

Lesson
23

Obedience: The First Law of Heaven

Purpose To help class members understand that God gives us commandments because of his love for us and that we should obey the commandments because of our love for him.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study 1 Samuel 9:17; 10:24; 13:13–14; 15:28; Luke 22:41–44; John 6:38; 14:15, 21; Mosiah 2:41; 3 Nephi 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21; Moses 1:39.
2. Materials needed:
 - a. The picture Jesus Praying in Gethsemane (picture 4 in the picture section of the manual; 62175; Gospel Art Picture Kit 227).
 - b. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher We show our love for Heavenly Father by obeying his commandments. It is important to remember that Heavenly Father gives us commandments because he loves us. He wants us to be like him and return to his presence. Help class members understand that it is by keeping the commandments that we are able to receive all of the blessings of the plan of salvation.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

The First Law of Heaven

Chalkboard discussion Write on the chalkboard *The First Law of Heaven*. Then ask class members the following question:

- What do you think the first law of heaven is?

Write class members' responses on the chalkboard. Acknowledge their thoughts and ideas, even if no one mentions obedience.

When all class members have had an opportunity to respond, write the word *obedience* on the chalkboard, or circle that word if it was mentioned.

- Why do you think obedience is the first law of heaven?

Quotation Read the following statement by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“The windows of heaven are open wide to the faithful and righteous; nothing closes them faster than disobedience. . . .

“ . . . Diligent, enduring obedience to God’s laws is the key that opens the windows of heaven. Obedience enables us to be receptive to the mind and will of the Lord. ‘The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing

and obedient' are those who receive the blessings of revelation through the open windows of heaven" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 75–76; see also D&C 64:34).

Explain that every blessing we receive is based on our obedience (see D&C 130:20–21; note that *irrevocable* means unable to be taken back and *predicate* means establish).

Obeying God and His Chosen Servants

Scripture story
and discussion

Tell class members that you are going to share two stories. One of the stories shows the consequences of disobedience, and the other shows the consequences of obedience.

Have class members read and mark the following scripture passages about Saul, the first king of Israel: 1 Samuel 9:17; 10:24; 15:28.

- In a short time, Saul went from being chosen by the Lord as king to being rejected by the Lord as king. What do you think could have happened to change Saul's standing with the Lord?

Allow class members to respond to this question. Then have them read and mark 1 Samuel 13:13–14.

- What was the main reason for Saul being rejected by the Lord? (He was disobedient to the Lord and His servants.)
- For Saul, disobedience made the difference between being king and not being king. What difference does our obedience or disobedience make in our lives?

Story and
discussion

Explain that part of obeying God is following the counsel of those he has called to lead us. Share the following story told by President Gordon B. Hinckley, fifteenth President of the Church:

"Years ago I was on a mission in England. I had been called to labor in the European Mission office in London under President Joseph F. Merrill of the Council of the Twelve, then president of the European Mission. One day three or four of the London papers carried reviews of a reprint of an old book, snide and ugly in tone, indicating that the book was a history of the Mormons. President Merrill said to me, 'I want you to go down to the publisher and protest this.' I looked at him and was about to say, 'Surely not me.' But I meekly said, 'Yes, sir.'

"I do not hesitate to say that I was frightened. I went to my room and felt something as I think Moses must have felt when the Lord asked him to go and see Pharaoh. I offered a prayer. My stomach was churning as I walked over to the Goodge Street station to get the underground train to Fleet Street. I found the office of the president [of the publishing company] and presented my card to the receptionist. She took it and went into the inner office and soon returned to say that the president was too busy to see me. I replied that I had come five thousand miles and that I would wait. During the next hour she made two or three trips to his office; then finally he invited me in. I shall never forget the picture when I entered. He was smoking a long cigar with a look that seemed to say, 'Don't bother me.'

“I held in my hand the reviews. I do not recall what I said after that. Another power seemed to be speaking through me. At first he was defensive and even belligerent. Then he began to soften. He concluded by promising to do something. Within an hour word went out to every book dealer in England to return the books to the publisher. At great expense he printed and [placed] in the front of each volume a statement to the effect that the book was not to be considered as history, but only as fiction, and that no offense was intended against the respected Mormon people. Years later he granted another favor of substantial worth to the Church, and each year until the time of his death I received a Christmas card from him.

“I came to know that when we try in faith to walk in obedience to the requests of the priesthood, the Lord opens the way, even when there appears to be no way” (“If Ye Be Willing and Obedient,” *Ensign*, July 1995, 4–5).

- Why was it difficult for young Elder Hinckley to obey the counsel of his mission president? Why is it sometimes difficult for us to be obedient?
- How was Elder Hinckley blessed for his obedience?
- What counsel has the Lord given recently through Church leaders? How are we blessed when we follow the counsel of our Church leaders?

God Gives Us Commandments Because He Wants Us to Live with Him Again

Scripture
discussion

Have class members read and mark Moses 1:39.

- What is God’s work and glory, or main purpose?

As class members answer this question, make sure they understand the terms *immortality* and *eternal life*. Immortality is a state of living forever, never to die again. Eternal life is living forever in the presence of God. It is the gift given to those who are exalted in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom (see lesson 8).

- How does our obedience play a part in Heavenly Father’s work and glory?

Point out that we will all be resurrected and receive immortality. However, we must obey Heavenly Father’s commandments to be able to receive eternal life. Heavenly Father gives us commandments because he loves us and wants us to become like him and dwell in his presence forever.

Point out that another reason Heavenly Father has given us commandments is to help us be happy. Have class members read and mark Mosiah 2:41.

- How have you seen that obedience to the commandments brings happiness?

If class members have difficulty answering this question, you may want to offer a few examples, such as when we obey the commandment to fast properly, we can enjoy spiritual growth; and when we obey the commandment to repent, we can be forgiven and freed from the burden of guilt. After you give examples, allow class members more time to think of examples of their own.

As you discuss this question, you may want to point out that obedience to the commandments does not guarantee that we will never experience difficulties or challenges. However, even when we are disappointed or sad about circumstances

in our lives, we can be happy about our lives in general because of our faith in God and our assurance that he is pleased with our efforts to be obedient.

Jesus Christ Set a Perfect Example of Obedience

Scripture
discussion

Tell class members that Heavenly Father showed his great love for us when he sent his Son to atone for our sins. By doing what Heavenly Father wanted him to do, Jesus Christ set a perfect example of complete obedience. Have class members read and mark John 6:38 (you may want to explain that Jesus is speaking in this verse).

- Why did Jesus come down from heaven?

Show class members the picture of Jesus praying in Gethsemane. Have them read and mark Luke 22:41–44.

- How did Jesus show complete obedience before he suffered for our sins and afflictions in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Explain that Jesus asked to be spared the pain that he knew would come in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, he put Heavenly Father's will before his own and willingly partook of the "bitter cup" the Father gave him (see 3 Nephi 11:11).

- What are some situations in which we might need to say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"?

We Obey the Commandments Because We Love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ

Discussion

- What are some reasons why people obey the commandments?

You may want to list class members' responses on the chalkboard. Answers may include the following:

People obey because:

1. They are afraid of being punished for disobedience.
2. They want the rewards that come from obedience.
3. They want other people to see them and think that they are righteous.
4. They feel peace and joy when they are obedient.
5. They love Heavenly Father and Jesus.

Have class members read and mark John 14:15.

- Why do you think love for Heavenly Father and Jesus is such an important reason for obeying the commandments?

Obedience Prepares Us to Serve God

Story and
discussion

Explain that when we are obedient, we are better prepared to serve God and those around us. Then share the following story related by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Two missionaries . . . had spent an active day establishing a branch of the Church in a remote village. At 5:30 that morning, they had taught a family before the husband left for the fields. Later they had struggled to plaster their adobe walls to keep out blood-sucking insects. During the week they had laid a small cement floor and had hung a five-gallon can with a shower head to keep clean. They had begun a sanitation facility and put new gravel and sand in their water filter. For part of the day they had worked beside men in the fields to later teach them. They were exhausted and ready for welcome rest.

“There came an anxious knock at the crude wooden door. A small girl was crying. She had been running and was gasping for air. They struggled to piece together her message, delivered amid sobs in a torrent of words. Her father had suffered a severe head injury while riding his donkey in the darkness. She knew he would die unless the elders saved his life. Men of the village were at that moment carrying him to the missionaries. She pled for her father’s life, then ran to help him.

“The seriousness of their desperate situation began to engulf them. They were in a village with no doctors or medical facilities. There were no telephones. The only means of communication was a rough road up a riverbed, and they had no vehicle.

“The people of the valley trusted them. The missionaries were not trained in medicine. They did not know how to care for a serious head wound, but they knew someone who did. They knelt in prayer and explained their problem to an understanding Father in Heaven. They pled for guidance, realizing that they could not save a life without His help.

“They felt impressed that the wound should be cleansed, closed, and the man given a blessing. One companion asked, ‘How will he stand the pain? How can we cleanse the wound and bless him while he is in such suffering?’

“They knelt again and explained to their Father, ‘We have no medicine. We have no anesthetic. Please help us to know what to do. Please bless him, Father.’

“As they arose, friends arrived with the injured man. Even in the subdued candlelight, they could see he had been severely hurt. He was suffering greatly. As they began to cleanse the wound, a very unusual thing occurred. He fell asleep. Carefully, anxiously, they finished the cleansing, closed the wound, and provided a makeshift bandage. As they laid their hands on his head to bless him, he awoke peacefully. Their prayer had been answered, and his life saved. The trust of the people increased, and a branch of the Church flourished” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 46; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 35).

- What commandments did these missionaries obey? (Answers may include that they served others, prayed for help, and followed the guidance of the Spirit.) How did the missionaries’ obedience help them in their efforts to receive guidance from the Lord? How did their obedience affect their success in missionary service?
- How might this situation have been different if the missionaries had not been obedient?

After class members have discussed these questions, read Elder Scott's comments about the missionaries:

"The missionaries were able to save a life because they trusted the Lord. They knew how to pray with faith for help with a problem they could not resolve themselves. Because they were obedient to the Lord, the Lord trusted them and answered their prayer. They had learned how to recognize the answer when it came as a quiet prompting of the Spirit. You have that same help available to you if you live for it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 46; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 35–36).

Point out that although our Heavenly Father always hears our prayers, we are more prepared to receive his answers when we are obedient.

Testimony

Tell class members how you feel about the love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have for us. Express your gratitude for the commandments, and testify that Heavenly Father has given us commandments to help us receive eternal life and happiness.

Encourage class members to show their love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ by keeping the commandments.

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. If *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276) is available, show "The Commandments Are for Our Protection," a six-minute segment.
2. Sing or read the words to the hymn "Love One Another" (*Hymns*, no. 308; or *Children's Songbook*, 136). Ask class members to think about how the words of this hymn apply to the Savior's counsel in John 14:15.

3. Read or tell in your own words the following story told by President Wilford Woodruff, fourth President of the Church:

"I will now give an example from my own experience of the result of not obeying the voice of the Spirit.

"Some years since I had part of my family living in Randolph, Rich County [Utah]. I was there on a visit, with my team [of horses], in the month of December.

"One Monday morning my monitor, the Spirit watching over me, said: 'Take your team and go home to Salt Lake City.'

"When I named it to my family who were at Randolph they urged me strongly to stop longer.

"Through their persuasion I stayed until Saturday morning, with the Spirit continually prompting me to go home. I then began to feel ashamed to think that I had not obeyed the whisperings of the Spirit to me before.

"I took my team and started early on Saturday morning. When I arrived at Woodruff, the Bishop urged me to stop until Monday and he would go with me.

“I told him, ‘No, I [have] tarried too long already.’

“I drove on sprightly, and when within fifteen miles of Wasatch, a furious snow storm overtook me, the wind blowing heavily in my face.

“In fifteen minutes I could not see any road whatever, and knew not how or where to guide my horses.

“I left my lines loosely on my animals, went inside my wagon, tied down the cover, and committed my life and guidance into the hands of the Lord, trusting to my horses to find the way, as they had twice before passed over that road.

“I prayed to the Lord to forgive my sin in not obeying the voice of the Spirit to me, and implored Him to preserve my life.

“My horses brought me into the Wasatch [train] station at 9 o’clock in the evening, with the hubs of my wagon dragging in the snow.

“I got my horses under cover, and had to remain there until the next Monday night, with the snow six feet deep on the level, and still snowing.

“It was with great difficulty at last that I saved the lives of my horses by getting them into a [railroad] box car and taking them to Ogden; while if I had obeyed the revelation of the Spirit of God to me, I should have traveled to Salt Lake City over a good road without any storm.

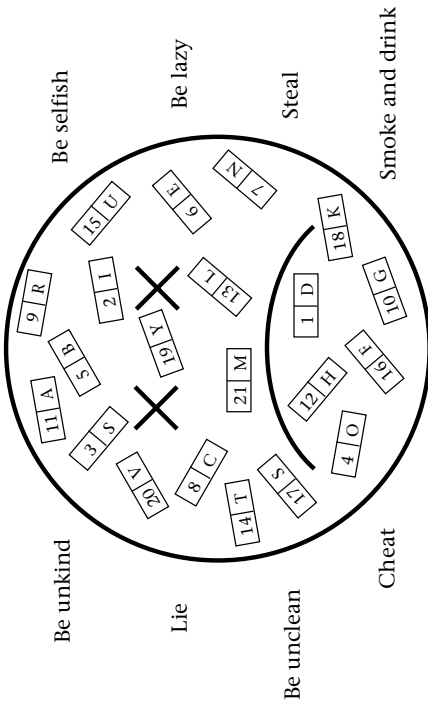
“As I have received the good and the evil, the fruits of obedience and disobedience, I think I am justified in exhorting all my young friends to always obey the whisperings of the Spirit of God, and they will always be safe” (*Leaves from My Journal* [1881], 90–91).

4. Make copies of the “Obedience Puzzle” on the next page. Since there will not be time to do this activity in class, give each class member a copy of the puzzle to take home. Encourage class members to complete the puzzle by themselves or with their families in family home evening.

OBEDIENCE PUZZLE

Copy the letters from each circle to the corresponding numbered spaces in the box below it.

DECIPHER THIS DISOBEDIENCE DILEMMA:



1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 6 7 8 6

8 11 7 5 9 2 7 10

* 5 11 1 12 6 11 13 14 12

* 15 7 14 9 15 6 16 9 2 6 7 1 17

* 13 11 8 18 4 16

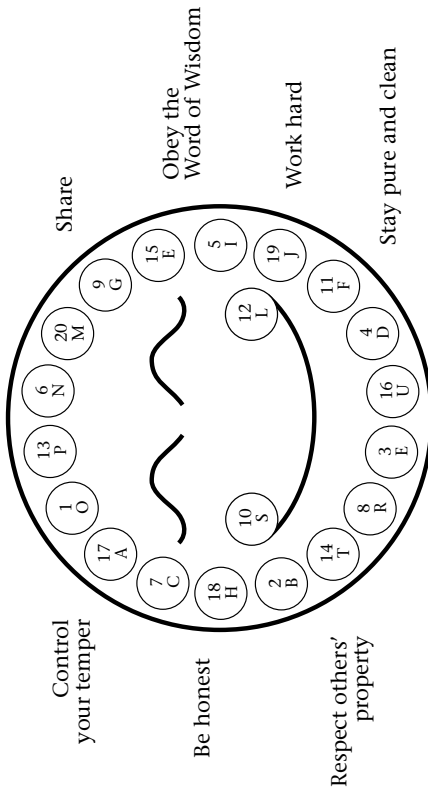
8 4 7 16 2 1 6 7 8 6

* 13 11 8 18 4 16 14 9 15 17 14

16 9 4 21 4 14 12 6 9 17

* 17 13 11 20 6 9 19 14 4 17 11 14 11 7

OPEN UP THIS OBEDIENCE OPTION:



1 2 3 4 5 15 6 7 3

7 17 6 2 8 5 6 9

* 7 1 6 11 5 4 3 6 7 15

* 10 3 12 11 8 3 10 13 15 7 14

* 14 8 16 10 14 11 8 1 20 1 14 18 3 8 10

* 9 1 1 4 18 3 17 12 14 18, 19 1 2 10,

17 6 4 11 8 5 15 6 4 10

* 14 3 20 13 12 15 2 12 3 10 10 5 6 9 10

* 13 3 8 11 15 7 14 11 8 3 15 4 1 20

17 6 4 9 1 4 18 1 1 4