

THE JOURNEY

BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS



UNIT FOUR – TO OBEY HIM

THE JOURNEY

DEAR FELLOW TRAVELER,

Welcome to The Journey. We are so glad you are here. We believe that discipleship is a journey of becoming more like Jesus, and we want to come alongside you on this adventure. Perhaps you are new to following Jesus. Or maybe you've been following Him for many years. Regardless of your place on the path, we believe The Journey is for you.

The Journey is a versatile resource designed with the church and home in mind. The content will contain foundational, biblical teaching presented in an interactive format. It's intended for use in community with other believers. We also have built At-Home Exercises into the content for you to engage in at home throughout the week. We hope that these exercises help to strengthen your understanding of Jesus and hold you accountable for meeting with Jesus daily.

Our lives are radically changed by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit through salvation, but our journey with the Lord shouldn't stop at our salvation experience. We must then embark on a journey of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. By digging deeper into this relationship, The Journey will help you extend discipleship beyond Sundays. By immersing yourself into God's Word, prayer, and worship, you will fall more in love with the One who loves you most. Remember, there is always more to learn, still room to grow, and always support available for you on the journey.

We have been praying for you. We have had you in mind as we have been preparing this study. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit would work mightily in your life as you commit to this personal and communal discipleship journey with the Lord.

With you on The Journey,

YOUR DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES FAMILY

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Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT BIBLE TRANSLATION ARE YOU USING?

All scriptures used in The Journey will be the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

HOW IS THE JOURNEY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BIBLE STUDIES?

The Journey is an invitation to say yes to Jesus in every part of your life. Centered around weekly class experiences, the focus of The Journey is on the 6 days you aren't with your group. We want you to grow in knowledge, as all Bible studies do, but we also want you to be transformed by the power of God and become more like Jesus. By connecting, growing in knowledge, daily intimacy with Jesus, and participation in community, we hope that you will experience transformation.

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH DISCUSSION?

We believe that the discussion of the lesson with one another is a vital part of learning. It teaches us to think critically about what we are hearing, to be dependent on one another (someone else may have an insight that we need to hear), and to build trust and relationships in the group.

DOES THIS WORK FOR SMALL AND LARGE GROUPS?

Yes! We believe that the flexibility of this resource allows it to function in both settings. It can be easily adapted to fit the needs of any sized group!

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LESSON ONE | THE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS

One thing we don't talk about much in the church is the high cost of discipleship. While it is true that we can do nothing to earn God's forgiveness, Christ calls believers to a radically different life than everyone else.

In this lesson, we'll explore a variety of scripture passages that consider God's demands of those who commit to following Him. But before we look at those, it's important to ask, "Have I made Christ the Lord of my life?" There is a vast difference between asking Jesus to forgive your sins and committing to follow wherever He leads.

Jesus is the very definition of love. Because He loves you with an everlasting, all-encompassing, perfect love, you can trust Him. And if you can trust Him, you can follow Him, regardless of where He leads.

I. WHO DO I LIVE FOR?

Read: 2 Corinthians 15

TALK ABOUT IT

According to 2 Corinthians 5:15, how does knowing Jesus make a difference in the way someone lives before versus his lifestyle after becoming a Christian?

THINK ABOUT IT

The message of the gospel is good news. It proclaims that Jesus has come to rescue us from the consequences of and slavery to sin and give us eternal life.

The Bible teaches that we should expect

difficulties and suffering simply because we are Christians.

II. SHOULD I EXPECT TO SUFFER?

Read: John 15:20; Matthew 7:24-27

TALK ABOUT IT

If Jesus teaches that following Him will include suffering, why are we surprised when we encounter it? How does Jesus describe the foolish man in Matt. 7:24-27?

THINK ABOUT IT

One of the primary ways we fulfill our calling as disciples is by following God's commands obediently and faithfully.

Paul expected that all believers would suffer purely because of their relationship to Christ.

III. HOW DOES DEATH BRING LIFE?

Read: Luke 9:23

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think it means to "carry our cross"? Why does a person need humility to follow Christ?

THINK ABOUT IT

The cross is more than a symbol of suffering; it represents death. So, when Jesus calls His disciples to take up their crosses daily, he says that every day we will have to decide again

and again to choose ourselves or choose Him.

The Holy Spirit uses our obedience, in ways we don't understand, to actually make us holy and righteous.

IV. IS THIS GOOD NEWS?

Read: Philippians 2:4-11

TALK ABOUT IT

What encouragement for the journey do you receive from Phil. 2:4-11? How does this other-worldly, all-consuming love of God make discipleship worth the hardship?

THINK ABOUT IT

God has sent the Holy Spirit to help us become more like His Son, and He created His Church so we could cheer one another on and speak truth to each other. We are not alone.

The Bible makes it clear that the One who suffered the most also loves us the most, and Jesus is sitting beside our Heavenly Father pleading our case.

Becoming more and more like Jesus can take a lifetime. Be devoted but patient too.

Finally, remind yourself regularly why you have chosen to follow Jesus.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) In what ways do you still live for yourself instead of for Jesus?
- 2) Define humility in your own words. Why is humility so hard?
- 3) In addition to John 15:20 can you think of other passages from scripture that should help prepare us (mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually) for suffering?
- 4) What is different about a discipleship based

on duty and one based on love?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Luke 9:1-27

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study Luke 9:1-27. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.

2) While it's common to think of scripture memory as something reserved for children, the book of Psalms gives all of us a compelling reason to make this practice a personal habit (See Psalm 119:11-16). Choose one of the scripture passages we studied in this week's lesson and commit it to memory this week. To make this discipline easier, use one of the many Bible memory apps available, use a dry erase marker and write the verse on your bathroom mirror, or write the verse out on a notecard and keep it in a place you'll see often.

3) Consider a specific area where you have been fighting to get your way. Then, ask God to examine your heart and make it clear where you need to exercise humility. Prayerfully discern if you need to respond in one of the following ways:

- Remind yourself who the real enemy is (and it's not other believers). Move from criticism and judgment to prayer and loving reconciliation.
- Consider whether God is asking you to let go of the fight. Ask God to show you if what you're fighting for is about Him or you. If it's about you, it's probably time to move on.

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LESSON TWO | KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

Have you ever thought about the many challenges a baby faces in his first year of life? Just think of how often he falls in the process of learning to walk. What if a newborn could think, reason, and talk immediately upon being born? After considering the challenges of the growing process, he might conclude that life is too hard and wonder if managing all the pitfalls ahead would be possible or even desirable.

I. FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS

Read: Matthew 9:9

TALK ABOUT IT

Growing up, were you told “no” a lot? Were all those negative communications really for your good? Is it possible to make following Jesus more difficult than it needs to be?

THINK ABOUT IT

The reason Jesus tells us to keep His commandments is also the difference between life and death. The only good choice is clear—choose life!

Jesus made keeping His directions simple. He began by calling His disciples with two words: “Follow me.” In other words, He was saying, “I am giving you the perfect model. Watch me; do what I do.”

Just as Jesus said these words to the disciples, He gives us the same invitation today.

II. KEEP CHRIST'S COMMANDMENTS

Read: John 14:15; Luke 6:46

TALK ABOUT IT

Yes, there are commandments we must obey as we follow Jesus. If there are do's and don'ts, what are they?

THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus simplified all the law into two commandments (Matt. 22:37-40): Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

Besides the positives, the New Testament also includes lists of don'ts, specific sins that must be avoided.

In the gospel of John, Jesus explains to Nicodemus that being born again means having a new heart.

This new heart that the Scriptures speak of is a heart of love for Jesus and, therefore, a desire to obey Him. A heart of love focuses on knowing and pleasing the person one loves.

III. CONFESS, FORGIVE, TURN AWAY FROM SIN

Read: John 3:3; 1 John 1:9

TALK ABOUT IT

When a baby falls, a parent does not stop loving the child. Instead, the parent reaches out to help. Our loving Father does the same

for us. He invites us to confess our sins, find forgiveness, and continue to grow. Do you see confession and forgiveness modeled in your life? Are these graces modeled in your church?

THINK ABOUT IT

The goal of the spiritual life is always to obey and please our Lord even though we may fail at times. As followers of Jesus, we must learn to confess quickly, ask for forgiveness, turn our back on sin, and learn.

It is not enough to know right from wrong. Obedience must follow knowledge. Too many people spend their time focusing on knowledge, memorizing talking points, and debating the finer points of doctrine while ignoring the obedience factor. James (ch.2) reminds us we must have both knowledge and obedience at work in our pursuit of following Jesus.

The benefits of obedience are twofold:

- 1) We are following God's directions for our life which leads to blessing.
- 2) Obeying the commands of Jesus gives Him glory.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) What challenges do you face in keeping God's commandments?
- 2) Are there times when your obedience to what Christ commands flows more out of duty than love? Why do you think this happens?
- 3) What things help you focus on and prioritize your love for God? Do these things then impact your obedience?
- 4) Talk about a time when a decision to obey was hard but ultimately beneficial for you.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

1 John 5:1-12

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Develop the habit, if you have not already done so, of reading the Word of God daily. Establish a consistent time, place, and pattern. Make this habit a high priority this week.
- 2) This week, pass on to others some of the things God has been teaching you. This kind of personal sharing is always a benefit to others. Do not worry about it being wise or intellectual enough, simply share what God is doing in your life, and watch others warm up to the good news.
- 3) A Christian writer once wrote, "The Lord's chief desire is to reveal Himself to you." This week, pay close attention to the different ways in which God makes Himself known to you.
- 4) Be careful in both your conduct and your conversation this week. Be mindful of the fact that others are watching to see if your faith has truly set you free.

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LESSON THREE | OBEDIENCE IN THE COVENANTS

Much of the story of the people of God seems like a ride on a spiritual roller coaster. That story may sound familiar if you have ever struggled in your walk with the Lord. In this lesson, we will take a closer look at how God deals once and for all with the problem of our disobedience.

I. THE INSUFFICIENT OLD COVENANT

Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34

TALK ABOUT IT

Why was the old covenant insufficient to solve the problem of disobedience?

THINK ABOUT IT

The old covenant was conditional upon the obedience of the people. If they obeyed, they would be blessed. If they disobeyed, they were subject to the curses and punishments stipulated in the covenant agreement.

There was a cycle of sin in the Old Testament: sin, judgment, mercy, deliverance.

This repetitive cycle is what precipitated the need for a new way of dealing with people as Jeremiah's prophecy promises. It would bring a lasting solution to the problem of sin and separation from God. The new covenant would include a new outpouring of God's Spirit intended to empower the obedience it required (Ezek. 36:27).

II. A BETTER COVENANT

Read: Hebrews 9:13-15

TALK ABOUT IT

What is the basis of the new covenant?

THINK ABOUT IT

Nowhere is the new covenant described more powerfully than in the book of Hebrews. Written particularly for a Jewish audience, the book highlights how Jesus fulfills the promises of the Old Testament.

The old covenant, mediated by Moses, never brought the people fully into the promises God wanted for them. The new covenant, mediated by Jesus, would help people receive the ultimate promise of eternal life.

The old covenant was based upon the faithfulness and the obedience of the people. The new covenant is based on the faithfulness and obedience of Jesus.

The sacrifice of Jesus was a once-for-all-time action (Heb. 10:12). In His perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God paid the eternal price of our sin.

Our obedience flows from God's grace; His grace does not flow from our obedience.

III. OBEDIENCE—A WAY OF BECOMING LIKE JESUS

Read: Romans 5:19, 8:29; 1 Corinthians 1:30

TALK ABOUT IT

What is the ultimate goal of the Christian life?

THINK ABOUT IT

The ultimate goal of the Christian life is not to go to heaven. The final goal of the Christian life is to be like Jesus.

As we were identified with Adam in His disobedience and death, we have been united with Jesus in His perfection and life.

None of us can deposit enough of our righteousness to pay the debts we owe due to our sin, but, thank God, the Father credits us with the righteousness of Christ!

The closer I get to God, the more I want to be like Jesus. Rather than being the source of grace for me, my obedience comes as the result of grace in my life. The Holy Spirit empowers me to live like Jesus so that I become like the one who became sin for me (2 Cor. 5:21).

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) What does it mean to you to know that our God is a God of covenant and not contract?
- 2) Talk about the statement, "Our obedience flows from His grace; His grace does not flow from our obedience." How would you explain this statement?
- 3) Are there areas of your life where you struggle wanting to be like Jesus? How does understanding the new covenant help you in this struggle?
- 4) In what ways do you find yourself operating like you live under the old covenant rather than the new and better covenant?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Hebrews 10:12-25

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study Hebrews 10:12-25. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.
- 2) Many people live on a treadmill of guilt and shame because they don't feel like they live up to the standards of holiness. How does the good news about the righteousness of Jesus liberate us from that cycle? What is a practical way you can apply this to your life?
- 3) Spend some time thinking about your efforts at obedience. Ask whether your efforts to obey are "from grace" or "for grace."
- 4) Do you really want to be like Jesus? Why? Why not? Are there any areas of your life where you struggle with that? What would people who really know you say about that?

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LESSON FOUR | HEARING GOD'S DIRECTION

As we embark on our journey of following Jesus, we encounter some difficulties not faced by His first-century disciples. We want to learn from Jesus' teaching, imitate His life, and do what He tells us. But He isn't here!

How do we know what He wants us to do? How can we listen to His voice? God has provided the means for us to hear from Him every day.

I. HEARING GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; Psalm 119:130

TALK ABOUT IT

Has God spoken to you personally through the Bible? Can you give an example of when the words of Scripture spoke directly to your specific situation or need?

THINK ABOUT IT

Many people today dismiss the Bible as an obsolete book for another time and place, but if we want to hear God's voice, we need to turn to the Bible.

The eyewitness testimony of the gospel writers makes it possible for us to encounter Jesus.

As we read the Bible, we can see parallels between our lives and the characters introduced in its pages. We learn what God is like, and come to understand His hopes and expectations for His people.

II. HEARING GOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Read: John 14:16-17; John 14:26; John 10:27

TALK ABOUT IT

Jesus describes the Holy Spirit's ministry as one of teaching us and leading us into the truth. How have you experienced this in your life?

THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus had great confidence that the Holy Spirit would be a more than adequate replacement to tell His disciples all they needed to know and do.

Jesus continues to communicate with and lead His followers through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us in a number of ways: through gifts of prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, and tongues and interpretation.

Every believer enjoys the privilege of receiving direction and instruction from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit brings to mind the words of Jesus, or other passages from Scripture, at just the time they are needed. In these ways, the Holy Spirit communicates to us the personal presence of Jesus as our Shepherd and Guide.

III. HEARING GOD THROUGH PRAYER

Read: Psalm 55:17; Romans 8:26; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 11:15



TALK ABOUT IT

People often think of prayer as a one-way transmission from us to God, in which we share our concerns, hopes, fears, and requests. Is this accurate?

THINK ABOUT IT

Prayer is not actually a separate and distinct means by which we hear from God. In reality, prayer and Scripture and the Holy Spirit form an interactive network through which God speaks to us.

We pray most effectively when our prayers are informed by Scripture. The Holy Spirit also helps us in our prayers, making possible a genuine link between a transcendent God and a human creature.

Prayer may be defined as our response to God.

We may feel that God is silent at times, but the problem is usually not with the transmission but with the reception.

We can and should bring our needs and desires to God in prayer, but to hear from Him, we must also listen.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) How have you experienced hearing the voice of God in your own life?
- 2) Have you been intimidated or overwhelmed with how to listen and hear God speaking? Explain.
- 3) What practices or practical methods do you use to help you hear from God?
- 4) How does knowing that God wants to speak to you personally impact your obedience to Him?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 116

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study Psalm 116. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.

2) Use a notepad, notebook, or mobile phone to record every time the Holy Spirit brings a verse of Scripture to mind this week. This will help you to develop the habit of listening for His voice. At the end of the week, review what God has been saying to you.

3) Set aside a special time for prayer every day this week, in which you pray through a psalm and listen for God's response. Don't rush, take time to wait and listen and meditate. Write down what you hear from God (suggested psalms: 1-5, 8).

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LESSON FIVE | OBEDIENCE IN DAILY LIFE

We can walk successfully in obedience to Jesus out of a heart of love and trust. This foundation causes the believer to obey not out of duty or fear but out of a heart full of love, faith, and devotion.

In this lesson, we will see how important it is to make obedience in our daily living a quest of our faith.

I. THOUGHTS ON OBEDIENCE FROM SAUL

Read: 1 Samuel 15:3, 9, 19-22

TALK ABOUT IT

Have you ever heard the phrase, “obedience is greater than sacrifice”? What does that saying mean to you?

THINK ABOUT IT

In 1 Samuel 15, King Saul chose to offer a sacrifice to God over obedience to Him.

The root of sacrifice is obligation, but obedience is rooted in love. Sacrifice may check off some box on a list we have created ourselves, but we have to watch our motives.

Sacrifice tends to be self-focused, while obedience is God-focused.

There is only one sufficient sacrifice: the death of Jesus on the cross. Our obedience is far better than sacrifice because it reveals a heart that is in love with Jesus.

II. THOUGHTS ON OBEDIENCE FROM PAUL

Read: Romans 6:16

TALK ABOUT IT

Why should Christians choose to turn away from sin once they have been declared righteous through faith in Christ?

THINK ABOUT IT

In Romans 6, Paul explains that we are not slaves to sin anymore because our old self has been crucified (vv. 17-18). He suggests that we still have a daily choice: will we walk in obedience and not let sin reign in our bodies or continue in disobedience and sin.

If we are alive in Christ, we should not live like sin still owns us. Sin always leads to death, while walking in obedience to Christ leads to righteousness.

Paul’s story gives us hope. The poor choices we have made in the past do not have to rule our lives anymore. The transforming work of Jesus makes us new.

III. THOUGHTS ON DAILY OBEDIENCE

Read: Titus 3:1-7

TALK ABOUT IT

Why is obedience hard for us?

THINK ABOUT IT

To obey Jesus, we must know what He expects of His followers. It is impossible to live a life of obedience without spending time in the Word of God.

The same grace that has been extended to us, we then must extend to others. We should avoid foolish controversy and arguments because they are not beneficial. The truth of God's mercy is profitable and will spur us on in doing good.

We are even cautioned to guard our thought life. We are to "pull down strongholds, cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-6).

Our homes, our work, and our relationships with others should all be impacted by our commitment to walk in obedience. To obey Jesus out of a heart that loves and trusts him leads to righteousness.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) How would you define obedience to Christ?
- 2) Are there times you have perhaps chosen sacrifice over obedience? Explain.
- 3) What does actively choosing to obey God look like in your day to day life?
- 4) Relationships can be difficult. How can we demonstrate obedience in our relationships with others even when it's a difficult situation?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES:

Luke 16:1-14; Psalm 119:145-152

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study this week's scriptures: Luke 16:1-14; Psalm 119:145-152. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.
- 2) Take some time this week to reflect on how you demonstrate obedience to the Father. Write out your thoughts on what you learn through this reflection and what you can improve?
- 3) Learn to be faithful in the little things, as Jesus said in Luke 16:10. Make good use of your time, redeeming the moments by taking advantage of your opportunities to share your faith, to pray, or to read scripture.

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LESSON SIX | OBEDIENCE VS DISOBEDIENCE

The human condition is characterized by disobedience. It comes naturally to us, but disobedience was not part of our original condition. We were created and called to represent God in His creation.

God has provided a remedy to our chronic disobedience and a real possibility for us to become who we were created to be.

I. THE ROOT OF DISOBEDIENCE

Read: Genesis 3:1-7

TALK ABOUT IT

What is the significance of humanity being created in God's image? Why did God do this? How does this element of creation influence our behavior towards God and others?

THINK ABOUT IT

To understand the root of disobedience, we must examine the first act of disobedience committed among humanity.

Being made in God's image was less about how humans looked physically and more about their behavior.

God bestowed upon Adam and Eve authority as God's special representatives to carry on His work.

God was not forbidding Adam and Eve from obtaining knowledge of good and evil. Instead, being made in God's image naturally included the ability to distinguish good from evil.

This first act of disobedience involved a serpent (identified as Satan in Rev. 20:2). His method of temptation reveals a structure for understanding the nature of sin and rebellion.

Satan began his deception by planting a seed of doubt concerning the word and nature of God. The seeds of doubt and mistrust grew into a vine of pride and selfishness, which quickly produced the fruit of disobedience.

II. THE RESULTS OF DISOBEDIENCE

Read: Genesis 2:15-17; Romans 6:23

TALK ABOUT IT

Why are the results of our disobedience sometimes delayed? Does this delay influence our response to disobedience? How and why does our disobedience affect others?

THINK ABOUT IT

Though Adam and Eve did not immediately die physically, death was felt in several ways after their disobedience:

- 1) Humanity was cut off from the Tree of Life
- 2) Their relationship with God was severed
- 3) Humanity is destined for dust
- 4) Diminished quality of life

Disobedience to God did not correct a deficiency. It caused our deficiency.

III. THE REMEDY FOR DISOBEDIENCE

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

TALK ABOUT IT

Does obedience begin with outward effort? How can our understanding of Jesus' temptations help us overcome our temptations and disobedience?

THINK ABOUT IT

Obedience is not the remedy for disobedience. The whole course of human history demonstrates that we cannot will ourselves to be obedient in any meaningful way.

Obedience grows from a root of faith and trust in God, the opposite of doubt and mistrust. True obedience is the manifestation of faith rather than works.

This change of the human heart has been made possible by the obedience of Jesus, who is described as the second Adam (Rom. 5). Jesus succeeded where Adam failed.

The achievements of Christ's obedience deliver us from the consequences of our disobedience when we trust in Christ.

The rejection of faith produced the first act of disobedience, and it lies at the root of all disobedience. When we come alive by the Spirit before we die in our bodies, we will live eternally with our Creator as He originally intended.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Do you think roots of doubt, mistrust, or unbelief lead to disobedience? Explain.
- 2) What practical ways can we choose obedience over disobedience in our daily life?

- 3) How and why does our disobedience affect others?
- 4) This lesson stated, "obedience is not the remedy for disobedience." Talk about what this means to you.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Romans 3:9-20

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study this week's At-Home Scripture: Romans 3:9-20. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.
- 2) Rather than identifying the acts of disobedience that need to be corrected, examine your heart for any roots of doubt, mistrust, or unbelief. Where do you lack trust in the word or work of God? Remember, doubt itself is not sinful. Doubts still arise in all who profess faith in Christ. Our prayer is often like that of the man at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration who saw simultaneously the glory of Christ and the destruction of his child and cried out, "Lord, I believe! Help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Uprooting doubt and cultivating faith and trust is the best way to prune disobedience.
- 3) Take a personal assessment and determine if your endeavor to obey is propelled by faith or works. Trying to will ourselves to be obedient is actually an indication of pride in ourselves and doubt in our hearts. Rather than exhausting ourselves trying to be good, let us expend our energy on building our faith. What are some practical ways we can do that?

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LESSON SEVEN | OBEDIENCE AS THE CHURCH

God's vision for humanity is so grand that it requires a large-scale response from the Church—God's community of faith. This lesson will explore what it means to be obedient to God as a Church.

I. KNOW GOD'S VISION

Read: Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:21

TALK ABOUT IT

How does the creation story reveal God's communal nature? How would you summarize God's vision for humanity?

THINK ABOUT IT

The creation story reveals God's communal nature.

Community, fruitfulness, and mutual trust were at the heart of God's original vision for humanity. He wanted them to mirror His character and behavior.

Jesus spent a lot of time explaining and demonstrating God's vision for humanity. Jesus confirmed that God's vision for humanity could be summed up as loving God and loving people.

To fully apply God's two greatest commandments, we must do so in community. We cannot love God without obeying His commands, and we cannot obey His commands without loving people on both a personal and a practical community level.

II. MAKE IT PLAIN

Read: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Habakkuk 2:2-4

TALK ABOUT IT

How was the Christian faith passed on to you? Have you ever been part of a great team? What made it work?

THINK ABOUT IT

When an organization clearly communicates expectations, purposes, and goals, success often follows.

Two of the most meaningful symbolic ordinances (orders) of the Christian faith are baptism and the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion). Jesus commanded that we observe these Christian acts of worship to help us understand God's vision for the Church and humanity. Both are symbols of divine grace that should be celebrated in community.

III. RUN WITH IT

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25; Matthew 25:31-46; Matthew 28:16-20

TALK ABOUT IT

What are the main ingredients for being able to run a race well? How can this be applied to God's vision for the Church?

THINK ABOUT IT

Once a vision is established and made clear, it is of no benefit to anyone until it is enacted. Perhaps that is why before Jesus ascended into

heaven, He told His disciples to run with His vision.

When the church regularly comes together to learn and encourage one another, they are sure to be more successful in keeping their priorities right about sharing the gospel's good news in their community.

The Church is marked by God's authority to fulfill His purposes in the earth. Primarily, that comes down to loving God by trusting Him enough to learn His commands. It also means loving people because this is God's second greatest command.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) How does your involvement in the local church and other ministries demonstrate obedience?
- 2) In what ways can churches and other Christian ministries and organizations obey Christ and fulfill His purposes?
- 3) It is important to remember that the difficulties we face in churches are often attempts by the enemy to divide the body of Christ. What challenges have you faced when you've been involved in church community?
- 4) How do you think partnering with the body of Christ through obedience impacts the Kingdom of God for the sake of the gospel?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 23:1-36

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study this week's At-Home Scripture: Matthew 23:1-36. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close

attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.

2) Consider your local church's vision for ministry. Is there a way that you can become more involved with that vision? If so, determine to do so today. Can you volunteer to help create a clear vision and opportunities for the people in your church to run with God's vision for the church and the world?

3) Learn to be faithful in the little things, as Jesus said in Luke 16:10. Make good use of your time, redeeming the moments by taking advantage of your opportunities to share your faith, to pray, or to read Scripture. It might be helpful to write down things that distract you from this.

4) As you listen to a sermon this week, strive to be a good listener. Do not merely hear the words, but listen closely with an ear to how you might apply some of the principles to your life. Ask the Spirit to give you "ears to hear." Write down what you hear and reflect on how it affects your life.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON EIGHT | OBEYING THE GREAT COMMISSION

In this lesson, we will seek to gain a greater understanding of Jesus' command to go into all the world and make disciples. Matthew 28 contains the words of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension to heaven. Therefore, we must understand how important and essential these final instructions were (and are) to His disciples.

I. THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Read: Matthew 28:18

TALK ABOUT IT

In Matthew 28:18, Jesus spoke about having been given "all authority in heaven and on earth." What do you think "all authority" means?

THINK ABOUT IT

The Bible declares that Jesus rules over all nations, all people, all days, and all things. As we read this passage, we must pause and reflect on the magnitude of Jesus' dominion. As His disciples, any power and authority we have comes from Jesus. The command Jesus issued is not a suggestion for followers of Christ, but rather a mandate that was given out of His authority.

II. THE CALL TO GO

Read: Matthew 28:19

TALK ABOUT IT

How do you define the word disciple? What does discipleship mean to you?

THINK ABOUT IT

If Jesus commands us to go and make disciples, that statement presumes that we are disciples ourselves. We are commissioned to be disciples who make disciples.

Our love for those who are lost and need Jesus should compel us on the mission of seeing lives changed through salvation.

Jesus calls us to spread the gospel message to the world. This witness could be in other nations, or in the country, state, city, community, or neighborhood where you live. Begin to ask the Lord for opportunities to share and serve the gospel message right where you are and abroad.

III. THE COMMAND TO TEACH

Read: Matthew 28:20

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think it looks like to teach others to observe what Jesus has commanded? What teaching methods communicate best to you?

THINK ABOUT IT

The instruction Jesus gave in this passage does not stop at the salvation and baptism experiences. Jesus then told the disciples to teach the things He had commanded.

We must focus on sharing the gospel message with others to see them come to salvation; however, teaching and discipleship must also occur.

IV. THE COMPANION PROMISED

Read: Matthew 28:20

TALK ABOUT IT

After Jesus issued His Great Commission, He gave the disciples a promise to be with them always. What does it mean for Jesus to be with us? How does that assurance impact our mission?

THINK ABOUT IT

Because Jesus knows us so well, He follows up the Great Commission with a promise of His presence. We are not alone.

It is empowering to know that we aren't left to our own ability to learn and understand. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit, who helps us to understand the Scriptures for ourselves.

We are obedient to Jesus' call to share the gospel, not only to see lives saved but also to teach others what He has commanded—growing to become more like Jesus every day. We trust and rest in the promise of the Holy Spirit to help us as we heed the call. We take ownership of our part in the Great Commission out of a heart of obedience to our Savior.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) We know that Jesus has all authority. If you lived every moment with this knowledge, how might your life be impacted?
- 2) Where do you need the most help or support on your personal discipleship journey with the Lord?
- 3) In what places do you feel the Lord leading you to make disciples (ex: work, community, world)?
- 4) Talk about what you think prevents people

from making disciples.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Acts 2

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Use the Bible Study Handout and Worksheet to study this week's At-Home Scripture: Acts 2. Bible study is an essential part of your life with God. Paying close attention to the verses you read offers the greatest opportunity of hearing God's Word speak to your life. Don't rush as you read. Take your time.
- 2) How can you make disciples this week?

Suggestion: Write out your testimony. Make it a priority to share your salvation story and how the gospel has changed your life with someone this week. Your story doesn't have to be lengthy- about three to five minutes is ideal.
- 3) How can you begin teaching? This week, share something you learn through studying the Bible with someone.