

## I. Introduction

- A. We are in our second week of what I consider one of my most important message series ever. If you call yourself a follower of Jesus, this is critical teaching for you. We are talking about being a disciple. What it means and how to do it.
  - 1. Here's what's going to become our key verse:
    - a) *"A disciple is not above His teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like His teacher. (Luke 6:40, NKJV).*
- B. A disciple is a person who follows Jesus in such a way that you become more and more like Jesus in your character, and instinct, and responses to life.
- C. This is the LIFE God invites you into.
- D. It is the LIFE God had in mind for you when He saved you. That life is beautiful. That life is adventurous. That life is a life of faith; it is risky, and dangerous. And the path is not easy. But it is the life of your dreams. It is your spiritual promised land. You might even say it's the end zone (go Bears!).
- E. Every disciple is on a mission to really live.
- F. So how does that happen? That is our topic in this series.
- G. Like last week, I'm not going to preach just one message, but two mini-messages. What a disciple DOES, that's message one. And what a disciple NEEDS, that's message two.
- H. So let's get right into mini-message 1: what a disciple does.

## II. WHAT A DISCIPLE DOES

- A. It's really important not to miss any of these messages, because they build on each other. I'm building a concept of discipleship from the inside out.
- B. Last week, I gave you the first thing a disciple does. Anybody remember it?
- C. A DISCIPLE TRUSTS. That's the center. That's the heart of a disciple. Today, I want to add a second layer over that, like the second ring on a bulls-eye.
- D. A DISCIPLE OBEYS—a disciple trusts and obeys.
- E. Jesus is our supreme example. As a true, full-blooded human, Jesus obeyed God's will for His life.
  - 1. *Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (Hebrews 5:8, NKJV).*
- F. He learned obedience. He grew. He practiced. He learned it. And look how far He stretched His obedience:
  - 1. *5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8, NKJV).*
- G. Jesus obeyed Himself right onto a Cross; if you want to know what obedience to God looks like, look at Jesus. That doesn't mean we're all going to end up on a cross, it means something else.

## III. Here are four qualities of a true disciple's obedience:

- A. Obedience is relational.
  - 1. I had some friends who were big dog-people. Kathy was training to be a veterinarian, and Denis was just naturally great with animals. When I adopted a dog from the shelter, they gave me some advice. (My dog's name was Jesse).
  - 2. They said, before you try to train Jesse, you have to bond with him first. Don't try to command him to obey until you've bonded with him first. They suggested that I keep Jesse physically with me as much as I could for the first few weeks I had him.
  - 3. So I did. Jesse went to church with me, Bible class with me, and small group with me, and softball games with me, and shopping with me. 24/7, he was with me.
  - 4. And the result was a super-tight, super-close connection.
  - 5. And the result of that was incredible loyalty.
  - 6. I trained Jesse to bark on command, and to keep barking till I gave him a subtle hand signal to stop. Then I'd ask the neighborhood kids to give him a math problem, "Jesse, how much is 7 minus 2? He'd go arf, arf, arf, arf, arf. Then I'd give him the signal, and he'd stop, and the kids went crazy.
  - 7. I could walk him in downtown Chicago, off leash, and he'd stay at heel, even if other dogs were around.
  - 8. Obedience is relational. Jesse was super-eager to PLEASE me, and he didn't care what anybody else ever thought.
  - 9. In Jesus days, the religious leaders had turned obedience into something else. For them, it wasn't relational, it was mechanical. Do these steps and you will be blessed.
    - a) *4 They crush you with impossible religious demands and never lift a finger to help ease the burden. 5 Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear extra long tassels on their robes. 6 And how they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the most prominent seats in the synagogue! (Matthew 23:4-6, NLT).*
  - 10. They obeyed for show. They obeyed out of fear. They obeyed because they made God into a cosmic vending machine and figured if they pulled the right obedience levers, the right blessings would come down.
  - 11. But Jesus wants us to obey Him simply because He loves us, and we therefore trust Him enough to follow the directions.
  - 12. Obedience is relational. It is also...
- B. Obedience is Volitional
  - 1. That means it's something you have to choose. God won't force you. God won't overrule you. He lets you be captain of your own ship. You have to choose.
  - 2. You can't read anywhere in the Bible without getting the conviction that this is God's instruction manual for your life, and God wants you to follow the directions.
    - a) *"But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you that it may be well with you'" (Jeremiah 7:23, NKJV).*

- b) *“You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him” (Deuteronomy 10:1, NKJV).*
  - c) *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:6, 7, NKJV).*
3. What’s the biggest problem with obedience?
  4. We all want to be our own boss. Every one of us has a dark side the Bible calls the flesh. We call it the Inner Mess. One of your Inner Mess characters is your Inner Rebel. You don’t like authority. You don’t want a boss. You want to be a free agent, and don’t want anyone to tell you what to do, or what not to do.
  5. And along comes God saying **SUBMIT YOUR WHOLE LIFE TO Me**. And the amazing thing is He doesn’t force you. He **MOTIVATES YOU**, but He doesn’t force you.
  6. God wants strong-willed men and women who voluntarily submit their wills to God, in a kind of obedience that comes out in everyday choices.
    - a) Obey God in your relationships, especially your marriage or dating life.
    - b) Obey God in your finances, and be wise and generous.
    - c) Obey God in your moral choices.
    - d) Obey God in your character qualities and how you perform at college, and do your job at work.
    - e) Obey God in where you live and what you do and who you are and how you orient your life and mission on earth.
  7. When there is a tug of war between God’s will and your will, who wins? It’s your choice, because obedience is volitional.
- C. Obedience is mental.
1. It starts in your mind, your inner world and psyche, and moves out from there:
    - a) *4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5, NKJV).*
  2. Focus on that phrase, bringing every thought into captivity. That is the secret of obedience.
  3. Your thought life first.
  4. Do you realize you have your own personal philosophy of life, your own personal philosophy of how to be a success, how to be happy, how to thrive?
  5. Where did that philosophy come from?
  6. Unless it came from the Bible, it’s messed up.
  7. This is why the Bible is so important for us. It sets up a wrecking ball inside our minds. Then it goes to work demolishing our whole philosophy of life that is delusional.
  8. You know it’s delusional to think that your philosophy is better than God’s philosophy spelled out in the Bible. That’s why you have to renew your mind (Rom 12:2).
    - a) *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2, NKJV).*
  9. Obedience is mental.
- D. Obedience is communal.
1. By that I mean that your obedience to God shows up in your relationships with people—with the community of God’s people.
  2. Obedience is not invisible. Trust might be. Obedience isn’t.
    - a) We see you make the courageous choice to become a follower of Christ.
    - b) We see you make the courageous choice to break off what could become an affair.
    - c) We see you make the tough choice to stop stealing or cheating or lying.
  3. Here’s a secret: **MOST PEOPLE TREAT GOD THE SAME WAY THEY TREAT THE AUTHORITY FIGURES IN THEIR LIVES.**
  4. Because part of accepting God’s authority is accepting the human authorities He has placed in your life. Who might that be?
    - a) Parents (while you’re under their roof): *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord (Colossians 3:20, NKJV).*
    - b) *Government leaders and police in the line of duty, fulfilling the law: Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13:1, 2, NKJV).*
    - c) Your leaders in church fulfilling Scripture: *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17, NKJV).*
    - d) Your boss in the workplace: *Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God (Colossians 3:22, NKJV).* Do a good job, and don’t cut corners.
  5. There are more, but that’s enough for now. My point is very simple: discipleship is all about following your leader, Jesus. So every day, God gives you followership practice at work, at school, and at home.
  6. Your attitude toward earthly authority is a great mirror of your attitude toward heavenly authority.
- E. A DISCIPLE TRUSTS—A DISCIPLE OBEYS.
1. Let me ask you just one area of your life where you are knowingly disobeying God? Is that something where today you will choose differently? Will you change your mind? Will you change your choices? Will you follow Jesus in the realm of obedience?
    - a) Because that’s what a true disciple does.

## (1) End of mini-sermon one

## IV. WHAT A DISCIPLE NEEDS

- A. Let's switch gears and talk about what we need, and once again, let's go back to our leader, Jesus.
1. *35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You" (Mark 1:35-37, NKJV).*
- B. And what was He doing? Praying.
- C. A DISCIPLE NEEDS THE WORD—that was last week.
- D. A DISCIPLE NEEDS PRAYER. That's for today.
- E. The Bible says:
1. *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6, 7, NKJV).*
- F. Let's take it phrase by phrase:
1. A problem:
    - a) The problem is that we are anxious and worried people. The problem is anxiety. The problem is that you bite your nails, have a sore neck, and have acids chewing a hole through your stomach lining. You lead a high stress life, and you worry about a whole lot of things. Oops, there I go talking about myself in the second person again.
    - b) So God says to be anxious for nothing. What does that mean? It means do not worry over even one thing.
    - c) Let's be honest. If you have worried this past week, wave at me. Thanks for being honest.
    - d) So here's a problem. What is the solution?
  2. A solution:
    - a) But in everything: in every financial problem, relational problem, spiritual problem, health problem, church problem, school problem, dating problem—in everything. Everything means everything. What should you pray over? Everything.
    - b) By prayer it just means talking to God. You can talk to God anywhere, anytime. Talk to God, tell Him your needs. He wants to hear from you. He wants your prayers and...
    - c) Supplication: that means getting intense with God. That means going to God like a soldier goes to the commanding officer to requisition supplies for a battle. God, I need you to come through for me, because if you don't, I'm really messed up.
    - d) With thanksgiving: that means with thanksgiving. Thanking God in advance for HOWEVER He answers your prayer.
    - e) Let your requests be made known to God. Doesn't He already know them? Yes He does. But He's waiting for you to pray. There are some blessings that you have not experienced yet simply because you spent all your time complaining, and pouting, and whining—and no time at all praying. When you pray, you touch the arm that moves the universe. Let your requests be made known to God.
    - f) The prayers of a puny but believing disciple have the power to move the almighty arm of God.
    - g) If you want to live the life you were meant to live, you can't go a day without prayer. The problem is worry, and the solution is prayer. You need to pray.
  3. A result:
    - a) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
    - b) The peace of God, from God, that belongs to God—God's own peace. You know that God never worries? God is serene, tranquil, and unhurried. God is a God of Peace and when you pray, He exchanges your anxiety for His peace.
    - c) It is peace that passes all understanding. You are going broke, but you're not freaking out. Your kids are rebelling, but you're not falling apart. You have a supernatural peace from God that nobody can explain and your friends wonder how you do it.
    - d) Because God's peace guards your heart and mind through Christ Jesus—like an armed guard at a military installation, when you pray, God's peace builds a fortress around your soul.
- G. But you say, I prayed, and I still felt anxious.
1. Okay, then pray again, and this time, leave your problems in the hands of God.
  2. I heard a story of a kid who buried his dead cat with the tail sticking out of the ground.
  3. His dad asked him why he did that.
  4. The kid said, so I can check and see that it's still dead.
  5. A lot of times, you pray like that. You give your problem to God, but then you grab it by the tail and pull it back from Him.
  6. Real prayer means leaving the outcomes to God. He gets to answer however He answers, and you don't get to throw a tantrum if you don't like the way He answered.
  7. You do get to pray again, but you don't ever get to be God's boss.
  8. We want to equip you to pray. We want to teach you how to pray.
  9. We want to be a brotherhood and sisterhood linked together in the Word and in Prayer.
  10. Every true disciple develops three habits of prayer:
    - a) A prayer time: that's when you set aside time for Scripture and prayer every morning or evening, whatever works for you, no matter how long.

- b) On the spot praying: that's when something comes up, and you breathe a quick prayer to God.
- c) Group prayer: that's when you pray with other people, or your family, or your small group, or our whole church.

H. FAQ's about prayer:

1. How much faith do I need?
  - a) If you have faith enough to pray, you have faith enough. Quit beating yourself up for unanswered prayers.
2. What if I'm not good enough for God to answer my prayers?
  - a) Then confess your sins to God, and pray your prayers and move on.
  - b) God never answers your prayers because you're good.
  - c) He answers your prayers because the goodness of Jesus has been credited to your account.
3. What if I pray and I don't feel anything?
  - a) Then those are the most faith-filled prayers of all. Those are the prayers that really bother the devil, and make the angels stand up and cheer.
  - b) How you feel isn't the issue. Prayer is. And you can pray no matter how you feel.
4. What if God doesn't answer my prayers?
  - a) Then pray again, but never pout or turn a cold shoulder toward God.
  - b) Let's go back to my dogs. The best illustrations on how to keep and maintain a bond comes from your dog.
  - c) Every time I come home, my dogs run to me and want to touch me, and sit on my lap, and sniff me, and get petted by me. They just want to forge a deeper connection.
  - d) When you pray, you bond to God. You get close to God. You spend time with God. You look and listen and grow tight with God.
    - (1) *O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. 2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You (Psalms 63:1-3, NKJV).*
5. How often should I pray?
  - a) This is simple: never resist an urge to pray. That's the only rule I can think of. Don't you think God knows how to bring you to your knees?
6. What can I pray about?
  - a) Anything and everything
  - b) No prayer is too big, and no prayer is too small for God to answer.
    - (1) Prayer is the mightiest weapon that God has placed in our hands. It is the best weapon to use in every difficulty, and the surest remedy in every trouble. It is the key that unlocks the treasury of promises, and the hand that draws forth grace and help in time of need. It is the silver trumpet that God commands us to sound in all our necessity, and it is the cry He has promised always to listen to, just as a loving mother listens attentively to the voice of her child. (JC Ryle)

V. One last thing

- A. A disciple TRUSTS and OBEYS
- B. A disciple needs SCRIPTURE and PRAYER
- C. What we do. What we need.
- D. Once again, I want to return to our source of power. The things I'm speaking of are above us and beyond us. We cannot do them in our own strength.
- E. But God will help us. God will strengthen us. Christ lives in us, and by faith, He lives through us.
- F. By God's grace, I want to be a true disciple.
- G. By God's grace, I want to be part of a family of true disciples.
- H. Let's be that family.