

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 8: Obedience (4b)

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org (Studies)

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **Jeremiah 15:16**

"Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts."

Step 3: Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – **Jeremiah 15**

Step 4: Questions for Personal Applications and/or Group Discussions:

1. Why is it important to memorize key Scripture verses?
2. Why is it dangerous to seek for or depend on a "sense of peace" to find or follow God's will? Remember Jonah who didn't have peace about God's will to go to Ninevah.
3. Ponder on the value and dangers of following emotions versus obedience to God's Word.
4. How do disciples "will to obey God's Word"? Remember actions speak louder than words.
5. Explain how we are empowered by the Spirit and are not left alone to act on our commitment to follow Christ.

Step 5: Read and discuss the Content from the book:

Chapter 4b per the author – Keith Phillips:

When confronted with a serious dilemma, a severe temptation or a momentous decision, only the naive believe they can quickly pray to God, open the Bible and magically discover the answer. While God is not limited, the Holy Spirit usually chooses to bring to our memory those things that are already there. Jesus warned, "...Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29 KJV). The disciple must have a working knowledge of God's Word.

One schoolteacher believed that God was directing her to break her teaching contract in order to minister with us. She was confident that this was God's will because she had a "peace" about it.

I am always excited about new missionaries joining us in the ghetto. Our present staff cannot possibly respond to all the people who are seeking to know God through our ministry. But I knew it was not God's will for this teacher to break her contract. God says, "If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth" (Numbers 30:2). God's Word, not "a sense of peace," reveals His will. Remember Jonah? He had no "peace" about going to Nineveh, but it was definitely God's will, as revealed by "The word of the Lord" (Jonah 1:1).

I believe that this teacher sincerely desired to obey God and that her feelings led her to believe she was correct. But the Christian life is based on obedience to God's Word, not on following your emotions. Paul said, "... in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature" (1 Corinthians 14:20). "Childlike faith" is not license for ignorance. Paul said repeatedly, "I would not have you be ignorant...."

Without an adequate knowledge of God's Word, a disciple is gambling his future on feelings, hopes and opinions, instead of securing it in God's will and the facts of his faith. A disciple experiences the discovery of Jeremiah: "Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart..." (Jeremiah 15:16).

You Must Will to Obey

You must be committed to obeying God's Word even before you know what it says. Years ago, a well-known tight-rope-walker was about to cross Niagara Falls on a wire. He asked the crowd if they thought he could do it. When they affirmed their belief, he asked them again, "Do you really believe I can do it?" When their shouts indicated absolute faith, he asked for a volunteer to ride on his back.

Commitment is binding yourself to a person, an ideal or a goal no matter what the consequences. Your commitment is a pledge to be bound to Christ, to become one with Him; to place your future, your very life in His hands. Paul urges believers "to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God..." (Romans 12:1).

Most Christians want to obey God's Word, but wanting is not enough. Wanting is often a function of your emotions. It fluctuates with your feelings. The disciple wills to obey God's Word.

God does not expect you to exercise a Christ-like will on your own. Paul teaches that "...it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Your Spirit-empowered will can overrule your feelings and lead you to act upon your prior commitment to Christ (Romans 8).

I recall staying at a hotel that had a swimming pool with a high diving board. With considerable trepidation I decided to venture one dive off that high board. Carefully I maneuvered my way up the metal steps to the top of the ladder and stood trembling on that slab of fiber glass. I had no doubt that gravity could pull me into the pool. But I also knew it was unlikely to do so unless I jumped. One can compare gravity to God's work of empowering us; it is always available when we choose to obey.

A prominent philosophy today is, "If it feels good, do it." Avoiding negative feelings or experiences has become the highest law for many. They mistakenly assume that pleasure and happiness are synonymous. Satan is a master at making evil look good. He paints wickedness with enticing beauty and promises delightful gratification. If sins were not pleasurable, they would be no temptation.

A man who had just left his wife in order to find happiness assured me that God would approve. God wanted him to be happy and that was impossible in his present situation—in spite of that pledge "for better or for worse... till death do us part." He may find temporary pleasure, but he will not find happiness. True happiness can only be found by obeying God.

When there is a conflict between God's Word and one's feelings, a disciple wills to do what God says. That is what Christianity is all about.

One of the great tragedies of twentieth-century Christianity is that many biblically knowledgeable believers are educated beyond their obedience. Some Christians exercise the "dip and skip" method of obeying Scripture. They dip into the promises and skip the commands! Or they emphasize certain "important" verses and ignore others, discrediting 2 Timothy 3:16, which declares "All Scripture is inspired by God..." (italics added).

My initial relationships with young men in Watts were characterized by arguments and long discussions about questions like: "Can you prove there is a God?", "How could a virgin bear a child?", or "Why would a God of love allow poverty or child abuse?"

I knew that God's Word said, "Don't get involved in arguing over unanswerable questions and controversial theological ideas...for this kind of thing isn't worthwhile; it only does harm" (Titus 3:9 LB). But I figured this was the only way to persuade those street dudes to believe in Christ. So, I skipped this principle. I was sincere in trying to convert them, but I was not obeying God's Word. And I never won an argument.

Finally, I decided to try God's way. I would not argue or defend the Bible, just proclaim it (2 Timothy 4:2). I started to pray for those young men. When the opportunity arose, I shared God's

love with them. Before long God's Spirit convicted four of them to follow Christ. But the others never did. Their hearts were hardened by our debates. Christ had become a joke; Christianity, a game.

I could have avoided impeding the work of the Holy Spirit had I simply obeyed God, absolutely and without question. I had no right to choose what I would obey. Knowing what the Bible says without obeying it is a detestable affront to God.

Romans 6:16 asks, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey...?" Since the believer is committed to obeying God's will as the Holy Spirit reveals it, he studies the Word of God with a prior commitment to live what he learns. This determination is indisputable evidence that he is a disciple of Christ.

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Disciple's Checklist – Obedience?
☐ I faithfully study God's Word.
☐ I will obey God's Word.

Step 6: *Share personal prayer requests then each person prays for the other's requests.*

Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Phillips. Pub. by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content (except study questions) is taken from the book without revisions.

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