

**Men's
Servant Leadership Study**

**Week 10
OBEDIENCE TO GOD**

Memory Verse for the Week: 1 Samuel 15:22

Day 1 Obedience to God

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-23

Along with the costs of leadership come many opportunities – some positive, some negative. Many leaders have access to information or financial resources that they could use to their personal advantage. Others travel widely and almost anonymously, and have ample opportunity to compromise their purity. Still others use their position to unethically crush the competition – whether internal or external. Whether the temptation is money, sex or power, many leaders sell themselves out. We read about the higher profile cases on the newspaper headlines every day.

Every leader should periodically ask, “Do I have a price?” A godly leader’s commitment to God should be such that he or she will obey him no matter what he or she is offered to compromise. Unfortunately, Saul – the leader who had everything a nation could want – lacked such commitment. When the pressure was on, instead of obeying God’s command to completely destroy the Amalekites, Saul spared the king and the best of the livestock (v. 9). That was Saul’s price – a defeated king to gloat over and expanded wealth through owning animals, one of the major contemporary wealth indicators. Later, when Samuel confronted the king, Saul feebly explained that he had saved the best for the Lord. Instead of owning his sin, he rationalized it.

How did God respond? He said that obedience is better than sacrifice (v. 22). God doesn’t want ours, He wants us. Why? Because when God has us, He also has ours. King Saul rejected the Lord, and the Lord rejected him as king over Israel.

So ask yourself, “What my price? What would it take for me to disobey God?” Hopefully, your commitment is nonnegotiable. Such commitment is a crucial element in the character of a leader. Reread this tragic story of Saul’s’ disobedience to God and think through the tragic consequences of his failure.

1) Read verse 3. What is it that God is telling Saul to do? _____

2) In verse 13 Saul proclaims that he obeyed the Lord’s instructions. Do you think that Saul believed his own words? _____

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3) If you had an opportunity to be there when Samuel gave Saul God's instructions what advice would you have offered Saul to help him be obedient? _____

4) Is the advice that you would have given Saul something that you live by in your own life? _____

DAY 2 Obedience to God and Who God Is

A brief overview of Israel's history shows that the fundamental problem of God's covenant people was their repeated failure to obey God's commands. God always blessed their obedience, but their habitual disobedience was the cause of their misery and their eventual downfall. Clearly, there is a basic principle here that applies to our own lives as well. Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13 to see God's loving requirements for His people.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13

God's requirements in this passage relate to trust and the obedience that flows out of trust. Since our natural disposition is to trust in the visible rather than in what we can't see, we will engage in a spiritual conflict as long as we walk this earth.

This conflict between the call to obedience and the lure of disobedience is well illustrated in the lives of the kings of Judah. Even the minority of kings who did what was right in God's sight struggled with the issue of obedience, and most of these men slipped into disobedience in the latter part of their lives. Whenever this slippage occurred, it happened because the kings decided to trust in something or someone other than the Lord.

In one sense, God's requirements of us are quite simple: fear him, walk in His ways, love him, serve him, obey Him commands. All these things are facets of one thing: a growing personal relationship with the God who has already demonstrated His unflinching commitment to our best interests. Note well the stated purpose behind the commands in this passage: they are for your own good.

The more we realize in our thinking and experience that God always seeks our good, the more we will be willing to trust and obey Him in what He asked us to do and to avoid.

1) Do you really believe that everything the Lord commands you to do is for your own good, as the passage indicates? _____

2) If so, what mental process is going on when you decide to pursue a course of disobedience?

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3) What is the connection between knowing God and obeying Him? _____

Day 3 Obedience to God and Who I Am

According to Scripture, a fundamental factor of the quality of this life and of the next is our response to God's initiatives and claims on the choices we make. Response is unavoidable; we may ignore, resist or reject God's initiatives and requirements, or we may respond in positive obedience. Look at 1 John 5:3 for a biblical perspective on God's commands.

Read 1 John 5:3

Despite appearances to the contrary, God's commands are not burdensome. Far from being hardships, they are consistently beneficial, because obedience to God's will inevitably leads to divine blessing. In fact, it can be stated categorically that in the long run, disobedience to God always produces more pain than obedience to God. This is ironic, since the reason we usually disobey God is because we think that obedience will be more painful to us than following our own desires.

If God is really loving, the things He asks us to do are best for us. If God is sovereign, He alone can order our circumstances to bring about what is best for us. Thus, obedience is not burdensome if we are committed to the truths of God's goodness and sovereign purposes.

Jesus told His disciples that obedience to him was the clearest demonstration of their love for Him (John 14:15). Obedience flows out of love for God and leads to greater intimacy with Him (vv.23-24).

1) Think about this for a minute. Have you ever regretted an act of obedience to God? _____

2) Have you ever prospered in disobedience to God? _____

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3) To what degree are the choices you make based on right thinking (a biblical worldview), on wrong thinking (a temporal view of the world), or on emotions (the subjective tensions in your life)?

DAY 4 Obedience to God and How I Think

When obedience to God is costly, why be obedient? All of us had better have an answer to that question before we find ourselves in the vise of a tough decision. Three young men put their lives on the line rather than disobey God. We see why in Daniel 3:16-18.

Read Daniel 3:16-18

Most of what God requires is so easy and beneficial to His followers that we do it without even thinking about it. A smaller number of commands require discipline, commitment, accountability groups – some intentional decisions and maintenance. But periodically the leader finds himself or herself backed into a corner. That’s when it’s crunch time: “Obey God and lose the deal,” “Obey God and kill the chance for a promotion.” For these three young men it was, “Obey God and lose your life.”

For Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – and for all of us – obedience at that level requires a clear conviction. At that level, obedience is never based on what’s at stake, what’s to be gained or lost. It is only based on what’s real. To these three men the furnace was real. The threat on their life was real. The choice they faced was real. But, more importantly, so was the Sovereign God.

For these three young men, this issue was highly focused. Although two conflicting orders were given, the issue wasn’t so much “What was the order?” but “Who gave it?” For these three, the order of a king who could take their lives would never take precedence over the will of Almighty God. Their story of courage has inspired untold numbers of believers who have faced the fire – both literally and figuratively – over the centuries. Let their courage work its way into your life as well.

1) When obedience to God is costly, why be obedient? _____

2) What cost have you paid recently for disobeying a directive from God? _____

DAY 5 Obedience to God and What I Do

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There will be times when obedience to God means saying no to our personal desires. Jesus modeled such obedience in the Garden of Gethsemane. Author Vernon Grounds helps us appreciate the mindset that enabled Jesus to obey His Father even when it meant going to the cross.

Read Matthew 26:39

This is the ultimate statement of obedience. What Jesus wanted at this moment was not in line with what His Father wanted. Following the Father’s will led Jesus to an agonizing death and unimaginable separation from God. Jesus was fully aware of that, yet He still professed His conviction that God’s will was best. Although no human will ever know the depth of suffering that Jesus faced in that quiet garden, His statement in this moment of decision should be every leader’s response to the Almighty God. Vernon Grounds calls this attitude of obedience “the Gethsemane mindset” (p.42).*

The Gethsemane mindset is the attitude of trustful self-surrender demonstrated by Jesus as He prayed to the Father, not what I want but what You would have. It is the renunciation of our own human feelings, desires, hopes, dreams and ambitions so that God’s purposes may be accomplished. We develop this mindset as we follow Jesus’ example. We set our minds on doing the will of God, obeying Him even though obedience involves denying self and surrendering anything that would interfere with the fulfillment of the divine purpose. We do this in the confidence that, as we follow our Lord’s example, we are going to experience beyond loss and loneliness and pain the joy and blessing and glory which mean unimaginable self-fulfillment

Jesus Christ ultimately fulfilled His glorious purpose only through obedience to His Father. The ultimate test of any leader is his willingness to obey the same Father to whom Jesus entrusted Himself.

*Vernon Grounds, *Radical Commitment*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1984.

1) Read Mark 15:1 – 37. What were the consequences of Jesus obedience to His Father?

2) What does James 1:13 – 15 tell us about following our own desires?

3) Do you have an area in your life that you have been struggling to be obedient to God in?

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