SECTION 1: A Story of Obedience

Read Numbers 13 and 14

God’s people, Israel, had been slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. With a display of mighty signs and wonders worked through the Lord’s servant Moses, God delivered them out of Egypt’s bitter bondage and into His glorious freedom.

After a year’s time of learning God’s law and being instructed in how to worship and know God, it was time to go into Canaan, the land God had long ago promised to Abraham’s descendents, and take it as a God-given blessing. Everything was in place for God to deliver on His promise and for Israel to receive their possession. God commanded Moses to send 12 men, all leaders, to survey the land, both the obstacles and the opportunities; they were to bring back a faith-filled, courageous report to Moses and the people. Among this group of leaders were two men, Joshua and Caleb. They and the other 10 men found the land as God had described it, a land of rich resources with ample room for all. And while there would be a war to wage and work to do to fully possess the land, the God of divine protection and power would be with them.

But rather than obediently bringing back a good report, 10 of these spies brought back a report filled with fear and unbelief. Now these men were not commanded to form their own view as to whether or not the land could be conquered; God had already promised it would be. They were to simply to believe in God’s power and obey His directive. Instead, they rebelled against God and their leader, Moses, and they led the Israelites to do the same. Only Joshua and Caleb believed and obeyed God; they spoke words of faith, courage and conviction. But the people rejected Joshua and Caleb’s good report, persuaded that the negative report was true. As a result of their unbelief and disobedience, God deemed the people disqualified to enter the land. Instead, they died in the wilderness over a 40-year period. Only Joshua and Caleb, men of a “different spirit,” entered the land of promise and provision because they followed and obeyed the Lord fully.

The Definition of Obedience

What does it mean to obey?

Read 1 John 2:3-6

To “obey” means to follow a command or guidance of another, or to conform or comply with the directives of another. Just as the practice of obedience is critical to the success and safety of a military unit, obeying the commands of the Lord is critical to the safety and success of His entire people. However, understanding the full meaning of obedience is more than just outward actions or behavior. It engages your heart and mind. God says that what He had in His mind for you, from the beginning, is that your life would be patterned after the image of His son, Jesus.

“Obey” in the original Greek language is the word "Hupakouo," which means to listen to something, hearken, give heed to and follow. It is the manifestation of one’s faith in doing what is commanded in the Bible and denotes a continuous submission to the will of God. To obey is two-fold: it is both to hear the Lord and to do what He is asking you to do.

In the middle ages, a Latin word that came from the root word “obey” is the word “obeisance.” This was used to describe a posture of humility and an attitude of the heart that a common person would render to a king. “Obeisance” was closely associated with the concept of worship. You do not merely obey what the Lord says in your actions, but you intentionally conform your thinking to His way in your mind, rendering your heart humbly before Him because of who He is.

To “obey” is to follow the commands and guidance of the Lord in your heart, mind and actions, so that He is seen through your life.

Why do I need to obey?

Read John 15:9-17

Obedience enables you to abide in the Lord’s love. When you keep His commandments, He responds by giving you His grace to do what He has commanded. As you are obedient, you will experience more of His manifest presence in your life, and have a more intimate
relationship with Him. The goal of a disciple is not just knowing about the Father, but looking, sounding and acting like the Father in every way. The way you do this is by obeying the things He has told you to do, adhering to the truth of the Bible and guidance of the Holy Spirit, presenting your heart to Him. This produces the life of Christ in you in greater measure. Your obedience enables you to become the person God has designed you to be. Through your obedience, you will bring great glory to God, the greatest good to man, and see the Kingdom of God grow.

**How do I obey?**

*Read John 14:23-24 and Philippians 2:8*

The first step in obedience is listening with open ears and an open heart, ready to obey. In Hebrews 13:17 the word submission can be translated as “being softened towards”, the idea that you are receptive to “who” is asking and “what” they are asking you to do. Obedience is marked by a rapid response that leaves nothing undone and does nothing different from the orders given. Your response must be one of faith that you are doing the Father’s will and His authority and power are with you to do all that He intends. You say “yes” with your heart, set your mind on His will being done, and move in faith to act upon what He has told you.

The Lord helps you to obey through His gift of the Holy Spirit who leads and guides you into all truth, and His written word, the Bible. Additionally, He has placed other believers in your life to disciple, mentor and coach you as you discern His will and obey Him.

Take 10 minutes to examine how you have responded to the Lord in obedience this week. Ask Him by the leading of the Holy Spirit and the truths in the Bible to show you where you have not been walking in complete obedience to those things that He has commanded you to do.

Use the journal pages provided to write out the areas from the Examine section that you need to grow in. Write down a prayer acknowledging to the Lord where your obedience has fallen short of His direction. Read it aloud and receive His complete forgiveness for any area of partial obedience or disobedience.

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5 John 14:26
SECTION 3:

The Discussion about Obedience

Use the journal pages provided to write your response to each of these questions in preparation for a group discussion.

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you now about a specific area of your life where you have not obeyed or have partially obeyed. What is that area? How will you repent and fully obey in this area?

Share with the group a time where you fully walked in obedience to the Lord. How did it feel? How was it difficult? No matter the outcome, the disciple obeys. God rewards a life of obedience.

Commit to the Lord that you will obey Him when you hear His voice and read His Word, the Bible. What are the action steps of obedience you will take?
Marks of Maturing

These are the Marks of Maturing as someone who obeys. How well do they describe you? Use the journal pages provided to write your response.

- A disciple is someone whose life is patterned after the life of Jesus.
- A disciple is someone who experiences the Lord’s manifest presence in his/her life, and has an intimate relationship with Him.
- A disciple is someone who says “yes” with his/her heart, sets his/her mind on God’s will being done, and moves in faith to act upon what He has said.

Go Further

Here are some optional readings for you as you walk in obedience:

“The cross is laid on every Christian. It begins with the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with His death... we give over our lives to death. Since this happens at the beginning of the Christian life, the cross can never be merely a tragic ending to an otherwise happy religious life. When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow Him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time... death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at His call. That is why the rich young man was so loath to follow Jesus, for the cost of his following was the death of his will. In fact, every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and His call are necessarily our death and our life.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"Just as a servant knows that he must first obey his master in all things, so the surrender to an implicit and unquestionable obedience must become the essential characteristic of our lives." Andrew Murray

"Wicked men obey from fear; good men, from love." Augustine

"The natural people – those whose minds have not been enlightened by the Holy Spirit – scoff at us. What we do doesn't always seem logical to them. But then, who says our actions have to be logical? The Bible tells us the natural or carnal mind doesn't understand spiritual things (see 1 Corinthians 2:14). Too often, we push aside thoughts, saying, ‘This doesn't make sense,’ and we actually ignore divine guidance. It's true of course, the devil can flood our minds with wild thoughts that we do need to ignore, but if we pray and open ourselves to the Spirit, we soon know the difference. This is an important principle of obedience we must grasp: obeying instead of reasoning, or as one of my friends calls it, ‘The Nevertheless Principle.’ She says sometimes she feels God leading her to do things that don't always make a lot of sense. When she hears herself expressing that sentiment, she quickly adds, ‘Nevertheless.’ Then she obeys. That is really all God asks of us: to obey instead of reasoning against something He is telling us to do. The best policy is to check with your spirit and see if you have peace rather than checking with your mind to see if what God is asking is reasonable.” Joyce Meyer

6 www.christianquotes.com, Dietrich Bonhoeffer - German Lutheran Pastor/Theologian, 1906-1945
8 http://christianquotes.org

www.new-song.com