

OBEYING GOD

book eleven in the series:

THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU



DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

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- Day One: Respond to God's Love
 - Day Two: Focus on God's Two Key Commandments
 - Day Three: Obey Out of Reverence for God
 - Day Four: Obey God to Fulfill Your Purpose
 - Day Five: Review and Test

Obeying God: Book eleven in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

By Doug Britton, MFT

Twelve books on “Knowing God”

Twelve books on “Developing a Godly Character”

Twelve books on “Enjoying Healthy Relationships”

Twelve books on “Overcoming Personal Problems”

For

Individuals

Small Groups

Churches

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

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- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

Developing a Godly Character

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

Enjoying Healthy Relationships

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

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Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in "The Owner's Manual to the New You" series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: Respond to God's Love

What did you think when you read this book's title—Loving God, Obeying God? You may have immediately thought you would be told to follow thousands of instructions and laws found throughout the Bible. (In fact, that might be the way you are trying to follow Jesus now.)

On the other hand, you may have reacted to the title with anger, thinking that God is love and that "obedience" sounds too legalistic.

You might even think obedience has very little to do with being a believer—that we live under grace and shouldn't worry about rules.



Discussion question

1. What does "obeying God" mean to you? Explain your answer.

Obey God because he loves you

What is your image of God? Some people think of him as an impersonal deity who wants us to follow a bunch of rules that don't make much sense. Others think of him as an angry old man in the sky who is just waiting for us to mess up so he can punish us.

Neither of these pictures comes even close to capturing the truth. God is our Creator and our father, and he loves us passionately. Walking with him is much more than following a set of rules. It is basking in his love and enjoying an intimate relationship with him.

The better you understand God's love, the easier it is to obey him. It's a lot easier to follow someone who loves you than someone who doesn't love you.

Whether or not your parents, spouse, or anyone else loves you, God, the Creator of everything that exists, loves you deeply.

Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. (Psalm 36:5)

How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 36:7)

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." (Jeremiah 31:3)

The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

Discussion question

2. Does knowing that God loves you motivate you to obey him? Explain your answer.

Do you enjoy God's love?

Do you experience the joy that comes from being loved by God, or do you sometimes think God doesn't love you? Does either of the following statements describe you?

"God can't love me. I have committed terrible sins."

You may be sure God doesn't love you because of terrible things you have done. Yet that isn't true. Regardless of what you did when you sinned, or how often you sinned—even if it was after you became a Christian—God offers forgiveness. Why? Because he loves you.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)

"God doesn't love me. Look at all my problems."

You may think God doesn't love you because you are going through hard times, perhaps in health, relationships, finances, or other circumstances.

You might assume that if God loved you, you wouldn't have trouble. But Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Although God blesses us in many ways, problems are part of life. The key is to remember that Jesus is there to help and comfort you in times of trouble.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

Discussion questions

3. Have you thought God doesn't love you because of something you have done wrong or because of all your problems? If so, explain your answer.
4. In view of the previous Scriptures, can you be assured of God's love? Why or why not?

Pray to deeply know God's love.

It isn't just modern Christians who have trouble experiencing God's love. This was also true in the time of the apostle Paul. In fact, one of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians was that they would know God's love better. Read his prayer for them:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:16-21)

Discussion questions and personal prayer

5. Read the following prayer, adapted from Ephesians 3:16-19 (which you just read):

I pray that out of your glorious riches you may strengthen me with power through your Spirit in my inner being, so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith. And I pray that I, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that I may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

6. Was reading this prayer meaningful for you? Is this a prayer you would like to make part of your morning prayers? Explain your answer.

Obey God because you love him

As we experience God's love for us, we begin to love him back. Because we have fallen in love with him, we seek to please him by obeying him.

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."
(John 14:23-24)

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

Discussion question

7. Have you ever chosen to obey God because you love him? Explain your answer.

Obey God because you trust him

Although you can't understand the reasons for everything that happens or how God is working in your circumstances, you can trust that he is with you and will help you through the hard times.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. (Psalm 46:1-3)

In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? (Psalm 56:4)

I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:2)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Discussion questions

8. Why can we trust God—even in the midst of difficult circumstances?
9. How can trusting God make it easier to obey God?

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

Memory verse

Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. (Psalm 36:5)

Want to learn more?

Free online Bible study

God's Love for Me

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/gods-love

Book by Doug Britton

Who Do You Think You Are?

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/who-are-you

Homework – Day One

1. Why do you think this book started out with a lesson on responding to God's love?
2. What has been your image of God? Have you thought of him as a loving father or an angry old man waiting to catch you doing something wrong? Explain your answer:
3. Have you had trouble believing or accepting God's love in the past? Explain your answer:
4. Describe how you look at God now:

Day Two: Focus on God's Two Key Commandments

In yesterday's lesson you read about responding to God's love by obeying him. A reasonable follow-up question is, "What commands are we supposed to follow?" This could seem like an overwhelming question since there are thousands of instructions and commands in the Bible. However, as you will see, God has simplified things for us.



The two great commandments

The New Testament tells us many things to do and not to do. There are so many instructions that we could feel overwhelmed if we tried to memorize and follow them all.

Jesus' answer to the following question helps us understand all these instructions. The question was, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matthew 22:36).

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Discussion question

1. Jesus said, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:40). What do you think he meant?

These two commandments tell us to love God and to love others. The problem for us is that we don't know how to love. In fact, our ideas about love could be completely wrong. That's why the New Testament gives us so many instructions. We need help in figuring out how to love.

For example, an unmarried person might think he or she was showing love by saying to someone else, "I love you, so let's have sex." However, because of many passages in the New Testament, we know that true love would say, "Since I love you, let's not have sex."

In other words, the New Testament instructions are not a bunch of arbitrary commands. Instead, they are commands that help us know how to love.

Paul illustrated this concept in his letter to the Philippians when he prayed that they would love in "knowledge and depth of insight" (Philippians 1:9).

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)

Discussion question

2. How can the two greatest commandments help us make sense of all the instructions we read in the New Testament?

The first commandment

The first commandment—"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37)—says a lot. It obviously means more than going to church every week. And it means much more than being "religious." The following guidelines can help you love God more.

Seek to please God.

Think about loving God when you make decisions. Ask yourself, "Would this please God?" This simple question can help you maintain a Christ-centered perspective.

Pray regularly.

Paul wrote, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful" (Colossians 4:2). Prayer is a privilege, an opportunity to communicate with the one who loves you the most.

Praise and worship the Lord.

Praise is a powerful way to connect with our maker, a way to allow his Spirit to move in us and transform us. It's a great way to stay close to God. And it's a powerful way to reconnect with God when we start to drift away in our daily lives.

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. (Psalm 100:2)

Read the Bible daily.

Bible study is essential for growth as a Christian. In fact, we are told to "meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8).

Discussion questions

3. Describe how one of the above ways to love God has helped you in the past.
4. Name one of the above ways to love God that you need to work on. What steps will you take?

The second commandment

Now let's look at the second commandment—to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). When Jesus used the word "neighbor," he didn't just mean someone who lives next door. He meant anyone with whom you have contact. That includes your boss, your spouse, and—as you can see from the following verse—your enemies.

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

When Jesus said to love your enemy "as yourself," he was saying to love your neighbor intensely. (He did not mean, as some people think, that before you can love others you must "love yourself.")

We read the importance of loving others throughout the Scriptures. For example, in the following passage we learn that if we have knowledge (or any other gift), yet don't have love, we are "nothing."

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:2)

Discussion question

5. How does 1 Corinthians 13:2 motivate you to love others more?

Help others.

Loving others does not necessarily mean enjoying emotional feelings of love (although those are nice to have). Instead, it is wanting the best for others and looking for ways to help them. Read about this in Philippians 2:1-8. In essence, love is a choice.

Many people have trouble making this choice because they think if they love someone who is doing something wrong, they are condoning that person's behavior. But loving others does not mean you approve of their actions or that you want them to succeed in what they are doing. It does mean you will pray for them to turn to God and to turn from sin.

Encourage others.

Have you ever known someone who believed in you, someone who frequently spoke words of praise and encouragement? The kind of person who made you feel you could do it, whatever it was? Be that kind of person when you are with other people.

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Pray for others.

Make it a habit to pray for other people throughout the day.

Even pray for people who hurt you. Remember how much Jesus loves you even when you do wrong things.

For a beautiful example of praying for others, read Jesus' prayer in John 17:6-26.

Discussion questions

6. Name one of the above ways to love others that you have put into practice in the past. Discuss what you did and how it worked out.
7. Name one of the above ways to love others that you need to work on. What steps will you take?

What about the Old Testament laws?

As you have read this lesson, you may have noticed that it does not quote the many laws in the Old Testament. That's because these laws do not apply to us the same way they did when God gave them to the Israelites. When Jesus came to the earth, died, and was resurrected, he established a new covenant with us.

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. (Galatians 3:23-25)

Although the New Testament tells us how to walk in fellowship with Jesus, it would be a mistake not to also read the Old Testament. Reasons to read the Old Testament include:

- It tells us about God's love and faithfulness.
- It tells us about the coming messiah (Jesus).
- It tells us about God's holiness and warns us not to turn to other "gods" (or religions).
- It tells us how God looks at specific sins and gives us principles for daily living.

Ask God to help you fulfill his two greatest commandments

The two greatest commandments do not come naturally for anyone. We often forget them. Or we give in to our own stubbornness, selfishness, or irritation.

Pray to break free from a rebellious nature. Ask God to deeply transform you through his Spirit, helping you delight in his decrees (Psalm 119:16). Make the following two verses your personal prayers:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. (Psalm 143:10)

Discussion question

8. Would you like to make it a habit to pray to love God and others more? If so, when would be a good time? How can you remind yourself to pray at these times?

Remember God's grace

You will sin from time to time. (That is, you will do something disobedient to God's will.) After all, Jesus is the only sinless person who ever lived. The wonderful thing is that God knows we are imperfect. He is always there to forgive us when we confess our sins.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Memory verse

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40)

Homework – Day Two

1. Should you read the Old Testament? Why or why not?
2. The Bible has thousands of commands. How could anyone keep track of them, much less obey them?
3. When you are wondering if you should do something, why is it helpful to ask, “Would this please God?”
4. Is praying a way of loving God? Why or why not?

Day Three: Obey Out of Reverence for God

We live in an age of individuality. Instead of looking to someone as an ultimate authority, many people pick and choose what to think or believe. This attitude carries over to the way they look at God. They enjoy the benefits of knowing him, and they rejoice in the knowledge that he loves them, but they reserve the right to decide what to do if they don't like what he says. In other words, they have an independent attitude.



Remember who God is

God loves us, and he is our friend. But he is much more than that. He is the Creator of the universe and everything that exists. He is the one who holds everything together. He created us for a purpose, and he has plans for every one of us. When he talks, we should listen.

Read the following verses to remind yourself of God's majesty and power.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? (Psalm 8:3-4)

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. (Psalm 100:3)

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. (Colossians 1:16)

Discussion questions

1. What do you learn about God from the above verses?
2. When you read the Bible, are you open to learning? Are you willing to change? Why or why not?
3. How important is it to you to live according to God's word? Explain your answer.

Learn a lesson from the Old Testament

We read in the Old Testament that over the centuries the Israelites often repeated the same unfortunate pattern: They would promise to follow God, then go their own way, then be corrected by God, then once again promise to follow God. They followed this pattern in spite of God's promises of blessings for obedience and warnings about disobedience.

Here are some of the many times God warned the Israelites to follow his commands:

Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them. (Deuteronomy 28:14)

But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)

Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you. (Jeremiah 26:13)

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests." (Hosea 4:6)

When we read the Israelites' history in the Old Testament we may shake our heads and wonder, "Why didn't they get it right? What was their problem?"

Yet we do the same thing. We read what God says, then we don't do it because we are stubborn, lazy, or rebellious.

Discussion questions

4. Can you relate to the pattern the Israelites followed? If so, what have been your patterns?
5. What can you do to break this pattern and develop a good pattern?

Learn a lesson from the New Testament

Believers today are not governed by the Old Testament laws the same way the Israelites were, but we are still told to be obedient. Look at what Jesus told his followers about obedience:

If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (Luke 11:28)

If you love me, you will obey what I command. (John 14:15)

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me." (John 14:23-24)

The writers of the New Testament also stressed the importance of obedience. For example:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. (Romans 6:17)

But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25)

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (James 1:22)

Discussion question

6. Choose one or two of the previous verses from the New Testament that speak to you personally. How do they speak to you?

How obedient are you? Check your attitude.**Do you have a bad attitude?**

Do you ever fall into any of the following bad attitudes when it comes to obeying God? Check each one that describes how you sometimes feel.

- I don't care what God says. I want to live my own life.
- I'm upset with God. I want to do things my own way.
- I disagree with what God says in his word.
- I am stubborn. I don't like anyone, including God, telling me what to do.
- I am lazy. I don't like to study or put effort into living God's way.

Discussion questions

7. Did you check any of these bad attitudes? If so, which ones? How have they kept you from obeying God?
8. What steps can you take to overcome your bad attitudes?

Do you have a good attitude?

Do you ever have any of the following positive attitudes when it comes to obeying God? Check each one that describes how you sometimes feel.

- I know I need God's guidance and help.
- I am excited to learn what God says.
- I am eager to grow and become more Christ-like.
- I am disciplined and study the Bible every day.
- I want to please God, so I am glad to do what he says.

Discussion question

9. Did you check any of these good attitudes? If so, which ones? How have they helped you be obedient to God?

Give up your "right" to do things your way

The Bible will challenge your opinions, attitudes, emotions, actions, and beliefs. The question is, how will you respond? Will you try to fit what the Bible says into your current attitudes and opinions, or will you allow its words to change you?

Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. (Psalm 119:35)

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (Matthew 7:24-25)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Discussion question

10. How willing are you to let God change your opinions, attitudes, emotions, actions, and beliefs? Explain your answer.

Obey God to avoid the consequences of disobedience

When you follow God's instructions, life can be wonderful. However, when you disobey them you are likely to suffer "natural consequences." If you treat people poorly, you may be treated poorly. When you have sex outside marriage, you may get sexually transmitted diseases. When you sin, you may wound those around you.

In addition to the natural consequences of sin, if you continually disobey God, you may find yourself being disciplined or punished by him.

And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." (Hebrews 12:5-6)

Memory verse

If you love me, you will obey what I command. (John 14:15)

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Day Four: Obey God to Fulfill Your Purpose

Imagine your brother was a football player who had amazing natural abilities. Professional teams fought to get him to sign with them. Finally he decided on a team and joined. The owners, coaches, and teammates were excited. They saw great things ahead.

But once he joined the team, he showed an independent streak. He missed most practices. When he made it to practice, he ignored the coach's instructions and only ran the plays he felt like doing. He never read the playbook or looked at game videos.

Did he ever reach his God-given potential? Of course not. Did he experience a sense of satisfaction and joy about his performance? Probably not.

Now imagine you had another brother who only had average abilities, but he threw himself into everything he did. Although he didn't have outstanding skills, his hard-working attitude was so impressive that a professional team decided to give him a try.

Once on the team, he made it to every practice. He listened to the coach and did everything he was told. He studied playbooks on his own time and got together with some of his teammates for informal practices.

As he worked diligently, always following the coach's instructions, he developed skills he didn't know he had. Although he never became a star, he contributed significantly to the team. He found himself enjoying life, blessing teammates, and inspiring people who watched him play.



Discussion questions

1. What lessons can we learn from these two athletes?
2. How could we apply these lessons to our relationship with Jesus?

Obey God to fulfill your purpose

Do you know that God has a plan and a purpose for your life? If you are like many people, you might not be aware that your life has a purpose. In fact, you may be pretty sure there is no purpose for your life.

But that's not what the Bible says. As Paul wrote, Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14).

Paul also wrote:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Discussion question

3. Have you felt your life lacked purpose? Explain your answer.

You are created to bear fruit.

The type of person you become is more important than your success in the world. Ask God to help you develop the fruit of the Spirit so you can be as good a representative as possible to those with whom you have contact.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

You are created to do good works.

There are countless needs in the world. God wants each of us to identify something we can do to help others. The works may be small or they may be large. As you go through life, keep an eye open for opportunities to do good works. Remember Paul's words to the Ephesians:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

You are created to use the talents, gifts, and abilities God gave you.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:4-8)

You are created to spread the gospel.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. (Psalm 96:3)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)

You are created to praise God.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. (Hebrews 13:15)

You are created for God's glory.

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. (Isaiah 43:6-7)

Discussion question

4. Choose one of these ways God wants to use you. How can obeying God's word help you in this area?

Do not minimize your role.

All Christians collectively form the body of Christ. The body is formed of many different parts (Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27), and each one is important. It does not matter what part of the body you are, even if you think you don't have anything to offer.

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it. (1 Corinthians 12:22-24)

Don't compare yourself to others or give up if someone seems to do a better job than you. Of course there are others who have more talent. If all the evangelists or witnesses or teachers in the world decided to stop trying because someone else did a better job, where would we be?

God often uses "weak" people to accomplish amazing things. As God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. (1 Corinthians 1:26-27)

Discussion questions

5. Why do you think God uses "weak" people?
6. How do you think the Scriptures about God using "weak" people apply to you?

Prepare yourself.

Remember the football players at the beginning of this lesson. God is your coach—and much more than your coach. If you don't follow his instructions, you won't develop the wisdom, knowledge, and strength of character you need to succeed.

Study the Bible. Spend time in prayer and in fellowship with other believers. Listen to Bible-based preaching and teaching. Get to know God better, and allow him to change you. Prepare yourself for the adventure he has in store for you.

When you obey God, you live a full, joyful life

Jesus came to offer you an abundant, joyful life. When you live according to his commands, the quality of your life will be radically different. You will be able to make good friends and experience internal peace. You will experience the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Even when you go through difficult times you will be able to rest in the knowledge of God's love.

Jesus offers you an abundant life.

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (or "abundantly" in the New American Standard Bible). (John 10:10)

Jesus offers you peace.

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Jesus offers you joy.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Memory verse

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

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Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false

- T 1. Knowing that God loves us can help us obey him.
- T 2. Knowing that we can trust God can help us obey him.
- T 3. Knowing that God has a purpose for us can help us obey him.
- F 4. If we are close to God, we will never have trouble obeying him.
- F 5. Since we live under grace, obedience isn't very important to God.
- T 6. Jesus said all the Law and the Prophets hang on the two greatest commandments.
- T 7. Wanting to please God is a great motivation to obey him.
- F 8. Since Jesus loves us, he will never discipline or punish us for disobedience.
- F 9. Since we are not under the Old Testament law, it's not important to read the Old Testament.
- F 10. Life would be a lot more fun if we didn't have to obey God.

Memory verses

- 1. Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

- 2. John 14:15

If you love me, you will obey what I command.



About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

He has also trained pastors, counselors, mentors, and lay leaders in biblical counseling, mentoring, and small group leadership.

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Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

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Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com and click on the "Seminars" link.

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In addition to “The Owner’s Manual to the New You,” Doug Britton has written many more cross-cultural, Bible-based books on leadership, discipleship, and key areas of daily living.

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