

What Obedience Demands

What does obedience to God demand? What does it really mean to obey God, and follow Jesus with our everyday decisions as well as in our reactions to opposition that may come? How might our lives change if we strive for total obedience in everything we do and in everything we say? These are key questions that our passage invites us to consider. As the apostles again face opposition from the Jewish religious leaders, we see a picture of what it means to obey God in every situation and circumstance. The situations we face are different than theirs, but having the same core motivation of full obedience God should be the same. It is the only way to truly walk as disciples of Jesus.

Read Acts 5:17-42

1. What sticks out to you in this passage?

2. After their arrest the angel tells the apostles to return to the temple and keep speaking to the people (v. 20). The apostles obey. What did obedience to God demand of the apostles in this situation? What were they willing to suffer to be obedient to God?

Sam said:

Is it possible the same would ever be asked of us? If we were to apply this principle of total obedience to God to things like our opportunities, our resources, our freedoms, or even our rights...what sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel might be demanded of us? What power might we lose? What privileges might we set aside so we can better love and serve our neighbor? And are we ready, as they were, to make those sacrifices today? We need to take this kind of obedience seriously. This is not a simple thought exercise or theological debate. Obedience to God – even costly, shocking obedience – is the norm, not the outlier, of every Christian life.

3. What might it take for us to be ready for the kind of costly obedience we see in the apostles as they return to preach in the temple?

4. How much would you agree with this statement: “I am willing to trust God when obedience to him could put me in clear and obvious danger.” Explain.

5. When the apostles were re-arrested the religious leaders did not bring them in by force because they were afraid of the people (v. 26). It seems that the apostles could have resisted arrest with the crowd's backing, but instead went willingly with the officers. What does this reveal about them? In what ways were they following the example of Jesus?

6. Once the religious leaders were finally able to bring the apostles before them and question them, how does Peter respond to high priest's charge that they were disobeying their command to not teach in Jesus' name (vv. 28ff)?

7. Ultimately, the religious leaders again charge the apostles not to speak in the name of Jesus (v. 40) and then release them after beating them. Why do you think the apostle rejoiced after being beaten (vv. 40-41)? What does this reveal about what they believed and valued?

Sam said:

It has become my practice to ask myself "**what does obedience to God demand of me in this situation and this circumstance?**" in every area of my life, with every difficult decision I make, or when working to resist temptation or repent from sin. What does obedience to God demand of me as a husband or as a father? How might the way I love my wife or lead my family change if I considered my actions in light of what God expects of me? What does obedience to God demand of me when I am tired and spent and done talking to people for the day . . . but I also know that neighbor is out working on his lawn and could use someone to ask how he's doing? Or that my friend really needs someone to check in and speak a few words of truth? What does obedience to God demand of me when I want to be selfish, when I crave giving into desire, or when I am so angry I can't see the humanity and image bearing reality of the person I believe is wrong? These are all hard questions born from hard circumstances. Obedience is rarely easy. But taking the time and working out the discipline to ask myself, "What must I do to obey God now?" is a necessary part of living a Christian life. We've got to do this work. We've got to seek out obedience. So, this week, join me in asking yourself, "**What does obedience to God demand of me in this situation and this circumstance?**"

8. How might this impact how you live if you developed the practice of regularly asking this question?