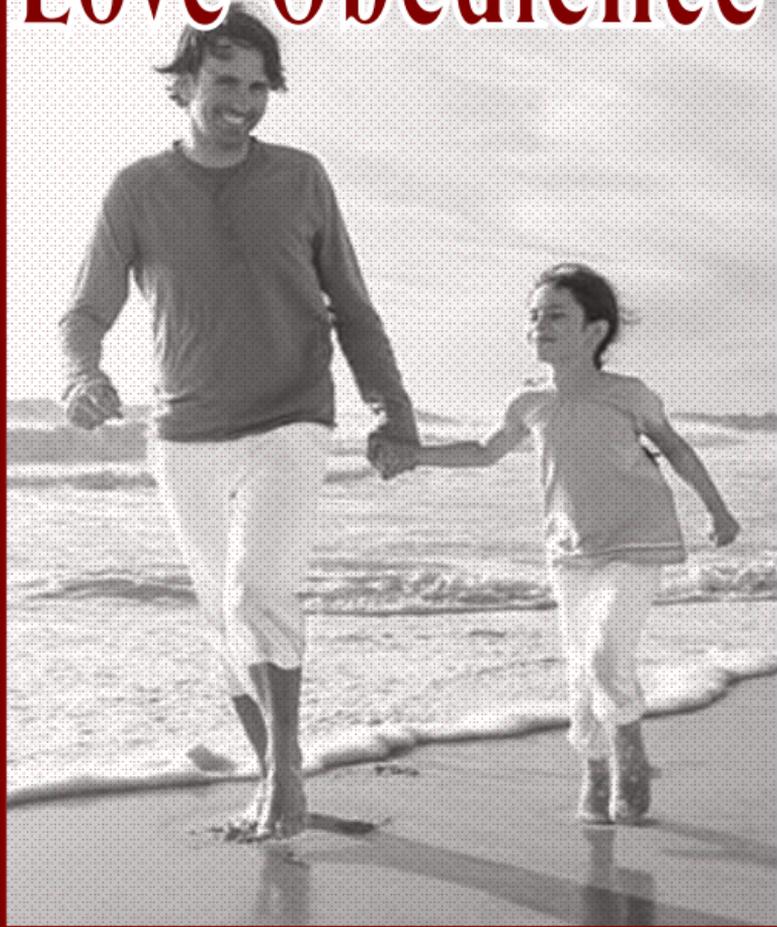


Love-Obedience



by Jason Peebles

One of the most important keys in the Bible that the Holy Spirit wants you to have is what I call **“LOVE-OBEDIENCE.”** Basically, this phrase describes God’s desire for His people to walk in obedience that flows from a heart of love for Him. In John 14:15 Jesus said, *“If you love Me, keep my commandments.”* The book of *1 John* lets us know that love-obedience is one of the key ingredients for maturity in Christ.

Let me quickly point out that there are two basic types of obedience. There is legalistic obedience that comes from fear – and then there is what I call LOVE-OBEDIENCE. By way of example, parents know about both types. In the beginning, most children obey their parents because they fear the consequences of not obeying. And, in some things, this is good. For instance, your children need to have a healthy fear of what can happen if they play in the street or play with fire. Yet, the desire of all parents is to see obedience in their children that flows from the heart. Hopefully, a child will eventually develop good decision-making skills that are based on wisdom and understanding.

Walking with Christ

The goal of our faith is to “know Him and make Him known.” 1 John 1:3 says – *“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* **The apostle John was identifying the central goal of our faith – which is a lifestyle of FELLOWSHIP with God. As we fellowship with our Savior we receive His strength, plans, and guidance.** Thus, it is vital that you learn how to maintain your fellowship through obedience. John calls it *“walking in the light.”*

So let’s ask a basic question – “Why is it good to obey God?” Well, for starters, walking in God’s path leads to LIFE AND BLESSING. Deuteronomy 30:19 says, *“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you that I have set before you LIFE AND DEATH, BLESSING AND CURSING. **THEREFORE CHOOSE LIFE** that both you and your descendants may live.”* Thus, the short answer is that obeying God puts you on the path to a good and happy life. How so? Well, God knows what works and what doesn’t work! For example, He knows that forgiveness is better than unforgiveness. He knows that unforgiveness will act like a cancer and destroy your life. Thus, He commands you to forgive (Mt 18:35). He also knows that sexual sins create problems for individuals and families. Therefore, He commands you to not commit fornication (1 Thess 4:1-7). In every case, God wants you to obey Him in order that you may enjoy life and avoid the bad consequences of disobedience and sin. **But there is a higher reason that you must learn to obey. Yes, God wants you to “enjoy” life to the fullest – but He also wants you to FULFILL HIS PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE!** Notice the connection between your commitment and God’s plan for your life. Romans 12:2 says, *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind **THAT YOU MAY PROVE (EXPERIENCE) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**”* Learning the key of love-obedience is important if you want to fulfill God’s assignments for your life.

Let’s address another important question that is bound to come up in your mind. *“Does your obedience EARN God’s blessing or cause Him to love you more?”* The answer is **ABSOLUTELY**

NOT! Salvation is a free gift that comes from God. Ephesians 2:8,9 says, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – not of works lest anyone should boast.”* Romans 5:8 says, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”* Obviously God loved you before you accepted Him and He will love you even when you sin after you know Christ. **Obedience is not a question of EARNING but a question of POSITIONING. Consider the illustration of a baseball player who wants to “catch” the ball. The ball may have been thrown – but unless the baseball player gets in POSITION to catch the ball he will not “catch” it. Obedience positions you to receive what God has for your life.**

As we said earlier, **FELLOWSHIP** is also a central issue. Your disobedience does not change your relationship with the Father – but it may strain your fellowship. A child’s disobedience does not alter their relationship with their parents (they are still in the family) – but it can certainly strain the fellowship! **To really grasp the key of LOVE-OBEDIENCE you need to remove from your thinking once and for all that your obedience earns anything from God – and switch over to a mind-set of wanting to obey God because you love Him, want to fellowship with Him, and fulfill His assignments for your life.**



Unbroken Fellowship

In the book of *1 John*, the apostle says that he was writing to Christians for several reasons: 1) that we might enjoy fellowship with the Father

and His Son Jesus Christ (1:3), 2) that we would walk continually in the light (1:7), and 3) that we might not sin (2:1). **God wants us to live in UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP with Him. The apostle John refers to this as “walking in the light” (1:7). Learning the key of LOVE-OBEDIENCE is vital for you to maintain this fellowship.**

Keep in mind that your obedience did not “earn” you salvation and it certainly will not “maintain” your salvation. Your salvation is solely and absolutely dependant on the work of God Himself, through Jesus Christ. As we said earlier, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that salvation is a “gift” to be received by faith (Eph 2:8,9). **However, having said that, LOVE-OBEDIENCE certainly IS important for maintaining the level of fellowship with Christ that He wants you to walk in.** Your fellowship with Him should not always revolve around the confession of your sins (though, thank God, forgiveness is available whenever you need it). But there is MORE -- MUCH MORE! **There is a level of fellowship whereby the Holy Spirit desires to teach you the deeper things of God; guide you, help you overcome problems, reveal God’s assignments for your life, and take you into the destiny that God has for you.** To fully maximize this, you must endeavor to walk in the light and maintain unbroken fellowship as much as possible. This is why it is important for you to learn the key of **LOVE-OBEDIENCE**.

Your Advocate -- Jesus Christ

The primary force that tends to break our fellowship is sin. Likewise, sin is the primary force that ruins relationships. This is certainly not a new revelation because we all deal with it! Sin comes in all forms from the daily common temptations to the more severe. Worry, anxiety, anger, lying, unforgiveness, etc., are common temptations that we face. Then, there are the more severe like alcoholism, substance abuse, sexual sins, etc., that many struggle with. It is not the intent of this Study Guide to teach on breaking addictive behaviors, but let me just say that the work of the cross will avail for ANY and ALL sin. I have seen alcoholics delivered, drug addicts, prostitutes, and many other cases that would be deemed difficult. Thank God

our gospel is “good news” for anyone who will call upon the Lord.

I once heard someone say, “Well, sin is sin – it’s all the same!” That is a very naïve viewpoint. In one sense it is true, but it really ignores the “consequences” of sin. For example, speeding in a car and murder are both examples of breaking the law – but no one would argue that the consequences of each are light-years apart. **And, so it is with sin. Yes, all sin will break your fellowship with God, but not all sins have equal consequences.** The truth is, as long as we are in these mortal bodies we will face temptation. There will never be a time in this world that you will be exempt from the temptation of sin. Even Jesus was tempted, though He did not yield (Heb 4:15). 1 John 1:8 says, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*” John was talking to Christians. But thank God, he goes on to say in verse 9 – “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” **God’s desire is that we walk in UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP.**

1 John 2:1 says, “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*” **Thus, the goal is to “not sin” – but John was also a realist. He says, “but if you do sin” you have an Advocate.** The word “Advocate” literally means “*legal representative.*” In other words, when you confess your sins, Jesus Christ will legally represent your case in the court of heaven and enforce the forgiveness that was purchased through His death and resurrection. You see, in heaven, holiness demands that all sin be dealt with. Light and darkness cannot mix. Thus, like a good lawyer, Jesus Christ will make sure that the penalty of your sin is paid for through His own blood. **Our goal as Christians should be to live more and more “above” sin. The only way that we can do this is to “walk in the Spirit.” Romans 8:1-6 let’s us know that the answer to sin and the flesh is to “walk in the Spirit” – that is, to live in a yielded state to the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.** But if we do sin, then praise God we have an Advocate – Jesus Christ!

One verse that has caused confusion in the minds of some Christians is 1 John 5:18 -- “*We know that whosoever is born of God sins not; but he that is born of God keeps himself, and that wicked*

one touches him not.” The problem arises when you don’t consider what the original language of the text actually says. Unfortunately, for some, when they read this verse they conclude: “Well, I guess I’m not a Christian, because I know that I still sin.” **Let me paraphrase the intent of this verse from the original language: “Whosoever is born of God does not continually sin without an attempt to overcome it – they endeavor to guard themselves from the enemy.”** I remember when my own dad was struggling to overcome alcoholism as a Christian. He knew in his heart that it was wrong; he had seen its destructive work in our family, but he continued to drink. Was he a Christian? Absolutely! The day he asked for forgiveness (I led my dad to Christ) he was instantly transformed on the “inside” – but the “outside” took time. Even though he continued to drink, he was endeavoring to overcome it. It took my dad about two years to finally “tap into” the grace that God had all along – but he did. My father lived the last 20+ years of his life sober and helping others overcome alcoholism. An authentic Christian, even though they are struggling, will have a conviction in their heart that they want to overcome the problem. That conviction is proof that the Holy Spirit is at work.



Rewards of Love-Obedience

For the remainder of this Study Guide, I want to focus on the wonderful benefits of LOVE-OBEDIENCE. **As we said before, love-obedience “positions you” to receive God’s blessings.** Deuteronomy 28:2 says, “*And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee IF you will hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God.*” In other words, obeying the voice of God leads to the BLESSINGS of God. *How?* Because only through His input will you discern what you need to be doing and what you need to avoid. Psalm 32:8 says, “*I will instruct you and teach you*

in the way which you shall go. I will guide you with mine eye.”

LOVE-OBEDIENCE also takes you into the miraculous realm of answered prayer. Look at 1 John 3:22 -- “*And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep his commandment and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*” Wow! What a promise! There is a dimension of “*whatsoever you ask*” being done! At first glance, you may misread this to say, “*If you obey me then you will earn answers.*” But that’s not the intent at all. Obedience cannot “earn” salvation or anything from God. Here is a paraphrase that will help – “*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him because we are walking in such union and fellowship with him that we are involved in the plans that He leads us in.*” **You see, if you are walking in love-obedience then you will not be asking for things that are outside God’s will and plan. You will be in step and in harmony with His plans.** The same idea is conveyed in John 15:7 where Jesus said, “*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.*” **Through ABIDING (like a branch in the vine) you receive the “sap” of His desires and His plans.** Jesus operated the same way. In John 5:19 Jesus said, “*The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; for whatever He does, these also does the Son likewise.*” Jesus’ union with the Father was the secret to his success. John 5:20 goes on to say, “*For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He is doing; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.*” When you are walking in love-obedience, the Holy Spirit will “*show you*” what you need to be doing. He will also “*show you*” what you need to avoid.

LOVE-OBEDIENCE is based on the first and great commandment. In Matthew 22:37,38 Jesus said, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*” The more you love Him, the more you will want to obey Him and please Him. “*If you love Me, keep my commandments*” (Jn 14:15).

Dear friend, my prayer is that you will discover the joy of LOVE-OBEDIENCE and fulfill the wonderful assignments that God has for your life.

■ -- Jason Peebles

Key Memory Verse:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”
Matthew 22:37,38

Prayer for Love-Obedience

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. I want to obey you because I love you. Empower me to walk in your blessings and to fulfill your assignments for my life. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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