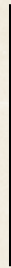


WHAT IT MEANS TO  
OBEY GOD



A 5-DAY DEVOTIONAL



## INTRODUCTION:

God is a just, kind, and wise Father, and His commands to us are for our own benefit. As a Christian, it is our privilege to be saved by grace and the gift of salvation through Christ — but it is also our privilege on earth to please God through worship and obedience. When we pursue God's will and do as He commands, we are essentially saying to ourselves and others, "God knows what's right for me, and His direction will send me down the path of goodness." And if we believe He is who He says He is, then of course God knows what is best and right for us!

Over the next five days, we will discuss what obedience should mean in our lives and explore some of the pitfalls we ought to avoid on our way. In short, obedience is the path toward a deeper, more intimate relationship with the Father; and following His holy Word will only bring blessings to our lives.

## Day 1: Obedience Is Immediate

- Psalm 112:1
- Isaiah 1:19
- 1 Samuel 2:30

We all have priorities. Family, church, friends, children, work . . . Every individual expends great amounts of energy deciding what is most important in life. For the Christian, God is and should be the priority. And there is no way to demonstrate that something is a priority than giving it attention *right now*.

Obedience is not something to be put off. When we know what God's will in a situation is, we are to do it right away. Waiting around may result in a lost opportunity or even a misstep. Even worse, when we waver, we are not acting in faith.

We think lightly of God when we delay or neglect to obey His Word. We in essence communicate: He's not our priority.

Is doing God's will the priority in your life? Are you hesitating to do what's right for Him? Think of what could be lost if you delayed your obedience. Then, take a moment and ask for God's discernment over your priorities, then consider praying the following words:

*Dear heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I've treated Your Word as optional or not prioritized it as most important. I realize in doing so I've inadvertently communicated what is important to You to be trivial to me. I repent and ask Your forgiveness. I will give top priority to what You desire. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

## Day 2: Obedience Does Not Always Make Sense

- Proverbs 3:5–6
- Proverbs 28:26

It's natural for us to want to understand things, but sometimes the Holy Spirit suggests we do strange things. Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever felt urged to do something that made no sense at the time, but you later discovered it to be an important urging from the Lord?

God has granted us minds and wits, but they are nothing in comparison to the mind and knowledge of God. We are limited at best, and even the smartest among us cannot come close to the wisdom and omniscience of our Creator. As such, it behooves each of us to listen to God's command even when we do not understand it. We can easily be swayed from obedience that will ultimately benefit when we are instructed to do something that's not logical. The person who fears God obeys, even when it doesn't make sense.

We can thank God for our minds and senses while also realizing that those who rely on their insight alone can be tremendously foolish. God knows more than us, and His commands are for our own good; therefore, let us acknowledge His wisdom and power and obey Him with urgency.

*Dear heavenly Father, forgive me for trusting in my own wisdom over Yours. I ask for faith to receive Your wisdom as I read Your Word, pray, and hear godly counsel from those who fear You. Give me the strength to believe and obey even if it doesn't make sense. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*



### Day 3: Obedience Is Not Contingent Upon Personal Benefit

- Psalm 19:11
- Matthew 16:25

We've already covered how our comprehension is not great enough to rival God's; therefore, it benefits us listen to and follow His commands even when their purpose eludes us. Similarly, our minds may not fully grasp why following His Word is a benefit to us — but that is still no reason to choose our own faulty insight above the Lord's.

Some of God's laws are obviously for our good. Abstaining from murder and theft, for example, protects us from personal consequences while also making for a safer and more peaceful society. But being motivated by incentive alone can be dangerous. In the moments when we cannot see or understand how a law of God's personally affects us, we may in turn look for ways out of obedience. This is why the fear of the Lord is so crucial; it motivates obedience, whether a reward is obvious or not.

Jesus in particular commands us to pray for those who are spiteful toward us (Matthew 5:44) and to bless those who curse us (Luke 6:28). On the surface, these commands do not reveal much obvious personal gain. But perhaps, through such prayers, we will become changed. What matters most is that we do as Jesus said, not what we get from it. Such obedience will demonstrate to God that we are serious about His all-knowing glory.

*Dear heavenly Father, forgive me for limiting my hunger and obedience to the wisdom that I deem personally beneficial. I repent of this mindset and ask Your forgiveness. I chose from this moment forward to no longer hang on to my life, but to give it up for Jesus' sake. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

## Day 4: Obedience Doesn't Always Feel Good

- Hebrews 5:7
- 1 Peter 4:1

Some pain is beneficial. For example, childbirth brings forth life, and exercise strengthens and protects the body. But in general, human beings tend to run from pain. It is not in our nature to embrace it.

The most important example of One who obeyed and suffered as a result is Christ Himself. The night before the crucifixion, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus cried out in anguish, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine” (Matthew 26:39). The conflict between obedience and self-preservation was so intense that Jesus sweat great drops of blood. Remember, He “faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He foresaw the horrific suffering ahead and pleaded for an alternate path to accomplish the Father’s will, but it wasn’t possible.

We, too, may face impossible and painful tasks, but obedience demands we endure them. Jesus has set the perfect example for us of finishing the race. God does not inflict pain on us for pain’s sake, and He will not waste an ounce of our suffering. Rather, He will strengthen us through struggle and reward us for our trouble — with the kinds of incredible heavenly gifts we cannot yet fully grasp.

*Dear Lord, forgive me for the pattern of avoiding obedience to Your Word in order to protect myself. I realize I’ve chose unwisely — Your protection is infallible and enduring; my protection is only temporary. From this moment forward I choose the fear of the Lord; may it give me the deep resolve to obey You no matter the cost. Thank You for this strength, in Jesus’ name, amen.*

## Day 5: Obedience Is to Be Completed

- Luke 17:10
- Hebrews 12:2–3
- 1 John 3:4

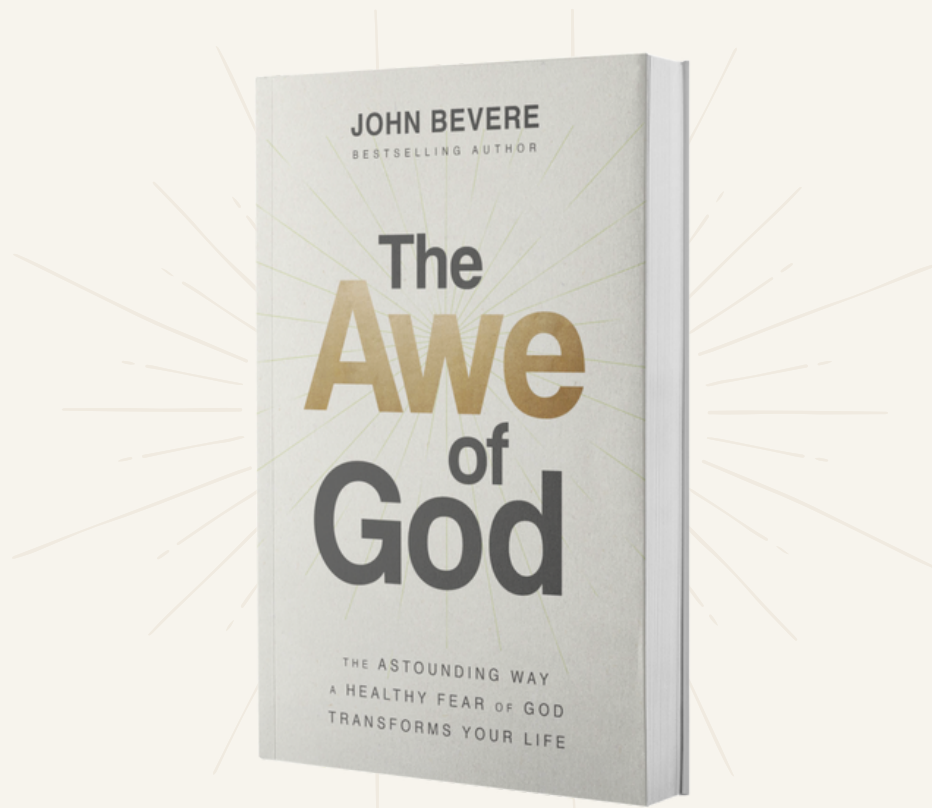
Have you ever thought to yourself, I can obey a little bit—but the rest is too much for me? In the Old Testament, King Saul was one who obeyed God sometimes but not all the time. He often followed his own wisdom, and as a result, he received little credit from God. In fact, God told the prophet Samuel that He regretted making Saul king (1 Samuel 15:11)! Because Saul did not follow God's instructions perfectly, he was in rebellion against Him — much to Saul's surprise. In light of this, it's safe to conclude this truth: almost complete obedience isn't obedience at all.

We are not permitted to pick-and-choose the laws we want to obey. God's will and commands are complete, and as Christians who relentlessly pursue God, we are to follow Him to the end of our days. Once again, our example is Jesus — the One who followed each of God's commands until He finished the full work of dying and being resurrected for us. What if He had decided to say "I quit" in the days or hours before His crucifixion? What if He had fallen just short of the mark?

Obedience is a lifelong endeavor. As we work to please God each day of our lives, may we always remember the One — the Son of God — who completed the greatest work of all, that we might be able to take part in the heavenly kingdom awaiting those who pursue it.

*Dear heavenly Father, please forgive me for starting to obey what You've told me to do but not finishing, either by ignoring it or changing my mind because of not seeing it as self-serving. I repent of this lack of holy fear and ask Your forgiveness. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

A fresh look at what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. The healthy, holy, and largely forgotten virtue of Holy Fear is the uncommon path to a more fulfilled and fruitful life.



In this book you will see why godly fear is the foundation of:

- Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge
- Foresight, clarity, and divine direction
- Maturity and conformity to the image of Jesus Christ
- Building an eternal legacy
- Confidence, fearlessness, and security
- Freedom from the fear of man as all lesser fears are eclipsed

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