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“O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E, obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.” I remember singing this song in Sunday school from the time I was 8 years old. The concept of obedience is not new. It has been taught to us throughout our lives. We are supposed to obey our parents, teachers, elders, police officers, and for believers, we are to be obedient to Christ. Yet, as mundane as this idea may be, we simply cannot seem to figure it out! The past few months have brought many changes to my life. I have always been one to welcome change, but as I have sought to find a “new normal” in my day to day life, God has continually laid the concept of obedience on my heart. I know that I am where God wants me to be, but am I obediently doing what He wants me to do on a daily basis? What does faithful obedience look like and why is it so important? Let me share with you a few things that God has laid on my heart, and I pray that it will be an encouragement to you as well.

Luke 9: 23-24 says, “And He said to all, If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.” This scripture tells me why it is so important to live a life of obedience... it is a command! If I am to be a true disciple of Christ, obedience is required. On the surface, this concept sounds a bit crazy and even impossible. How can we, as humans, walk in perfect obedience? However, Jesus does not say that obedience is always going to lead us down an easy and joyful road in life. God has been teaching me that He is not talking about perfect obedience and a life in which I never fail. He is just asking that I be submissive and as a result, like it says in verse 24, His plan will ultimately prevail and I will get to experience His amazing faithfulness.

There are two things that Satan is constantly trying to use to prevent believers from being obedient to the Lord. Fear and pride. I understand that these are two very common issues that we all struggle with, but that is the very reason Satan can use them to easily get in our way! Fear is an expected emotion for us to have when we are facing the unknown. It is rational to be afraid when we are about to step into uncharted waters, especially when our decisions affect not only ourselves but the ones we love. However, if we let fear paralyze us, we become blind to the needs of those around us. Slowly the center of our life becomes more about us as opposed to the task God has placed in front of us. If the step we have taken in faith goes completely wrong, we live in a constant state of “what if” and are consumed by what “could have been.” While we are here on earth, hardship and failure are inevitable, but God is not judging us for experiencing emotions. How we react to our circumstances is where we will be held accountable.

Pride can also get in the way of an obedient life. In my life, I see it played out as obedience, but on my own terms. I rationalize my actions by convincing myself that as long as I get the job done, the Lord will be pleased with it. However, I miss out on so many blessings because some of the most trying times in life produce the most bountiful fruit. Too often my partial obedience prevents me from loving others as I am commanded to love. Not everyone is easy to love, but my response to people is often a reflection of my heart. My lack of contentment and patience with those around me is often a direct result of my own sin and disobedience. It is hard to be obedient to God’s timing when we live in a world of instant gratification. That is however, not how relationships with the Lord and people work. Unbelievers will watch us, and as they see us faithfully living our lives for the Lord they will begin to form an understanding of God in a way that penetrates their hearts and not just their minds. Like the song lyrics state in the first paragraph, obedience IS the best way to show others that we are followers of Jesus Christ.

Obedience is not something that we do one time and then we are finished. It is continually surrendering our own authority and power to the Lord. I have come to see that surrendering my whole life to the Lord, for His service, is not the hardest part of my Christian walk. It is much harder to obey the Lord in the little things on a day to day basis. I don’t know what the Lord may be asking each and every one of you to surrender or what He may be calling you to do. However, I do know that if we desire to live a life of faithfulness, we are required to be obedient no matter the consequences or the path we are led down. These past few months have proven that this is easier said than done, and have led me to ask myself, is it worth it? My experiences have all lead me to the same conclusion and that is YES! Obedience is worth it because God has proven Himself worthy of our service. Jesus gives us unending mercy every day, despite our failures, and rewards us for our faithfulness. He has given us promises in his Word that he wants us to claim as our own. As we begin to get even a small taste of who our sweet Jesus really is, this alone is enough to lead us to a life of obedience.

**“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”
Hebrews 13:16**