

Obedience

Key Verse

"...We must obey God rather than men." Romans 5:29b

Basic Biblical Understanding

Obedience is not an isolated concept. Instead, obedience is a single link in a greater chain of God's activity in which guidance, obedience, faith, and outcome are always linked together. Guidance is what God provides through Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and prayer. Obedience is our response of following God's guidance. Faith is the motivator of our obedience. Outcome is God's prerogative according to His sovereign will.

Our part is to believe and obey. However, we must be careful to submit our obedience to God's sovereign will. Our obedience does not guarantee our will; it allows us to rest in His sovereign plan.

- Jesus' faith and obedience took Him to the cross. Matthew 27
- Stephen's faith and obedience resulted in martyrdom. Acts 7
- Paul's faith and obedience led him to being beaten, imprisoned, stoned, and eventually put to death. 2 Corinthians 11:21–28; 2 Timothy 4:6–8
- For thousands of years, faithful servants of God have been persecuted, tortured, and killed while walking in full faith and obedience. Hebrews 11

Those stories do not suggest that obedience always results in difficulty. There are many stories where God immediately blesses people who have obeyed in faith (2 Kings 4:1–7; Daniel 3:16–28; Daniel 6; John 2:1–12; Matthew 12:9–13). The point is that obedience doesn't guarantee our preferred outcome. God does not promise to grant our wishes in response to obedience. Things do not always get better in the short-term. In fact, God doesn't even promise our earthly safety when we obey.

Someone might say, "That's not fair! If we obey God, He should bless us." That's an understandable yet incomplete response. We need to remember what Jesus said to those who desired to follow Him. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me" (Luke 9:23b). We cannot promote our rights and follow Jesus simultaneously. We are called to die to self so that Christ may live through us.

For those who have suffered, been mistreated, or even died while obeying God, they will ultimately be rewarded (Matthew 19:29). But even in the short-term, they received a greater testimony: Jesus is enough!

God honors our obedience; trust Him with the results.

Verses (ask God to show you how they apply to your life)

- "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15
- "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Luke 6:46
- "...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..." 1 Samuel 15:22b

Helpful Questions and Application

1. Where is God instructing you to walk in faith and obedience? List those areas. Will you trust Him regardless of the outcome?
2. Obedience is not easy, but it is right. What are the fears that are keeping you from obeying? As you make your list, submit those fears to God in prayer and ask Him to give you the courage to step out in obedience.

Additional Resources

Scripture references: Exodus 19:5; Joshua 22:5; Romans 6:16; Philippians 2:8; Titus 3:1

WordTruth articles: ["Becoming a Christ-like Servant"](#)
["Living by Feelings or Living by Faith"](#)