



Introduction

Any product with complex working parts normally comes with an owner's manual. The owner's manual provides specific guidelines for the use and care of the product you bought. For instance, the owner's manual for a car will tell you how often to change the oil and how often to have a tune-up. To ignore the instructions would result in damage to the car.

The Bible is God's owner's manual for mankind. God has provided instruction in the Bible that will help us have a trouble free life. This study will look at the importance of obeying the instructions God has given.

Why Obey?

Obeying the commands of someone else is almost always distasteful. When you are told to obey someone, it's natural to ask why. God made the benefits of obeying him very clear.

Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

Deuteronomy 5:29

- Underline the two things that God desired to find in their hearts.
- Circle the results that come from keeping His commands.
- Frame the amount of time that benefit would continue.

¹ *If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.* ² *All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:*

Deuteronomy 28:1-2

- Frame the word describing how the Israelites were to obey.
- Frame the word describing how the Israelites were to follow God's commands.
- Circle in verse 1 the result of obeying God.
- In verse 2, underline the result of obeying the Lord.
- *Verses 3 through 14 (not shown) go on to list the wonderful benefits of obedience*

Obedience is an outward sign of an inward trust

If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Isaiah 48:18

- Circle the thing to which God desired them to pay attention.
- Underline the personal blessing that would be like a river.
- Underline the personal blessing that would have been like the waves of the sea.

Learn more about God's Word and how to get it into your life in Study 3 of vDRC's The Basics Series, God's Word.

Deuteronomy 28 is a marvelous explanation of what will happen to the Nation of Israel if they obey God, and what will happen if they disobey Him. Spend some time comparing the benefits of obedience to the results of disobedience. Sadly, the nation of Israel chose disobedience.

It is important to note that while Christians cannot claim **national blessing**, God will bestow **individual blessing** of a similar nature and benefit to those who obey Him.

A river continually flows. Waves in the sea never cease. Similarly, peace and righteousness are continuously present in the life of one who obeys.

The Choice of Obedience

God never forces our obedience. He always presents us with choices. Jesus used a parable to illustrate the results of choices we make.

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who
 hears these words of mine and
 puts them into practice
 is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.
²⁵ The rain came down,
 the streams rose, and
 the winds blew and beat against that house;
 yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.
²⁶ But everyone who
 hears these words of mine and
 does not put them into practice
 is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.
²⁷ The rain came down,
 the streams rose, and
 the winds blew and beat against that house,
 and it fell with a great crash."

Matthew 7:24-27

- Compare verses 24 through 25 with verses 26 through 27.
- In verse 26, circle the differences between the person in verse 26 and the person in verse 24.
- In verse 25 underline the reason the house did not fall.
- In verse 26, frame the term used to describe the person who does not obey (put into practice) Jesus' words.

The only difference between the two men is their obedience. Both heard but only one put the words into practice.

Notice that obedience does not result in the removal of difficulties. Both houses suffered rain, flooding and high winds.

The result of obedience is a life that survives disaster.

The Measure of Obedience

Many words can be used to describe someone's obedience. Scripture uses the position of a bondservant to describe the kind of obedience God desires. Consider the following verses.

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God (NKJV)

Romans 1:1-2

* * *

Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, (NKJV)

Philippians 1:1

- Circle the term Paul uses to describe his relation to Jesus.
- The Greek word **doulos** is translated **bondservant** in both verses. The word means "one who is given wholly to the will of another".

Many translators use the term servant to translate the Greek word **doulos**. The meaning in Paul's day was much closer to **slave** than to the modern meaning of **servant**.

Paul uses the same word, **doulos**, to describe the types of obedience each Christian can choose. In the following verses, the translated word for **doulos** is highlighted with **bold** text.

¹⁶ *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as **slaves**, you are **slaves** to the one whom you obey—whether you are **slaves** to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?* ¹⁷ *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be **slaves** to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.* ¹⁸ *You have been set free from sin and have become **slaves** to righteousness.*

Romans 6:16-18

- In verse 16,
 - Frame the word that describes the person who obeys someone else.
 - Circle the result of being a slave to sin.
 - Underline the result of obedience
- In verse 17,
 - Circle the type of slavery we used to engage in.
 - Frame the term describing how they obeyed the form of teaching to which they were entrusted.
- In verse 18
 - Underline the results of obedience
 - Circle the kind of slavery to which we are called

Even though we are to obey as if we were slaves, God has granted great freedom to those who believe in Jesus.

Freedom from the Law

The Old Testament was full of rules to follow. There were rules for ceremonial cleanliness, rules for offering sacrifices and rules for moral and civil conduct. These rules are referred to as “The Law” in the New Testament.

²⁴ *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* ²⁵ *Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

Galatians 3:24-25

- Underline why the law was given (put in charge)
- Circle the means by which we are justified.
- *Justified means to be counted sinless (**Just as if I had never sinned**). If we are justified by faith, we are **not** justified by obedience (keeping the law).*
- Frame the supervisor we are no longer under.

A little further on in Galatians, Paul clarifies the point he is making about the law.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1

- Underline what Christ has done for us.
- Circle the burden we should avoid.
- *The word **freedom** comes from the Greek word **eleutheria**, which means liberty to do or to omit things having no relation to salvation.*

It should be clear that everyone is a slave to something. Either you are a slave of sin or a slave of righteousness. Both kinds of slavery are the result of choices you make. To what do you want to be enslaved?

The book of Galatians explains the importance of faith as opposed to following the law. There is no longer a requirement to keep the law in order to gain God's approval.

The slavery Paul is talking about is the slavery of following the law. Paul maintains that we are saved by faith and not by keeping the law.

Still further in Galatians Paul summarizes his point concerning freedom from the law.

¹³ You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ¹⁴ The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:13-14

- Underline that to which we were called
- Circle the wrong use of freedom
- Underline the right use of freedom
- Circle the command that summarizes the law.

Notice that we are free to love and to serve one another. Our freedom is meant to lead us into godly activities and not into ungodliness. We no longer are required to keep the law as a means of gain salvation or God's favor.

***God's favor is not a result of our obedience.
Rather our obedience is a result of obtaining God's favor.***

The Practice of Obedience

Jesus summarized the requirements of obedience to a bright lawyer who asked him to identify the greatest commandment.

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40

- Underline the first and greatest commandment.
- Circle the three parts of our life with which we are to love God in verse 37.
- Underline the second commandment.
- In verse 40, frame the two portions of scripture that hang on these two commandments.
- Notice the four times Jesus uses the word **all**.

Another dimension in the relationship between love and obedience can be found in the Gospel of John.

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

John 14:21

- Circle the activities that identify the one who loves Jesus.
- Underline the response of the Father to one who obeys.
- Underline the two responses of Jesus to the one who obeys.

Legalism

Legalism is a term used to describe the actions of Christians who follow a strict set of rules in order to gain God's favor. Often these rules pertain to giving up outward actions like smoking, drinking alcohol or wearing make-up. We are free from bondage to such rules.

God's Moral Law

There is a danger in saying that we are free from all rules. It sounds like we can do whatever we want. In a certain sense that is true. But the intent of our freedom is for us to do the things that God would want us to do. We are free to do good.



Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

1 Peter 2:1



Jesus has a special command to those who are his disciples.

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35

- Underline the command in verse 34 (it is repeated twice).
- Jesus gives the standard of measure for loving in the last part of verse 34. Circle the way we are to love.
- In verse 35 frame the result that will occur if Christians love each other.

There are many ways to show love to one another. However, Paul gave one clear example in regards to a brother who has different values than you.

*¹³ Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.
Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.*

¹⁴ As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.

¹⁵ If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.

Romans 14:13-15

- In verse 13 circle the thing we are to refrain from doing.
- *A stumbling block is something that would cause someone to fall. In the spiritual sense, it means causing someone to sin.*
- In verse 15, underline the thing that is no longer true of one who distresses a brother?

Application

Has God spoken to you about some area of disobedience in your walk with Him?

What would God have you do?

When should you begin?

How will you remind yourself to obey?



There is a balance between freedom to do what I want and a loving concern for the welfare of my brother. My choices must be guided by both considerations.



Though we may have freedom to do a particular activity, we are bound to refrain from that activity if it might encourage my brother to do something that for him would be sin.