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# FRAMEWORK

OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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GRACE  
FAITH  
OBEDIENCE

## FRAMEWORK

is a Bible study series designed to be used for personal study, discipleship or small groups.  
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### **Some thoughts about using this study series—**

**Framework** is written as a guided study in the Scriptures, to draw your own conclusions and applications. The point of this series is to highlight grace, faith and obedience as the means by which we live the Christian life.

If you are not familiar with additional Bible resources, check the back of your Bible for a concordance. You will find many more Bible passages on these three topics. You can also find a Bible concordance online at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). Under the tab “study,” click on “keyword search” and type in the word you want to search throughout the Scriptures.

# PREFACE

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The first 22 years of my life were spent on an Iowa farm. We were familiar with every country road for miles around. The nearest town (Fertile, pop. 300) was three miles south. We bussed to school 11 miles west (Forest City, pop. about 3,000). The nearest hospital was 25 miles to the southeast (Mason City).

In the summer the gently rolling land looked like a quilt of corn and soybean fields, broken by an occasional hay pasture. Mile after mile of gravel roads were speckled with farmsteads, each nestled in a grove of trees along the road. Standing prominent in almost every farmstead was a massive red or white barn.

Traveling those same country roads 40 years later, you will find most of the barns are still standing. The harsh winters and humid summers have taken a toll on their exterior appearance. You notice the weathered paint, a couple of broken windows and the rusty hinges holding the massive hay loft door.

Step inside the barn. Climb the ladder to the upper level hay loft and you see why the old structure remains standing. The framework made of wooden rafters, beams and braces is still intact. The framework of the barn functions as the structure that holds everything together in the building.

In a similar way, I see grace, faith and obedience as the framework of the Christian life because they are the dynamic elements of following Christ. Our understanding of their significance determines the vibrancy and health of our relationship with Him.

Since my college days when I began to see God work in my life, I have been captivated by the issues of spiritual growth. In my own life, I have experienced the difference between learning about the Christian life (theology, spiritual disciplines, church, ministry) and pursuing a personal fellowship with God. Both are needed, but I have often been content with the first category and missed developing the personal nature of the second.

**GRACE** is part of the framework because it upholds every action of God in our lives. It is grace that draws us to confidently approach a holy and sovereign God. It is grace that enables us to be personal with Him. His care, His unconditional love, His protection and His transforming work are all extensions of His grace.

**FAITH** is part of the framework because it is our response to God when life seems to be falling apart, when the world runs contrary to His Word and when we have to wait for Him to act. Faith is trusting Him to do what we cannot.

**OBEDIENCE** is part of the framework because it reveals how intentional we are about walking wholeheartedly in step with Jesus. Disobedience always alienates us from Him, robbing us from enjoying the fellowship He offers.

Grace, faith and obedience form the framework of the Christian life. I suspect there is rarely a day in following Christ that we are not prompted to respond to God in terms of grace, faith and obedience. They are the means by which we live the Christian life.

It all started with grace. God provided Jesus as the payment for a debt you could not pay. You heard the Gospel, God convicted you and you responded. You repented of your sin, believed in Him and Christ took up residence in your life. At that same moment, God did one of the most amazing things you can imagine. The Apostle Paul writes in the Book of Colossians:

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness,  
and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,  
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

God rescued us out of darkness and its influence and transferred us into His Kingdom. Notice Paul writes this in the past tense—it has already happened. God is the One who accomplished it! Becoming a Christian was more than adopting a new set of beliefs. God transferred us into a new realm.

We have a new King, a new allegiance, a new eternal destiny...and a new life.

Though we previously stood condemned under God's Law, Jesus' payment on our behalf satisfied God's requirement of justice. Through faith in Christ, God brought an entirely new dimension to our lives. In this new realm we live in a relationship with Christ that is based on grace.

Therefore having been justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also  
we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand;  
and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

Jesus placed us "into this grace" at our conversion. It is like stepping out of a dark hallway into a room flooded with light. This is more than experiencing occasional acts of kindness from God. We stand in a new state, a new environment, a new life...characterized by grace.

Grace describes how God relates to us and us to Him.

Grace defines God's attitude toward us, prompting gifts that we can neither earn nor deserve.

Grace underlies all that God does for us and in us throughout eternity.

Grace permeates the new life in the kingdom to which we have been transferred.

Too often we associate grace just with the Gospel and our salvation. Salvation is a grand introduction to grace, but it gets even better! Paul writes to the church in Ephesus—

But God, being rich in mercy,  
because of His great love with which He loved us,  
even when we were dead in our transgressions,  
made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),  
and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places,  
in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come  
He might show the surpassing riches of His grace  
in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-7

Grace was not only displayed by redemption, new life, forgiveness and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but grace continues as the driving factor in His transformation of our lives, conviction of sin, guidance, spiritual gifts, discipline and trials.

In Romans 5:12-21, Adam's sin resulting in the reign of death is contrasted to Jesus' righteousness resulting in the reign of grace. Grace dominates daily life in God's kingdom. Too often we take grace for granted, or simply underestimate its significance in our daily lives. Grace is part of the framework of the Christian life.

...WE STAND IN GRACE.

# GRACE

**GRACE:** GOD'S ATTITUDE AND ACTION OF UNMERITED FAVOR TOWARD THOSE WHO DESERVE HIS JUDGMENT.

God gave the Law in the Old Testament as a covenant between Himself and His people. The Law could not make man holy, but instead it revealed his sinfulness and his inability to be delivered from the power of sin (Romans 3:19-20). Having taken upon Himself the condemnation that we deserved for our sin, Jesus is now free to bestow on us His unmerited favor.

Grace is a common word in our spiritual vocabulary, but sometimes it is helpful to revisit the details of our salvation in order to gain a fresh perspective of Christ's work on our behalf. Make a list of the words used in the text to describe our condition before and after we put our faith in Christ.

Without Christ	List the words that describe life without a relationship with Christ
Romans 3:23	
Romans 5:6-10	
Ephesians 2:1-3	
Ephesians 2:12	
In Christ	List the words that describe the life you gained in a relationship with Christ
Romans 3:21-24	
Romans 5:6-10	
Romans 6:23	
Ephesians 1:3-11	
Ephesians 2:4-10	
Ephesians 2:17-19	
2 Timothy 1:8-9	
Titus 3:4-7	
1 Peter 1:3-5	

## DEFINITIONS—

*Redemption* - the payment of ransom (Christ's death) for a sinner to be freed from condemnation.

*Justified* - a legal term meaning to be declared righteous.

*Propitiation* - the complete satisfaction of all God's demands for judgment of our sin. Debt is paid.

*Regeneration* - new birth; the instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life, resulting in eternal life.

Before you became a Christian, how did you hope you could gain God's approval?

Considering your life before Christ, why did you need grace for salvation?

Having read these passages, what is so amazing about grace to you?

What things have you struggled with concerning your life before Christ that are answered by God's grace?

## CONCLUSIONS—

To grasp the full meaning of grace, we must recognize the depths of our depravity and the hopelessness of life without Christ. Everything that God did to accomplish our salvation is defined by grace. Nothing He has done for us or given to us could be earned, bought or inherited.

Paul summarizes in 1 Corinthians 1:30—

“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”

The Scriptures detail a long list of possessions and positions that God gives us at salvation. Because of His grace, we are:

Redeemed	Reconciled	Forgiven
Adopted	Made a Child of God	Justified
Freed from the Law	Made a citizen of heaven	Delivered from darkness
Given access to God	The object of His care	In the family of God
His inheritance	Complete in Christ	Indwelt by the Holy Spirit...

All of these results of His grace are instantaneous, simultaneous and complete at salvation. We can only imagine the delight in the heart of God as He bestows these riches upon each person who has responded to Christ. Grace is an expression of His unconditional love for His people.

Grace is more than a memory and a truth of salvation. As we could only receive salvation by grace, so the Christian life is meant to be lived under grace. We remain helpless to experience His transforming work by anything but the riches of His continued grace.

# GRACE

We have been “introduced into this grace in which we stand.” (Romans 5:2) In our continuing relationship with God, we stand in the same grace that defined the Gospel and provided salvation. Grace does not come and go. But we often live like it does.

Despite the abundance of grace that we experienced in salvation, we can easily find ourselves slipping back into our former mentality of performing to gain God’s approval. So often we fear that we may have lost something when we have sinned, and need to re-earn our standing.

Grace dominates God’s attitude and actions toward us. This state of grace is not defined by occasional episodes of kindness when we have done well. As in salvation, grace cannot be gained by faithfully living for Christ. Study the following passages with the thought in mind—how does grace affect our walk with God?

## GRACE DOMINATES OUR LIVES.

## NOTE YOUR OBSERVATIONS (descriptions, key words, promises, or applications)

■ Ephesians 2:4-7

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■ Psalm 103:8-11

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■ Lamentations 3:21-25

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■ Romans 8:31-39

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■ 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

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## GRACE REPLACES THE LAW

■ Romans 6:8-14

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■ Romans 7:4-6

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■ Romans 11:6

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■ Galatians 3:21

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## GRACE PROMOTES OUR GROWTH

■ Acts 20:32

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■ 1 Peter 5:6-11

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■ 2 Peter 1:2-4

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■ 2 Peter 3:17-18

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■ Hebrews 4:14-16

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GRACE PROVIDES  
OUR SUFFICIENCY (Grace is more than acts of kindness; it includes His enablement in life.)

■ 1 Corinthians 15:9-10

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■ 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

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■ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

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■ Romans 12:4-8

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If someone stopped you on the street and asked you to explain grace, what would you say?

What are you working through right now that involves God's grace for it to be resolved?

Why do you find it difficult to completely embrace God's grace?

If you tried to live the Christian life without God's grace, what would it look like?

## CONCLUSIONS—

The Apostle John announced Jesus in his Gospel with these words: “For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.” –John 1:16-17 (NASB) Grace is piled upon grace. Jesus’ grace is immeasurable because it flows from His fullness. How aware are you that you stand in grace?

- God’s grace sent Jesus to the cross to pay a debt we could not pay.
- Grace offered salvation and all of its blessings.
- Grace replaced the Law, those standards of God that left us condemned.
- In His grace, Jesus is committed to transform our lives.
- His grace is sufficient for all that I face in life.

With this “grace upon grace,” why do we drift back to works? Why do we keep trying to earn His approval by our own goodness? The prophet Isaiah says, “...and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.” (Isaiah 64:6) Our best deeds as a Christian do not negate the need for grace.

There are many reasons we often have a tendency to rely on our works or performance:

- Satan whispers that we are still unworthy of the forgiveness Jesus offers.
- Because we fail so often, we think works will help resolve the guilt we feel.
- We think a good lifestyle will give us leverage to receive answers to prayer.
- We think that we can control life by our works, to get what we earn or deserve.
- We find it difficult to believe God unconditionally loves and accepts us.

Jesus’ grace is so radically different than anything we experience in life. It flows from His love, compassion, care, protection and mercy. Grace is referred to over 120 times in the Scriptures. A few questions help us process what it means to stand in His grace:

- Do I think God will love me less because of my sin?
- Can I say out loud, “God is not angry with me anymore?”
- Do I look for ways to improve God’s view of me?
- Are there things that I must do to maintain His approval?
- Do I strive to be obedient *because* of His grace, or to *obtain* His grace?
- Do I fear that God holds grudges because of my sins?
- Do I think God should do more for me because of the way I conduct my life?

Most believers struggle to understand the connection between grace and obedience. Obedience is a demonstration of our gratitude for His grace. Grace changes our motivation for walking consistently with Him. Knowing the price God paid through the cross, could His call for our obedience be anything short of what is best for us? We obey because of grace, not to obtain grace.

By grace we have been saved through faith. God who saved us by grace also sustains us by grace. Amazing grace.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live,  
but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh  
I live by faith in the Son of God,  
who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.  
Galatians 2:20

The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia who had come to Christ by faith. They had become confused by false teachers who taught that salvation required a system of works to be complete. He reminded them that no one could be justified (declared righteous) by their works, but only by faith in Christ (Galatians 2:16).

In Galatians 2:20, Paul concludes about our position in Christ:

- Crucified with Christ – by placing faith in Christ, we are identified with His death. Sin is paid for; our debt is covered. To add works to salvation is to nullify Christ’s death on the cross.
- Christ lives in us – God has placed the Holy Spirit in every believer. (Romans 8:9-10)
- The life we now live, we live by faith – just as we entered a relationship with Jesus *by faith*, so we continue in the relationship *by faith*. We live in continued reliance upon His payment for us. Works cannot save us, nor hold us securely in Christ.
- He loved us and delivered Himself for us – this was God’s motive for providing salvation. It now becomes our motive for living by faith in Christ.

So now we live by faith.

Faith is depending on Christ’s full payment for our sins and His credited righteousness to us.

Faith is trusting that He holds us securely in our relationship with Him.

Faith is resting in His sovereignty while we live in a world that appears to be in chaos.

Faith is obeying His moral boundaries when our fleshly desires are pulling us in another direction.

Faith is trusting His presence in and through difficulties, not demanding to go around them.

Faith is factoring God into the way I view every circumstance of life.

Faith is following Christ to places and ministry we would not choose on our own.

God asks us to trust what He says, what He does and where He leads. He asks us to trust Him when the culture, our family, our traditions, and our own desires disagree with Him. Faith is the means by which we walk with God. It is part of the framework of the Christian life.

...WE LIVE BY FAITH.

# FAITH

## UNDERSTANDING FAITH

## LESSON 1

The story is told of a pioneer dying of thirst as he crossed a barren desert. He found an abandoned shack and a nearby pump. A jug of water hung on the pump with a note attached: *There is enough water in the jug to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour the whole jug of water into the top of the pump to prime it, then pump the handle quickly. You will get all the water you want, then fill the jug for the next traveler.*

Put yourself into the pioneer's boots. When is the moment of faith for you?

When you saw the pump?

When you understood the note?

When you agreed the pump needed to be primed?

When you began to pour the water into the pump?

You probably sensed a "faith moment" when you began to pour the jug of water into the pump. It was at that moment you trusted that the instructions of the note were reliable and acted accordingly.

The pioneer could have had some fears the pump would not work as he primed the pump. Faith is not the absence of fear or doubts. Faith is responding to, or trusting, what God said is true. Just as the pioneer had to respond to the instructions on the pump, so we exercise faith by responding to God's word in the Scriptures.

**FAITH**: TO HAVE A FIRM CONVICTION, TO BELIEVE, TO TRUST OR RELY UPON.

Below are two translations of Hebrews 11:1. In your own words, summarize what faith is:

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Hebrews 11:1 (NASB)

*Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.* Hebrews 11:1 (NLT)

The author of Hebrews 11 points to the lives of Old Testament men and women who lived by faith. Read Hebrews 11:6-13; 23-40. How would you describe faith from the examples of God's people?

God sent the prophet Jeremiah to tell the people of Israel that hard times were coming. They were wavering between fleeing to Egypt or obeying God by surrendering to their enemy. What do you learn about faith from Jeremiah 17:5-10?

Draw some conclusions about faith in these passages:

■ Proverbs 3:5-6

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■ Psalm 37:1-7

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■ Psalm 40:1-4

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## APPLICATION—

Today there are probably circumstances in your life, difficulties you face, decisions to be made or commands to obey. You stand in the same place as the pioneer and the pump. You realize that you are at a faith crossroads, to either believe God and act accordingly, or live life by your own efforts.

Hebrews 11:6 presents two conditions for the kind of faith that pleases God:

*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

1. Believe that He is = God is able. Believe that God is Who the Bible says He is; that He is loving, good, wise, sovereign, all-knowing, all-powerful, merciful,...
2. Believe that He rewards = God is willing. "He rewards" means that He does what glorifies Him, transforms us and fulfills His purposes. Faith is not leverage to get what we desire, but rather faith is a dependence on Him that He will take us through our circumstances. .

Given the present circumstances in which you need to trust God, which one of the above conditions do you struggle with when it comes to trusting Him?

How do you resolve your difficulty in trusting God?





Considering any current circumstances or issues in your life, which attributes of God help you to trust Him? Why?

Given the descriptions of God in these passages, how would you approach His throne with a request? How would you finish the conversation?

What attributes of God give you reason to trust Him when He does not seem to work in your timing or expectations?

## CONCLUSIONS—

We will often be surprised that God does not operate as we expect Him to act. Throughout our lives we have formed our opinions of God by something other than the Scriptures. They are affected by:

- Difficult relationships with authorities in our lives – parent, coach, employer. They have failed us, used us or hurt us. We fear God might do the same.
- Disappointments with the way God answered our prayers or needs in the past. We expected God to do something that He did not promise. (i.e., we tend to use the Book of Proverbs as promises, but it was written as principles.)
- The image of the God who we want Him to be. (If He is so loving, there should be no pain.)
- Satan’s deceptions – Satan seeks to undermine God’s character; accusing Him of failing to meet our needs the way we “deserve” to be treated.

Want your faith to expand? God is so immense, mysterious, intricate and surprising that it will take more than a lifetime to search the depths of His character. Try one of these longer studies for a start:

- Read through the Book of Psalms with just one question in mind – What is God like? Record every description, trait, attitude and action of God.
- Read through the four Gospels. What is Jesus like? Record your conclusions from His interaction with people, His teaching, His focus and His relationships.

There is an overriding question to be asked of every Bible passage we read: Who is this God whom I will worship, trust and obey all the days of my life? Because we will only trust God to the extent that we know Him, we must pursue Him with our whole heart and mind.

# FAITH

## SUSTAINING FAITH

## LESSON 3

Walking by faith rather than by sight is not a simple life. From the unknowns to the uncomfortable, God has a way of putting us in circumstances designed to stretch our faith.

In Romans 5:3-5, the Apostle Paul gives a progression: trials produce perseverance, perseverance produces proven character and proven character produces hope. If God is going to use trials to produce perseverance in us, those trials will not be resolved as quickly as we would like. Prolonged difficulties have a way of testing our faith. We eventually question what it takes to sustain our faith.

In walking by faith, God will ask us to **WAIT**.

What do the Biblical writers have to say about waiting, about God and about our expectations?

■ Psalm 25:1-5

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■ Psalm 27:13-14

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■ Psalm 37:5-9

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■ Psalm 62:5-8

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■ Psalm 130:1-8

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■ Lamentations 3:19-26

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How do times of prolonged suffering, doubt or discouragement affect your faith personally?

What do you take from these verses for the times when it seems that God is silent?

Waiting will test our commitment to trust God. Waiting opens our eyes to examine how we view Him. When we have to wait, it appears that God is silent, but He is still unfolding His purposes for us. Trusting God means trusting His timing and His response. This is what it means to walk by faith.

In order to sustain our faith, God asks us to REMEMBER.

We wonder what God is up to in every new challenge, trial or circumstance. Satan will seek to discredit His character. If we forget what God has already done, we will be prone to doubt or drift.

In the following passages, make some observations about remembering: what, when and why:

- Joshua 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Chronicles 16:7-12 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 77:11-14 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 78:5-8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 105:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 106:6-13 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When God’s people rebelled against Him, He reminded them of His faithfulness. When God’s people questioned His actions, He reminded them of His sovereignty. When God’s people complained about their circumstances, He reminded them of His goodness. God reminded them that His actions are always consistent with His character. He does not change.

We build memorials to mark significant events in the life of our country, like the World War II Memorial, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial and the 9/11 Memorial. Memorials leave a record of sacrifices, people and stories so that we remember their significance to both us and the following generations.

The word translated “remember” means to recount, to mark or record. As Joshua set up a memorial of 12 stones to remind them of God’s power, so we may need some personal memorials as a reminder of what God has done in our lives. In times of discouragement or doubt, these memorials will be a reminder of God’s care, power, wisdom and guidance. Some ideas:

- Keep a journal of significant life lessons learned from your trials.
- Keep a journal of God “sightings,” when life can only be explained by God showing up.
- Keep a prayer journal, with a record of major prayer requests and His answers.
- Save mementos associated with God’s work, like a souvenir from a missions trip.
- Keep a file of encouraging notes from a mentor or close friends whom God used in your life.
- Keep photos of a ministry team on which you served.

# OBEDIENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is:  
fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.  
Ecclesiastes 12:13

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,  
"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.  
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;  
and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "  
Matthew 28:18-20

What would you have expected Jesus to say in His final charge to His disciples? Warnings? Cautions? Between the reminders of His authority and His continued presence, Jesus commanded His followers to go (not circle the wagons) and make disciples. He instructed them to do two things with these new followers:

1. Baptize them – to publicly declare that they believe in Jesus.
2. Teach them to observe all that He commanded the disciples.

Notice the wording of the second instruction, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." The word *observe* means *to keep* or *to apply oneself to*. Jesus didn't instruct His disciples to merely teach others what He commanded and taught them; He instructed them to teach new disciples how to be obedient to what He taught. The latter is more difficult, but more important.

Many will wonder why obedience is critical to the framework of the Christian life since we stand in grace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor executed for his resistance to the Nazi regime said it well: "For faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience." (*The Cost of Discipleship*)

Rather than legalistic and restrictive, whole-hearted obedience actually enhances the vibrancy of our relationship with Christ. Obedience reflects our understanding of who God is and what He desires from our lives. Rightly understood and applied, obedience results in joy, growth and fruitfulness.

...WE RESPOND IN OBEDIENCE.

# OBEDIENCE

## UNDERSTANDING OBEDIENCE

## LESSON 1

Obedience is more than keeping a set of rules or maintaining boundaries of behavior. As you read the following passages, draw your own conclusions about the nature of obedience.

### A NEW MOTIVATION

■ John 14:15, 23-26

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■ John 15:7-17

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■ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

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■ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

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■ Titus 2:11-14

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■ 1 John 2:3-6

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### A NEW HEART

■ 1 Chronicles 28:9

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■ Psalm 119:34

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■ Proverbs 3:1-2

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■ Ezekiel 36:26-27

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### A NEW MASTER

■ Romans 6:11-18

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■ Ephesians 4:1-3

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■ Colossians 3:1-17

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■ James 1:23-25

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■ 1 Peter 1:13-16

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From your observations in the above passages, summarize the importance of obedience.

What is the difference between duty and a heart of obedience?

In your personal experience, how has intentional obedience (especially in recurring sin) affected your walk with God?

## CONCLUSIONS—

1. **A NEW MOTIVATION.** Obedience is a normal reaction to God's incredible gift of salvation. If God's love moved Him to sacrifice Jesus so that we might have life, then His love must be the basis for His commands. Every command is meant to either provide for us or to protect us. He has freed us from the grip of sin so that we are now able to obey Him. From forgiveness to empowerment, God has provided everything we need to live the Christian life.
2. **A NEW HEART.** A changed heart moves our obedience from the realm of duty to devotion. Obedience is more about walking with Jesus than it is aligning our behavior to a rulebook. His commands are more than helpful suggestions. God commended the kings in the Old Testament who He described as being "whole-hearted" in their obedience.
3. **A NEW MASTER.** We are citizens of His Kingdom. Our obedience is evidence that we have placed our faith in Christ. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus invites His disciples to learn from Him, to take His yoke upon them. A yoke was a statement of submission. God, not our cultural norms, sets the standards for our lives.

We stand in grace. If we discount grace (God paid for our sin), we end up with legalism. Legalism turns obedience into an effort to earn His favor. If we take sin lightly because of grace, we end up with license, a disregard for the damage that sin does to our walk with God.

Author Jerry Bridges addresses the connection between obedience and grace:

"Ironically, the law of God, viewed as commands to be obeyed, should actually promote living by grace. When we view God's commands as optional—or think that as God's children we are no longer under the law as a moral requirement—we subtly slip into a works mentality. If obedience to God's law is optional, then in our minds we begin to accumulate merit or extra points. 'After all, we didn't have to obey, so we must gain some merit by voluntary obedience.'

But the person who knows that he is required to obey God's commands, even as a child of God, will see more and more how far short he comes in obedience. And if that person understands the biblical concept of grace, he will be driven more and more into the arms of the Savior and His merit alone." (Transforming Grace, p. 92.)

# O

# BEDIENCE

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## UNDERSTANDING DISOBEDIENCE

## LESSON 2

In order to grasp the significance of whole-hearted obedience, we need to understand the meaning of disobedience. What is going on in our lives when we disobey God. What is our intent, our drive, or our demand? Why does sin hinder our walk with God?

The Scriptures record periods of history when the people of God obeyed Him and when they disobeyed Him. Whether the writers addressed the nation of Israel as God's people or individuals in the church, they addressed the nature of their disobedience and called them back to obey Him.

Draw some conclusions about the nature of disobedience from these passages:

### DISOBEDIENCE IS DEFIANCE

- Jeremiah 2:20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jeremiah 2:31 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jeremiah 3:5 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jeremiah 5:23-24 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jeremiah 6:16-17 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jeremiah 7:23-24 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jeremiah 18:11-12 \_\_\_\_\_
- Isaiah 29:13 \_\_\_\_\_

From your notes on the above passages, summarize how God describes disobedience.

One of the things God identified in the people was their refusal to listen or respond. If you can identify the times of defiance that you have experienced in your own life, put into words what you are actually saying to God.

## DISOBEDIENCE IS DISMISSIVE (of God's character)

- Jeremiah 2:5 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jeremiah 2:11 \_\_\_\_\_
- Malachi 1:6, 11 \_\_\_\_\_
- Malachi 3:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

In the Book of Malachi, the people were giving lip service to God, and were staining the character of God. Their spiritual lives were reduced to a formality in order to look good. What does it tell you about their hearts?

When you act in disobedience, you are making a statement about God and about His character. Considering particular sins in your life, what aspects of His character are you dismissing when you disobey Him?

## DISOBEDIENCE IS DECEPTION

- Jeremiah 2:13 \_\_\_\_\_  
(Cisterns were underground reservoirs for collecting and holding water)
- Ezekiel 33:31-32 \_\_\_\_\_
- James 1:13-16 \_\_\_\_\_
- James 1:22-26 \_\_\_\_\_

Oswald Chambers, a Scottish evangelist and teacher, said "the root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good." In turn we are deceived by our own desires, to think that we can find fulfillment outside of God's boundaries.

List some sins by which we are most likely to struggle between obeying God and finding ways to fulfill our own desires. Why do we choose sin?

## CONCLUSIONS—

When we view disobedience as merely a violation of a set of laws or rules, we miss the significance of our heart attitude toward God. We have been defiant of His authority, or have been dismissive of His righteous character or have been deceived into thinking that we are more adequate to fulfill our desires outside of God's boundaries. We must view our disobedience as a relational issue with God.

# O

# BEDIENCE

“...but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’” (1 Peter 1:15-16)

God has called us to holiness, but because of the sin which still dwells in us, we will never live a completely righteous life in this world.

Peter preceded his charge to holiness with— “...fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:13b)

God in His grace makes it possible to walk with Him, and to get back on track when we don’t. Consider the following passages. Note your own conclusions about God’s provisions to live a life of obedience.

## HIS WORD – CONVICTION

- Psalm 119:11, 33-38 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Corinthians 4:4-5 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 \_\_\_\_\_
- Hebrews 4:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_

Consistency in a walk with Christ begins with being receptive to God’s conviction, most powerfully from His Word. Knowledge alone won’t change our lives—we need to act on what God shows us. When we walk whole-heartedly with God, we will hear and respond to His conviction.

## HIS GRACE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

- Psalm 32:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_
- Colossians 2:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_
- Hebrews 4:14-16 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 John 2:1 \_\_\_\_\_

If God extended grace to us when we were His enemies, how much more should we expect His grace as His children? Grace does not change the sinfulness or the seriousness of sin, but by grace Jesus extends forgiveness.

Disobedience does not break our relationship with Christ, but it does disrupt our fellowship, service and empowerment. Confession (agreeing with God about our sin) maintains a right heart before God.

## HIS SPIRIT – EMPOWERMENT

■ John 16:7-15

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■ Galatians 5:16-25

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God has called us to a life that is impossible to live outside the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit. He provides the strength to obey, the conviction to confess sin, and the grace to continue.

## HIS CHARGE – PURSUIT OF GODLINESS

■ Romans 6:12-18

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■ 1 Corinthians 10:13

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■ Colossians 2:6-7

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■ 1 Timothy 6:6-12

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■ 2 Peter 1:1-11

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How would you summarize a life of obedience from these passages?

In your life, how does “pleasing God” differ from “performing for God?”

What do these passages convict you to talk to the Lord about?

## CONCLUSIONS—

The Christian life is not just defined by what we should not do. It is described as a pursuit of God, of holiness, of Christ-likeness. It is not a pursuit to gain or earn anything. It is a pursuit to embrace what God has done. It is a pursuit to know Him better. The New Testament writers who tell us what to flee, conclude with what we should be pursuing. Passivity is a fruitless option.

# SUMMARY

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The change in our lives at salvation is staggering: Once enemies, now justified, forgiven and adopted children of God. We were transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Our eternal destiny is determined. We are both the object and the agent of His purposes.

What is the daily significance of all this? We have been granted access to the throne of the loving, sovereign, omnipotent God of the universe. He calls us child, friend, and fellow-worker. The question is: "How do we live in this new relationship with God?"

WE STAND IN GRACE.  
WE WALK BY FAITH.  
WE LIVE IN OBEDIENCE.

This is the framework of the Christian life. This is where transformation happens. This is where fellowship with Jesus deepens. This is where service thrives. This is where we experience God's care, and protection. This is where the truths of the Scriptures are lived out.

Therefore having been justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also  
we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand;  
and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live,  
but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh  
I live by faith in the Son of God,  
who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

Galatians 2:20

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is:  
fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.

Ecclesiastes 12:13