

Reading Plan

January 1-17

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OBEDIENCE

Obedience is such a weighty word. For Christians it basically means to hear God's Word and act accordingly. That seems simple enough, right? In reality it is not so simple. It's not easy because we are sinful people. We fight against the things that the Lord has for us because we want to follow after our own desires.

Understanding obedience is difficult because we don't have a correct view of obedience. Some of us grew up in very authoritative homes where obedience was forced upon us and we obeyed out of fear of the punishment. Others may have grown up in a permissive home with little fear of discipline. We get a warped view of what obedience is and what it is not.

The Lord desires our obedience. He loves us and gave Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sinfulness. Through Jesus we have relationship with God and we grow in His love. He wants us to obey him, not out of fear, but out of our love for Him. Our obedience is a response to His love in our lives.

Over the next two weeks we are going to really look at obedience. The beginning of the year is a great time to take a look at our lives. It is my prayer that you see obedience as a way to show your love to God.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1

Read the Parable of the Talents found in Matthew 25:14-30. It is clear that one of the servants in this passage did not truly understand who the master was and what he expected from his servants.

Which of the servants in this parable truly knew their Master and obeyed him?

The first two servants had respect and a desire to honor their master. This compelled them to obey and help their master prosper. It is evident that their relationship with the master was not full of fear or doubt. They wanted to obey.

How did the third respond? He obviously did not know the true heart of the master and nor have a relationship with him. Look at how the servant responds to the master when he returns the single talent the master left him. Did this servant love his master? No, he did not have a true any sort of understanding of the master. There was no relationship and no desire to have a relationship.

Looking at your walk with the Lord how would you say you view your relationship with the Lord? Which servant do you feel you can relate to and why?



There have been times in my life when I have had a relationship with others that was more about obeying because I feared the repercussions of what I did. There is no freedom or joy in obeying when you do it out of fear the punishment. Also, when fear is the motivation behind being obedient, it is difficult to have a relationship.

Spend time with the Lord praying and meditating on these two different definitions. The Lord desires a relationship with voluntary obedience from us. Think about the joy that comes from this revelation and how your walk with the Lord can grow.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2

Why is obedience so hard?

Obedience is not always easy for any of us. There may be different levels of being obedient. Some of us are more compliant and willingly follow the rules while others want to challenge the rules. It may seem it is easier for some and not others. In truth, we all struggle with obedience to the Lord—many are just not seen by the world. In the Scriptures, we see the struggle with obedience was as real then as it is now.

Read Romans 7. Paul writes about his struggles with obedience and following God's law. Isn't that interesting? Paul is one of the great writers of the Bible. It is heartening to know that he struggles just like we struggle. It gives us encouragement and hope to carry on fighting the good fight.

In the Old Testament there were a lot of laws for the Jews to follow and it was impossible to follow them in our own power. In verses 1-6 Paul is explaining that through Jesus Christ we have been freed from the law.

The next portion of this chapter, verses 7-12, Paul talks about the purpose of the law. What does he say the Law has done for him?

Paul continues in verses 13-25 discussing the true difficulty in being the obedient follower of Christ he desires. Read this portion carefully. Does it sound familiar to our lives? Take time to process this and then write out any thoughts you have on why it is difficult to be obedient.

Sin is always there, dogging our every step and trying to trip us up. It can be downright discouraging to know that sin is right there in our flesh and that following the Law is extremely difficult. However, in the first two verses of the next chapter we see that there is hope. To end today's study, read Romans 8:1-2. Take some time to thank the Lord that even though it is hard to be obedient. He has provided a solution to our sin problem: Jesus Christ's sacrifice for our sins and the Holy Spirit indwelling us and helping us obey.

With your kids and/or spouse

Talk with your children about how it is hard to be obedient. Share with them that even as an adult you struggle to obey but that you ask forgiveness from our Heavenly Father and he forgives. Ask them questions about obeying and why it is hard for them to obey at times.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3

In keeping with the theme of how hard it is to obey, today we will look at examples of people in the Bible disobeying God. Often it is hard to think of some of the saints in the Bible as being capable of messing up and not obeying, but they did. It can be a bit of an encouragement to realize we are in the same boat as some of these greats.

There are three examples in the Old Testament. After reading each one think about how they were disobedient.

- Genesis 4:1-14 (The disobedience here may not be as straightforward as it would seem)
- Genesis 19:1-26
- Numbers 13-14:34

King David is described as a man after God's own heart. He wrote many of the Psalms. He loved the Lord but just like us he disobeyed the Lord. 2 Samuel 11 & 12 shares the story of David and Bathsheba. David messed up at a big way. He slept with another man's wife, tried to cover it up, and eventually had the husband killed. All of this sin from the man after God's own heart. We are in good company in our own inability to obey.

These are just some examples of disobedience. One thing of importance to understand is that we live in time where we have the Holy Spirit and grace. Thankfully we do not suffer from the same punishments that those in the Old Testament. Let's look at the verses from Romans 8:1-2 again.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death

With your kids and/or spouse

Spend some time with your kids today sharing one of these passages. Talk with them about

what the people in the passages did and what happened afterwards. Share with them how Jesus took on our punishment for sin because of the Father's great love for us.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4

Today I want to encourage you to spend time in reflection. We all struggle with things in regards to obedience to the Lord. In October we discussed the different pathways to connect with the Lord. Today try to find time to get alone with the Lord. Spend time thinking about areas where He wants to see you grow in obedience.

With your kids and/or spouse

You can help your kids understand that each one of us connect with the Lord. If you feel you connect with the Lord through journaling then you can share them how it connects you to the Lord. Help them think about times when they feel close to the Lord.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5 & SUNDAY, JANUARY 6

When the weekend comes we know a change in routine comes as well. Use today to pray, REST, (maybe catch up on your reading) and reflect on the Scripture we are working to memorize this month.

*"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."
Colossians 3:15 ESV*

With your kids and/or spouse

Spend time together as a family. Since it is chilly outside (maybe), it would be a good time to watch a family movie or play a game. Attend church together.

MONDAY, JANUARY 7

On Friday you spent time with the Lord, seeking out areas of disobedience in your life. I am going to be transparent. I am going to share a personal area in my life and then share how I am trying to become obedient in that area.

My area of disobedience is food. I overeat and doing it rather regularly. In fact, this area of disobedience has impacted my health. In 2012 I was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and high triglycerides. Food has become an idol and I felt the Lord calling me to get this area under control. In my search I have done Weight Watchers and other programs that teach you how to eat "right". With each program I would succeed and fail.

Recently I started journaling again and I realized what I need is a changed mind. Honestly without a changed mind my behavior would never change. This realization has led me to a book that I feel anyone can use when trying to bring obedience to your life. It is *Taste for Truth* by Barb Raveling. The focus of this book is basically about letting God's Word change our minds.

Thinking about your area of obedience that you desire victory in read the following verses.

- Romans 13:14
- 1 Peter 1:14-16
- Romans 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

These verses speak of our hearts and how the Lord has equipped us to be victorious through the Holy Spirit. Today is a very personal day, so do not feel like you have to share anything with your family. Spend time letting these verses speak to you.

With your kids and/or spouse

Play Simon Says. Sometimes we do not follow what Simon says. Discuss how this is what being obedient is like and talk about how you can work at listening to Simon. When we are listening to the Lord sometimes we do not obey Him. Give your kids the opportunity to be Simon.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8

Jesus is our ultimate example of obedience. He came to the Earth to be the sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is God incarnate. His life here was not one of the King he truly is but as a servant who laid down his life for us.

Philippians 2:5-9 describes so perfectly how he humbled himself and willingly put himself under the authority of God. Read Philippians 2:5-9. List the ways you see Jesus submitting to the calling of his life.

This a beautiful picture of sacrifice. Jesus had every right to not sacrifice himself on our behalf. He obeyed because he loves his Father and he loves us. He died knowing that not everyone would accept this gift of salvation.

One area that we struggle with as wives is our relationship to our husband. Ephesians 5:21-33 talks about how wives and husbands are to live out their marriages. It starts off with submitting to each other

out of our love for Jesus. Wives receive more of a challenge to be submissive to our husbands as Christ was submissive. Wow! That can be very hard.

Think about areas of in your life where you feel you have been submissive to your husband.

Now, think about areas where you struggle with this area. It can be big, like following your husband when his career moves you from place to place. It can be small, like not posting pictures on Facebook of your husband without making sure he is ok with it beforehand. (I never suspected it bothered my husband until he asked me not to!) What areas to you feel you struggle?

With your kids and/or spouse

For those who are brave, you could talk with your husband about submission. I can hear your gasps of horror! This can be a real time of learning about the heart of your husband. There could be something that you never knew was an issue and it can be easy to fix.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9

We have talked about our lives being an act of worship. When we are obedient to the leading of the Lord we are worshiping Him. Worship is a feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for God. Simply put, worship is our expression of loving God. How do we show our love for Him? We show our love by obeying Him.

Jesus told his followers in John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Teens today love so many different things. They love a certain musician, YouTuber, TV show, superheros, or video games. The list can go on and on. They know what these people think, what ideals they promote, and even what they may have had for dinner last night. They show their love for these different celebrities by wearing their "Merch" (merchandise), by telling their friends about them, by trying to communicate with them, and promoting what these celebrities promote.

We have, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, direct access to the throne of God. We say we love him and we need to show him we love him. It pleases God when we obey what He commands us to do. When we obey his commands to be submissive to our husbands, train up our children, to share the Good News, to stop watching a certain program...Well, you get the picture. We worship what we love and we obey whom we love.

Look at the following verses and meditate on what these verses are saying about obedience to God.

- John 14:23
- James 1:22
- Romans 12:2

Spend time with the Lord asking Him to reveal where He desires you to obey. Pray for the desire to obey out of love and to please Him.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10

The next two days we are going to look at different ways we show obedience to God. This is by no means a complete list. As I was preparing this reading plan I read a lot of different books on obedience, looked at different verses in Scripture, and looked at different blogs on obedience. The idea of looking at different ways to show obedience came from the blog *Becoming His Crown* by Carisa Alford.

We can show our obedience by being obedient in our work. We heard recently about finding joy in our lives and as Mom it is hard to find joy in what we do. We do so many repetitive tasks each and every day. Frankly, it gets boring. When it gets boring there is the temptation to let things slide. The Lord has called us to this journey and embracing what he calls us to and doing it shows our obedience. One of my jobs is to keep the house picked up. This tends to be the first area I let slide and I find myself binge watching Netflix, reading, or napping. When I find myself slipping I have no peace in my heart. I feel guilty because I know I have things to do.

Read Psalm 25:10. What does it say about peace we can find in obeying the Lord?

Another area where we can show our obedience is in the area of our minds. This is a big one for a lot of people. Earlier I shared a struggle I have with my weight. It is not just enough to change my behaviors; I have to change how I think about food and my body. Many of us struggle with anxiety, and anxiety starts in our minds. We can get obsessed with thoughts that will make us ineffective in following the Lord. We need to keep a guard on what we think as this will affect every area of our lives.

The following verses speak to how we can and should obey the Lord with our thoughts.

- Romans 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 10:5
- Philippians 4:8

Can you see how these verses help us control our thoughts? Write out any of your thoughts.

Carisa Alford's blog is so full of different topics that are important to us as women. I encourage you to spend time looking through her blog.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11

Today I want to look at two more ways we can show our obedience to God. Again I am taking my lead from the blog *Becoming His Crown* by Carisa Alford. She really set this up well and I am thankful I stumbled across it.

We can show our obedience to God with the obedience of our hearts. The heart and mind are closely linked and having protecting what we hold in our hearts will help us to be obedient. We hide what is important, what we believe, what we long for, whom we love all in our heart. Matthew 6:20 says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also!"

The Lord knew we would need to protect this area if we want to be obedient to him. Look at these two passages of Scripture and meditate on what they are saying.

- Proverbs 4:23
- Mark 12:19-31

We also show our obedience with our bodies. No surprise that I included that one. It is a biggie for a lot of people. In November we had breakout sessions and the session about our bodies has really stayed with me. God has given our bodies to us as a gift. He has things that only we can do for his kingdom and having a strong healthy body is vital to carrying that out. I had never thought of my physical body as a gift. I have understood that my life is a gift, but not my body. My body has been something I have fought against for most of my life. Since that discussion I have tried to be thankful for my body. I have looked at how I use this body and am I taking care of it so I can carry out the commands of my Heavenly Father.

There are great verses for our bodies. Here are a few.

- Psalm 139:14
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

These are just a portion of the ways we show God our obedience to Him. Spend some time today thinking about other ways you show your obedience. Maybe look at the Scriptures to see what it says about these areas.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12

When the weekend comes we know a change in routine comes as well. Use today to pray, REST, (maybe catch up on your reading) and reflect on the Scripture we are working to memorize this month.

With your kids and/or spouse

Spend time together watching a family movie or playing a game.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13

When the weekend comes we know a change in routine comes as well. Use today to pray, REST, (maybe catch up on your reading) and reflect on the Scripture we are working to memorize this month.

With your kids and/or spouse

Attend church together as a family.

MONDAY, JANUARY 14

Today I want to look at the book of Joshua. In this Old Testament book we see the Israelites taking possession of the Promised Land. Before they cross the Jordan, the Lord gives them a commissioning of sorts.

Joshua 1:7-9

⁷Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

The Lord has commanded His children to go into the Promise Land and drive out all the inhabitants that are there. He gives this command because He did not want the people who were already there to draw the Israelites away from Him. The Lord knows how quickly we can have our hearts drawn away from Him. Therefore he commanded them and us to be strong and courageous in doing what He says.

This year we have been talking about being courageous and putting on love. It takes courage to be obedient to the Lord. This world will work so hard to draw us away from following the Lord. Thinking about this year ahead, what areas of your life do you feel you will need courage in obeying the Lord? Maybe make a list of them and look to the Scriptures to find verses to help you obey.

We come to Christ as sinners. He is the one to give us salvation. He is our perfect sacrifice and through Him we are right with the God of the Universe. We have done nothing to earn this salvation. However, when we become a Christian and walk in relationship to the Lord, we need to work with the Holy Spirit to shed the old sinful things in our lives and put on the new creature we are becoming.

With your kids and/or spouse

Read our Scripture for this year of MomLife. Pray about the things the Lord has revealed to you and pray for the courage to walk in His commands.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15

Today I am going to share the story behind a favorite hymn of mine. It is "Trust and Obey" by John H. Shammis. Tomorrow we will look at the hymn itself.

Shammis was a successful businessman who later became a minister in the late 1880s. He was good friends with musician Daniel Towner (who would later compose the music), who was the song leader at some of the revivals held by the great theologian D.L. Moody. At one meeting, a young man gave a comment on his confidence in his salvation. Tower later said of one evening, "One night a young man rose in a testimony meeting and said, 'I am not quite sure-but I am going to trust, and I am going to obey.' I just jotted that sentence down, and sent it with a little story to the Rev. J.H. Sammis, a Presbyterian minister. He wrote the hymn and the tune was born."

There are passages in the Bible that show how the Lord calls people then and now to trust Him and obey Him. The book of Hebrews has a chapter of how different people put their faith in what the Lord commanding them to do. Read Hebrews 11.

Think about the things these people were asked to do by the Lord. What we see is the Lord calling people, like Abraham, to leave all he has ever known and to follow Him to a land Abraham has never seen. That takes a lot of faith and trust in the Lord. We do not see the small daily sacrifices that Abraham and his family had to make in order to be obedient. Many of us have moved and can get a glimpse of what this move did to the family. They obeyed the Lord though, and for their faith in Him and their obedience they were richly rewarded.

As we have seen, obedience is a hard thing to do. There are things in this world that will fight us trying to obey. We have the Scriptures that show us the Lord's faithfulness through everything. We see the strength He gives to obey. We see the struggles and the rewards of being obedient. In the Old Testament we see the Lord calling the Israelites to make monuments to remind them of what He has done for them.

Is there anything the Lord is calling you to do in obedience to Him? Maybe you need to find someone to be an accountability partner with. Don't be afraid to ask someone. They probably would love to have someone to help them keep accountable.

With your kids and/or spouse

Tomorrow we will look at the hymn, Trust and Obey. You can look online and find it if you are not familiar with it. Listen to it. Listen to it with your family.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16

Trust and Obey

John H. Shammis 1887

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows, for the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.

There is such joy in the song. When we think of obedience we get uncomfortable. I love this song for the fact that we see that there is joy when we trust and obey. Just as the young man said that he did not understand all the theology but he would trust and obey, we can too. To be happy in Jesus we trust and obey.

Here are some references to help in the area of obedience

Books:

A Life of Obedience: Learning to Trust His Life, His Place, His Will by Andrew Murray

Everyday Obedience: Walking Purposely in His Grace by Katie Orr

The Pursuit of God by A W Tozer

Blogs:

Becoming His Crown by Carisa Alford