

Pursuing Obedience Through Surrender

God requires our obedience, and although it places needed demands on us, it comes from God's desire to point us toward what he knows is best for our lives. One of those demands is made clear in **Matthew 16: 24**:

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me”

Primarily because of our free will, obedience to God can be challenging. Some think of it as a bunch of oppressive rules and regulations that stifle us. Some feel it stands in the way of developing an intimate relationship with Him. And others may feel obedience is a threat to our independence.

Some of the obstacles to surrendering our will include:

- Fear, pride, laziness, impatience with God's timing, or personal ambitions.

Jesus is our example of surrendering our will to God. In **John 5: 30**, He says:

"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."

Obedience to God should not be seen as a “No”, but as God’s “Best yes for us”.

Obedience...

1. Binds us, while loosing us at the same time. (**Romans 6:16-18**)

¹⁶ Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. ¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

2. Blesses us if we are restrained by the word of God that liberates us (**James 1: 25**)

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

3. Limits us, yet opens up great possibilities, as shown in **Romans 6:22**

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

It requires love and sacrifice from us, but it leads to blessings and intimacy with God (**John 14: 21**):
"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

As this scripture says, he'll love us and show Himself to us when we keep His commandments.

Those who choose their personal ambitions over obeying God's plan for us may be concerned that those ambitions will be lost if we submit to His will. We don't lose our ambitions; when we surrender our will to Him it allows our ambitions to be molded by God into His will. Planning to pursue obedience puts ourselves in a position to hear what God wants us to do next, and then reap the blessing of the joy of following Him.

I remember the VERY LAST obstacle that kept me from surrendering my will to Him. My then girlfriend, now wife Myrna. No, it wasn't her that kept me from being saved, but my concern about what would happen to our relationship if I became saved. Concern my personal ambitions would be lost. One evening, my brother and his wife invited Myrna and I to come to a movie with them. The movie was called "A Distant Thunder", and it was one of those movies which for that time (1981) was pretty effective in showing the perils of hell. Result was after the movie, I tearfully asked someone to pray for me, and I said the life I was living wasn't worth being lost, I wanted to be saved. After prayer, I soon wondered how I was going to tell Myrna. I didn't know that she had the same experience I did, someone was praying with her separately, and we both became saved after the movie that evening. So God rewarded us with each other, for surrendering our will to him that evening.

I didn't know what was next for me, but God did, we relied on him teaching us. **Psalms 32: 8** reads:
"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you".

So as Myrna and I pursued God's word, and just as importantly, were involved in a fellowship of believers that were seeking obedience, He showed us what direction we should take. As we included Him in our decision making, he made ways out of no way, bringing us through various trials, abundantly blessing us.

I titled this message "Pursuing Obedience Through Surrender" because we need to chase obedience; it doesn't just happen haphazardly. There's so many things we plan, such as our daily routine to get ready for the day. We plan to save for a car, a house, vacations, retirement. What's our plan to obey God? If we don't plan to obey, our free will can take over and we're prone to follow our feelings and whatever we think makes sense to us, which often leads us into disobedience.

Abraham made plans to obey God in **Genesis 22: 3-12**.

<see PowerPoint slides for scripture>

Abraham did not haphazardly stumble into obedience here, he proved to be intentional. He had adequate preparation, strategy, accountability and attention to detail. His plans to raise Isaac into young adulthood surely didn't include offering him as a burnt sacrifice, yet Abraham allowed God to mold Abraham's ambitions into His will, and his demonstration of obedience and faith resulted in a generational covenant with Abraham and his seed.

Reviewing Abraham's plan to pursue obedience, it showed:

PREPARATION AND STRATEGY: It was 3 days journey to Mount Moriah where Abraham was to make his sacrifice. Abraham had to gather supplies ahead of time for overnight camping and plan adequate food and drink to support his entourage for the trip.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Abraham chose to bring 2 servants with him. It may have been to help carrying enough wood to build an altar, but he also may have brought them for companionship to offer counsel and encouragement for what had to be the hardest assignment of his life.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL: With the wood he also brought small pottery containers to carry charcoal or other embers until the fire was needed.

Abraham's planning to pursue obedience put him in position to let God tell him what to do. Abraham demonstrated his trust in God even before getting to Mount Moriah by making plans to obey. And as we know, that faith was rewarded by God, who provided the substitution sacrifice which saved his son Isaac.

In closing, let's follow the direction found in **Proverbs 16:3**, it's as relevant today as it was with Abraham -

"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."

So, let us plan to be obedient to God, sacrificing our will so it can be molded by his, being intentional in our preparation to obey God.