

TO OBEY *IS BETTER*

unit 10 | session 3



CHRIST CONNECTION

Though the sacrificial system was instated to reveal God's holiness, provide a temporary method of forgiveness of sin, and help people worship God, it also revealed people's hearts. When Jesus came, people who put their faith in Him revealed tender hearts willing to believe He was the Son of God and the Messiah. Those who rejected Jesus as Lord rejected God as well.

COMPLETE OBEDIENCE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

1 Samuel 14—1 Samuel 15

PARTIAL OBEDIENCE IS DISOBEDIENCE

1 SAMUEL 15:1-3,7-9

1 And Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD. 2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. 3 Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'" . . . 7 And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.

WE CAN'T HIDE OUR SIN FROM GOD

1 SAMUEL 15:10-15,22-23

10 The word of the LORD came to Samuel: 11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night. 12 And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal." 13 And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD." 14 And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" 15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction." . . . 22 And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."

MAIN POINT.

Our obedience to God must be complete.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN AS SELFISHNESS

When we sin, we are acting out of a selfish attitude and mindset that assumes our action will lead us to more happiness than if we were to obey God. Because sin is manifested in our tendency to be “curved inward” toward self, it is the opposite of love. Love looks outwardly to place others before oneself, operating from the mindset that others are more important (Phil. 2:3). Where sin selfishly seeks personal gratification and happiness, love works for the joy of others in the hopes of making them happy in God.

DISCUSSION

PARTIAL OBEDIENCE IS DISOBEDIENCE

1 SAMUEL 15:1-3,7-9



- How did Saul disobey God's instructions? Why did it matter?
- Why do we hold on to things God has commanded us to destroy?
- Read verse 9. What does it look like for us to give God only the “All that [is] despised and worthless”?

WE CAN'T HIDE OUR SIN FROM GOD

1 SAMUEL 15:10-15,22-23

- Read verse 14. What was the evidence of Saul's disobedience?
- How do you react when you're confronted with your sin? How is it kind of God to convict you?
- What do verses 22-23 help you understand about pretending to be something you're not?



IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE ARE YOU JUSTIFYING DISOBEDIENCE? HOW CAN YOU SEEK ACCOUNTABILITY?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Why is it important to make sure you're interpreting God's Word correctly? People interpret God's commands in different ways, right? Doing so often leads us to a place of twisting what God says into what we want it to say. We lessen the intensity of His words to make them more appealing. We soften His words to make them easier to follow. Or, we simply don't know His Word at all. Interpreting God's Word in our own way leads to devastating results. We do this when we read Scripture out of context or when we pick and choose which verses to follow. God's commands to us are clear if we will go to them. We must commit to study His Word in such a way that we learn the context. Looking at the whole narrative of Scripture instead of single verses in isolation helps us see the big picture and God's heart behind every command!



DAY ONE

HEBREWS 12:1-2

Can you think of a time when it was really difficult to keep going? Maybe you were running a race or studying all night for a final. Fatigue set in and tempted you to give up. Instead of enduring to the end, we often grow weary and debate taking the easier road. Spiritually, we're tempted by the same idea. Following Jesus is a beautiful journey, but sometimes, we get weary. We battle temptation. We struggle to obey. We face disappointment and loneliness. We become fearful. And in these situations, we may struggle to keep going. We think it'd be so much easier to allow ourselves to get lazy and to choose the easier road of this world.

This passage offers us encouragement during these moments when we struggle to endure. Verse 1 points back to Hebrews 11, a walk of fame about the heroes of our faith who endured all kinds of difficult situations. They are now in heaven as our "cloud of witnesses" (v. 1). They're on the other side of the finish line, seeing firsthand that endurance was worth it. How do we endure and obey when we're weary or fearful? We fix our eyes on Christ, the One who endured death for us (v. 2). We consider His great love for us. We lean into the power of His Spirit now living within us. We have all we need to endure when we fix our gaze on the One who endured so much for our salvation.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN TEMPTED TO TAKE THE EASIER ROAD OF THIS WORLD RATHER THAN ENDURING IN OBEDIENCE?**
- **WHAT IS CAUSING YOU TO FEEL TIRED NOW? HOW DOES CONSIDERING JESUS'S ENDURANCE HELP YOU?**



PRAY

LORD, SOMETIMES I GET TIRED. I WANT TO ENDURE, BUT THE ROAD FEELS DIFFICULT. HELP ME TO FIX MY EYES ON JESUS, WHO ENDURED SO MUCH FOR ME.



DAY TWO

1 SAMUEL 15:10-11

This week, we read about Saul's disobedience to God when he spared the Amalekite king, Agag, and all the best livestock—even though God had instructed him to destroy everything and everyone. Though Saul claimed to have kept the best for the Lord, his motive was really to build his own fame and glory. It was common in ancient eastern culture for conquering kings to capture enemy kings as trophies and to order the construction of a monument; Saul did both of these things. His actions grieved the Lord's heart to the point that God said He regretted making Saul king of Israel. Why? Because Saul's motives and actions revealed that he was more concerned about his own power and fame than about God's glory. Saul proved how quickly we are prone to disobeying the Lord when it benefits us in a worldly sense.

One thing we must understand is that God's "regret" doesn't imply He made a mistake. Every choice the Lord makes has purpose; He can use even our failures for His glory. This regret can also be understood as "grieved." Saul's partial obedience produced emotional pain in God's heart, and it would produce painful ripple effects for Israel. When we partially obey God, we must remember that God grieves. Why? Because our partial obedience shows that we don't trust Him enough to obey Him fully. Our partial obedience shows that we aren't fully devoted to Him. It's sometimes easy to forget that our God feels the emotions He created in us, and He feels them fully. We bring God great joy and delight when we walk in His commands, and we bring Him great sorrow when we stray because He wants us to walk in abundant life. The only way to do that is through obedience to His Word.

- **HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU TO REALIZE THAT GOD FEELS EMOTION WHEN YOU DISOBEY HIM?**
- **EXAMINE YOUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD NOW. DOES IT BRING GOD JOY OR GRIEF?**

PRAY

GOD, IT IS GOOD FOR ME TO REMEMBER THAT YOU
FEEL EVERY EMOTION FULLY AND PERFECTLY.
I WANT MY LIFE TO BRING YOU JOY. I WANT MY
OBEDIENCE TO BRING YOU DELIGHT.



DAY THREE

PSALM 139:1-6

Have you ever questioned someone's motives? Maybe someone did something really kind for you, but deep down, you knew it was for their own benefit. Maybe they were trying to get something from you in return. Sometimes, it's really difficult to know another person's true motives. We can't see their heart.

The Lord sees our hearts; He knows our thoughts before we think them; He knows the way we'll go before we take a single step. How? Because even though we have free will to do and say as we please, God is sovereign. He is all-knowing, and this means He knows us better than we know ourselves. Some of us are masters at fooling people into thinking we have good motives. We're masters at saying all the right words and doing all the right things so that people will believe we have good intentions. We have even mastered looking like good Christians to those who watch our lives. But the truth is that we can so easily hide our thoughts and our motives from people. This isn't the case with our Maker. He knows us. This knowledge should weigh on hearts like it weighed on David's. This truth is lofty and difficult to understand (v. 6). It should produce two effects: it should motivate us to allow God to purify our hearts and minds, and it should make us grateful that the God of all creation knows us and loves us still—sanctification and gratitude. He sees our sinful hearts, yet He still chooses to dwell within us. And He does this out of His great love for us and to purify us. Don't let the fact that God knows you discourage you. This week, let that knowledge encourage you, and let it motivate you obey Him in all your thoughts, words, motives, and actions.

- **DOES IT COMFORT YOU OR WORRY YOU THAT GOD KNOWS YOUR HEART AND YOUR THOUGHTS?**
- **WHY CAN WE BE ENCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT GOD KNOWS US SO DEEPLY?**

PRAY

LORD, THE TRUTH THAT YOU KNOW ME YET STILL LOVE ME IS BEYOND MY COMPREHENSION. I PRAY THAT THIS TRUTH MOTIVATES ME TO WALK CLOSELY WITH YOU AND TO HONOR YOU IN ALL MY WAYS.



DAY FOUR

GENESIS 3:8-13

“What is this that you have done?” (v. 13). It’s a question many of our parents or teachers have asked us, and it usually comes after an act of disobedience or a mistake on our part. In other words, they’re asking, “Why did you do this?” The question instantly shines light on our failure and produces shame and guilt. It directs our attention to where we’ve gone wrong. But that isn’t a bad thing.

In the passage today, God asked Adam and Eve the same question. In the lesson this week, Samuel echoed the question as well (1 Sam. 13:11). In both cases, the people acted in direct disobedience to God’s commands. Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, and Saul kept back the best of the livestock. And in both cases, the people faced consequences. Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, and Saul’s throne would be taken from him and given to someone else. If we look more closely at both situations, the people also tried to point the blame elsewhere. Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent; and Saul blamed his troops and accused Samuel of arriving late. In each case, the people didn’t take responsibility for their disobedience. What about you? We all disobey God at times because we are constantly fighting against our sin nature. But when you do mess up, do you own up to it? Or do you shift the blame to someone else or to your circumstances? Your answer to the question, “What have you done?” reveals the condition of your heart.

- **WHEN YOU SIN, DO YOU SHIFT THE BLAME OR ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY?**
- **LIKE ADAM AND EVE, WHY DO WE THINK WE CAN HIDE FROM GOD WHEN WE SIN?**

PRAY

GOD, WHEN I SIN, SOMETIMES IT’S HARD TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY. I WOULD RATHER SHIFT THE BLAME OR HIDE FROM YOU. HELP ME TO SEE MY SIN AND CONFESS IT TO YOU INSTEAD.



DAY FIVE

ROMANS 2:4

Think about the times when you apologize to people. A lot of times it's when people either express their anger toward us or the hurt they feel about something we've done. When we know we've messed up and angered someone we love, we just want the anger to go away. Saying we're sorry feels like the way to achieve that. When we've hurt someone we love, we desperately want to fix the relationship, and saying we're sorry feels like the quickest way to repair what's broken. But have you ever apologized to someone because they showed you great kindness? It's sort of a strange concept, isn't it?

Paul explained to the believers in Rome that it is easy to forget that God's patience and kindness toward us are actually meant to lead us to repentance. In other words, when we sin, God shows us grace and gives us mercy more often than He shows us His anger and wrath. Jesus took our place and shouldered the wrath we deserved because of our sin. While we do face consequences for our sin, because of Jesus's sacrifice believers never face the ultimate consequence of being eternally separated from God. Does God feel angry when His people stray? Yes. But more than anything, God restrains that anger and continually shows us kindness. Patience. Grace. Mercy. In response, many of us try to take advantage of God's kindness and keep on sinning (Rom. 6:1). Instead, God's loving kindness should prompt our repentance because we realize how much we deserve His wrath; we repent because His kindness reminds us how good He is to us and how much He loves us.

- **HAVE YOU EVER TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF SOMEONE'S KINDNESS? HAS SOMEONE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF YOURS? HOW DID IT FEEL?**
- **WHY DOESN'T GOD'S KINDNESS LEAD US TO REPENTANCE? WHY DO WE SO OFTEN TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS PATIENCE?**

PRAY

**LORD, I'M SO THANKFUL FOR YOUR KINDNESS
AND PATIENCE. I DON'T DESERVE IT, AND I KNOW
I RECEIVE IT ONLY BECAUSE OF YOUR SON'S
SACRIFICE. HELP ME TO RESPOND WITH GRATITUDE
AND REPENTANCE.**