



Obedience

Chapter 35

We Should Obey God Willingly

- What difference does it make to obey willingly rather than unwillingly?

When Jesus was on the earth, a lawyer asked Him a question:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

“Jesus said unto him, 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.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:36–40).

From these scriptures we learn how important it is for us to love the Lord and our neighbors. But how do we show our love for the Lord?

Jesus answered this question when He said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father” (John 14:21).

Each of us should ask ourselves why we obey God’s commandments. Is it because we fear punishment? Is it because we desire the rewards for living a good life? Is it because we love God and Jesus Christ and want to serve Them?

It is better to obey the commandments because we fear punishment than not to obey them at all. But we will be much happier if we obey God because we love Him and want to obey Him. When

For teachers: You can help class members or family members think more deeply about a question by giving them time to ponder. After they have had enough time, ask for their responses.

we obey Him freely, He can bless us freely. He said, “I, the Lord, . . . delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end” (D&C 76:5). Obedience also helps us progress and become more like our Heavenly Father. But those who do nothing until they are commanded and then keep the commandments unwillingly lose their reward (see D&C 58:26–29).

- How can we increase our desire to obey?

We Can Obey without Understanding Why

- Why do we not always need to understand the Lord’s purposes in order to be obedient?

By keeping God’s commandments, we prepare for eternal life and exaltation. Sometimes we do not know the reason for a particular commandment. However, we show our faith and trust in God when we obey Him without knowing why.

Adam and Eve were commanded to offer sacrifices to God. One day an angel appeared to Adam and asked why he offered sacrifices. Adam replied that he did not know the reason. He did it because the Lord commanded him. (See Moses 5:5–6 and the picture in this chapter.)

The angel then taught Adam the gospel and told him of the Savior who was to come. The Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, and Adam prophesied concerning the inhabitants of the earth down to the last generation. (See Moses 5:7–10; D&C 107:56.) This knowledge and great blessings came to Adam because he was obedient.

God Will Prepare a Way

The Book of Mormon tells us that Nephi and his older brothers received a very difficult assignment from the Lord (see 1 Nephi 3:1–6). Nephi’s brothers complained, saying that the Lord required a hard thing of them. But Nephi said, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7). When we find it

difficult to obey a commandment of the Lord, we should remember Nephi's words.

- When has the Lord prepared a way for you to obey Him?

No Commandment Is Too Small or Too Great to Obey

Sometimes we may think a commandment is not very important. The scriptures tell of a man named Naaman who thought that way. Naaman had a dreadful disease and traveled from Syria to Israel to ask the prophet Elisha to heal him. Naaman was an important man in his own country, so he was offended when Elisha did not greet him in person but sent his servant instead. Naaman was even more offended when he received Elisha's message: wash seven times in the river Jordan. "Are not [the] rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" he demanded. He went away in a rage. But his servants asked him: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" Naaman was wise enough to understand that it was important to obey the prophet of God, even if it seemed a small matter. So he washed in the Jordan and was healed. (See 2 Kings 5:1–14.)

Sometimes we may think a commandment is too difficult for us to obey. Like Nephi's brothers, we may say, "It is a hard thing God requires of us." Yet, like Nephi, we can be sure that God will give us no commandment unless He prepares a way for us to obey Him.

It was a "hard thing" when the Lord commanded Abraham to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice (see Genesis 22:1–13; see also chapter 26 in this book). Abraham had waited many years for the birth of Isaac, the son God had promised him. How could he lose his son in such a way? This commandment must have been exceedingly difficult for Abraham. Yet he chose to obey God.

We too should be willing to do anything God requires. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it*" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 160). This can be our rule also.

- When have you received blessings as a result of your obedience to commandments that seemed small?

Jesus Christ Obeyed His Father

- What examples come to mind when you think of Jesus Christ obeying His Father?

Jesus Christ was the sublime example of obedience to our Heavenly Father. He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). His whole life was devoted to obeying His Father; yet it was not always easy for him. He was tempted in all ways as other mortals (see Hebrews 4:15). In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

Because Jesus obeyed the Father’s will in all things, He made salvation possible for all of us.

- How can remembering the Savior’s example help us be obedient?

Results of Obedience and Disobedience

- What are the consequences of obeying or disobeying the Lord’s commandments?

The kingdom of heaven is governed by law, and when we receive any blessing, it is by obedience to the law upon which that blessing is based (see D&C 130:20–21; 132:5). The Lord has told us that through our obedience and diligence we may gain knowledge and intelligence (see D&C 130:18–19). We may also grow spiritually (see Jeremiah 7:23–24). On the other hand, disobedience brings disappointment and results in a loss of blessings. “Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing. Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled” (D&C 58:31–33).

When we keep the commandments of God, He fulfills His promises, as King Benjamin told his people: “He doth require that ye

should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you” (Mosiah 2:24).

The Obedient Gain Eternal Life

The Lord counsels us, “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

The Lord has described other blessings that will come to those who obey Him in righteousness and truth until the end:

“Thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

“And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

“Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

“And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven. . . .

“For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man” (D&C 76:5–10).

- What does the phrase “endure to the end” mean to you?
- What can we do to stay true to gospel principles even when it is unpopular to do so? How can we help children and youth stay true to gospel principles?

Additional Scriptures

- Abraham 3:25 (we came to earth to prove our obedience)
 - 1 Samuel 15:22 (obedience is better than sacrifice)
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- Ecclesiastes 12:13; John 14:15; Romans 6:16; D&C 78:7; 132:36; Deuteronomy 4:1–40 (we should obey God)
- 2 Nephi 31:7 (Jesus Christ was obedient)
- Proverbs 3:1–4; 6:20–22; 7:1–3; Ephesians 6:1–3; Colossians 3:20 (children should obey their parents)
- D&C 21:4–6 (obey the prophet)
- John 8:29–32; Mosiah 2:22, 41; D&C 82:10; 1 Nephi 2:20 (blessings for obedience)
- D&C 58:21–22; 98:4–6; 134:5–7 (obey the laws of the land)
- Isaiah 60:12; D&C 1:14; 93:39; 132:6, 39 (consequences of disobedience)
- 2 Nephi 31:16; D&C 53:7; Matthew 24:13; Luke 9:62 (endure to the end)