jesus' teaching about fasting - [Matthew 6:16-18](#)

ROMANS 6:16-18

"Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."

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Definitions

Definitions are important. One of Satan's tactics to deceive people is to prompt society to change the meaning of words. In our society, this deception is on full display. It is for this reason that we have provided detailed definitions for the key terms of this session.

SECULAR DEFINITION: SUBMISSION

The condition of being submissive, humble, or compliant; an act of submitting to the authority or control of another.

BIBLICAL DEFINITION: GODLY SUBMISSION

Acknowledging that one is of lower station than God. For the believer, this also entails a willful and joyous **abandoning** of one's will for God's will.

(see [Mark 1:16-20](#), [Matthew 16:24-26](#))

- It is impossible to practice obedience to God without first submitting to Him in humility, gratitude, and reverence of His position and power. Submission is the first step of obedience, **without submission, obedience is impossible.**

SECULAR DEFINITION: OBEY

To follow the commands or guidance of; to conform to or comply with.

BIBLICAL DEFINITION: GODLY OBEDIENCE

Attentively listening to God's Word and **responding** by seeking to align one's heart and mind with His will. (see [Psalm 119:97-104](#))

- Obedience is not a suggestion, a good idea, or a preferable path. For the Christ-follower, obedience is **mandatory**. Those who would identify with Christ are called to obey Him by actively carrying His message to the lost. "Jesus' instruction is compelling in its clarity. It is not a suggestion; it is a command. "Go!" He says. "I am sending you!"*
- To submit and obey God requires that believers follow and comply with God's commands, Jesus' teaching, and the Holy Spirit's promptings. It also means that they will conform themselves to the standards of God, and the example set by Jesus Christ.

*Nik Ripkin, *The Insanity of Obedience* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2014), 30.

BEWARE THE FATHER OF LIES

"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." - John 8:44