

## Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/22/04 Brad Brandt

### Value #7—"Obedience: Remembering Who's in Charge" \*\*

Main Idea: In order to value obedience as we ought we must settle three issues.

I. We need to know the Teacher.

A. He is the Creator of the world (Col 1:16-17).

B. He is the Head of the church (Col 1:18).

1. He is our Lord (Col 2:6).

2. He is our Savior (Rom 5:19; Heb 5:8-9).

3. He is our example (1 Pet 2:21).

II. We need to know His teaching.

A. A good teacher seeks to transform, not inform (Matt 28:20).

1. Is my teaching biblical?

2. Is my teaching purposeful?

3. Is my teaching prayerful?

B. A good teacher sticks to the right curriculum: *His commands*.

1. Follow Me (Matt 4:19).

2. Seek first God's kingdom (Matt 6:33).

3. Do with others what I've done with you (Matt 28:19).

III. We need to do what we know.

A. It's proof that we know Him (Matt 7:24-27; John 14:15ff.; 1 John 2:3-6).

1. We're to obey the gospel (2 Thes 1:8).

2. We're to obey delegated authorities (Eph 6:1, 5; Heb 13:17).

3. When there's conflict, we're to obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

B. It's the key to blessing (John 15:10; Deut 28:1-2).

C. It's the goal of our mission (Rom 1:5; 16:26).

Implications: Ponder three questions...

1. Do you have a learner's heart?

2. Do you have a doer's heart?

3. Do you have a teacher's heart?

*"Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes."*

I'm not sure there's a more fitting commentary for our society than those ten words, the final words of the book of Judges. "Nobody tells me what to do," says modern man. "You have no right to impose your values on me. I'll do what I want to do with my life."

And so we see demands for same sex marriages, the killing of unborn children, sexual promiscuity in the name of television entertainment, and on and on.

Know this. In a world where everyone does what is right in his own eyes, there's a word that doesn't fit. In fact, it's a word that irritates some as being old-fashioned and downright infuriates others as being bigoted. The word is *obedience*.

"Who, me? I need to obey somebody?" Yes, and it will be good for you.

"Now you've gone too far. Obedience may be a necessary evil, but how can it be a good thing? The goal is personal freedom and individual expression, isn't it?"

No, that's a lie from the Evil One, a lie our culture has bought hook, line, and sinker, a believed lie that is destroying us. The fact is, we exist for a nobler purpose than personal expression. We were created *by God* and *for God*. That makes obedience vital.

Just before Jesus returned to heaven He gave His followers a mission statement (Matt 28:19-20), "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."

The word "obey" appears 165 times in the Bible (NIV), but the concept undergirds every page of Scripture.

In a museum at Greenfield Village, Detroit, Michigan, there is a huge steam locomotive. Beside this complicated piece of machinery is a sign showing boiler pressure, size and number of wheels, horsepower, lengths, weight and more. The bottom line indicates that 96% of the power generated was used to move the locomotive and only 4% was left to pull the load.

Some churches are like that, especially those who don't understand the importance of *obedience*. Obedience is standard equipment for everyone. That notion doesn't sit well in our society. We want a God that exists for us, who meets our needs. But this is true Christianity, beloved, the kind our Savior endorsed. *Teach them to obey.*

We've been learning about seven values of a strong church and a strong Christian. To date we've seen the first six: Worship. Edification. Love. Service. Evangelism. Fellowship. And now we come to the seventh. It's the basis for the others. *Obedience*.

In order to value obedience as we ought we must settle three issues.

### I. We need to know the Teacher.

It may not be politically correct, but it's true. Everyone in this universe isn't on the same par. We're not all equal. There is one person who is in a class all by Himself, who deserves obedience. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. He possesses all authority in heaven and earth. His Father gave it to Him (Matt 28:18).

If a stranger on the street told you to follow him the rest of your life, would you do it? I doubt it. You don't obey people unless their credentials warrant such obedience. A car with a light on top motivates us to obey speed signs.

What's true of Jesus? What are His credentials? He holds two exalted positions.

A. He is the Creator of the world (Col 1:16-17). "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*. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

If you own something, you have the right to do with it as you please. Christ made this universe and He made it for Himself. He wrote the owner's manual, too. In it He defines what right and wrong is. For me to ignore His commands and do what is right in my own eyes is like trespassing on somebody else's property. As Creator of the universe, Jesus Christ deserves obedience from all His creatures. He holds a second credential.

B. He is the Head of the church (Col 1:18). "He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

As with the universe, the church exists because Christ made it. Please realize that as members of the church, we are called to obedience. 1 Peter 1:1-2—"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect...

chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, *for obedience to Jesus Christ* and sprinkling by his blood." There's why God saved us, for the purpose of obeying His Son.

He, then, deserves our obedience for two reasons. He created us. He redeemed us. We are His *twice*. He deserves our *all*, my friend. Sadly, many give Him far less.

Some has written the following adaptation, *Backward Christian Soldiers*:

*Backward Christian soldiers, Fleeing from the fight,  
With the cross of Jesus, Nearly out of sight.  
Christ our rightful master Stands against the foe  
Onward into battle, we seem afraid to go.*

*Chorus*

*Backward Christian soldiers, Fleeing from the fight,  
With the cross of Jesus, Nearly out of sight.*

*Like a might tortoise Moves the church of God.  
Brothers we are treading, Where we've often trod.  
We are much divided, Many bodies we,  
Having different doctrines, but Not much charity.*

*Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane,  
But the cross of Jesus Hidden does remain.  
Gates of hell should never 'gainst the Church prevail,  
We have Christ's own promise, but we think it might fail.*

*Sit here then ye people, Join our sleeping throng.  
Blend with ours, your voices in a feeble song.  
Blessings, ease and comfort Ask from Christ the King,  
But with our modern thinking, We won't do a thing.*

Three things are true of Christ. Consider them carefully.

1. *He is our Lord* (Col 2:6). "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him." Who do we receive? What is Christ to us? The *Lord*.

This has always been God's way. When He enters a person's life He enters as *the Lord*. You don't tack Him onto your life. You turn the controls over to Him. What He desires and deserves is nothing short of our absolute obedience.

Joshua understood this. Joshua 23:6—"Be very strong; *be careful to obey* all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left."

The prophet Samuel put it this way in 1 Samuel 15:22, "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."

But that's our problem, isn't it? We don't obey God as we should. As sinners, we enter the world unable to obey Him. By nature, we rebel against Him. We go our own way and rightly deserve His judgment.

Thankfully, He intervened. Romans 5:19 explains, "For just as through the disobedience of the one man

[Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the *obedience of the one man* [Christ] the many will be made righteous." Christ came to the world to do for us what we couldn't do. He lived a perfect life, died as our substitute taking our penalty, and conquered death. Consequently, in addition to being our Lord...

2. *He is our Savior (Rom 5:19; Heb 5:8-9)*. "Although he was a son, he *learned obedience* from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."

Christ not only tells us what to do. By giving His life, He makes it possible for us to do it. That's why obedience isn't a grind, but a delight. He is our Savior.

3. *He is our example (1 Pet 2:21)*. "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, *leaving you an example*, that you should follow in his steps."

The Lord Jesus is the outline, the prototype. He is our Lord, our Savior, and our example. He deserves our obedience, but to obey Him we must know Him.

Don't miss those words. You can't obey Him rightly until you *know* Him. Do you? We must start right here, issue #1—we need to know the Teacher.

## II. We need to know His teaching.

The Teacher, of course, went back to heaven 2,000 years ago. But He sent another teacher, the Holy Spirit, who has recorded His Word for us in a Book. And the Spirit has gifted His church with teachers who explain the Book so we'll learn His teaching.

What are the marks of a good teacher? Jesus highlighted two in Matthew 28:20.

A. A good teacher seeks to transform, not inform (Matt 28:20). Take a close look at Matthew 28:20. Jesus did *not* say, "Teach them." Disciple-making is not merely an academic exercise. He said, "Teach them *to obey* (or "teach them *to observe*," in the KJV)." Our goal isn't to inform. It's to transform.

The word translated "obey" (or "observe") means "to keep watch over," or "pay attention to." It can refer to guarding a prisoner. The same root word appears in verse 4 (Gk. *tarountes*) translated "guards" (or "keepers" in the KJV), referring to the soldiers whose task it was to keep watch over the body of Jesus. In Ephesians 4:3 the word appears, "Make every effort to *keep* the unity of the Spirit."

When it comes to teaching, here's the goal. It's not to fill heads with Bible knowledge. It's not merely to dispense information, though that's part of it. The goal is to teach disciples how to obey, even *guard* the Savior's commands.

To put it another way, the goal in teaching is a changed heart that show up in a changed life--a *Christ* honoring life.

Most school teachers have a lesson plan. The plan lists the teacher's objectives, what he or she plans to accomplish on a particular day, week, or year.

The fact is, Jesus gave us a lesson plan. He told us what He expects us to do with the pupils He entrusts to us. We're to teach them to obey.

In his helpful book, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, Bill Hull remarks, "The words 'to obey' have been referred to as the great omission in the Great Commission. The great omission is that we have not really made disciples if we have not taught them to obey. There is no discipling without training, and there is no training without accountability."

It's great to *hear* God's Word. But Jesus said there are two kinds of hearers. Remember His story about the two men who built houses in Matthew 7:24-27? The fact is, there are two types of people in this room this morning. There are those who hear and *do*, and then there are those who hear and *don't do*.

Anybody ever heard these words from your medical doctor? "If you don't get some exercise, you're heading for trouble." Your doctor knows that too much intake and too little output is a dangerous combination.

I'm sobered by the following possibility. Do churches in America, even Bible teaching churches like ours, foster the mentality of hearing the Word without doing it? Do we not have the tendency to turn the ministry of the Word into a type of "Christian entertainment?" Have you ever analyzed the comments people make after hearing messages from God's Word?

"He did a good job." Or, "I really enjoy listening to him. He's a good speaker." And, "He sure can tell great stories."

Hold on! God didn't give us His Word to entertain us. We're not supposed to be spectators, are we? No, God expects us to listen to His Word with the intent to *do it*.

We ought to leave every church service, come away from every Sunday School lesson or small group study with this commitment, "I am going to *do* something with what I just learned."

I'd like to offer a challenge to our teachers. If you have a teaching ministry in this church--whether it's from the pulpit, or in a Sunday School class, or with a teen or children's group—please don't teach merely to inform. Teach to *transform*.

That's a high goal. To help you assess how you're doing, I encourage you to ask yourself the following three questions every time you prepare and teach God's Word.

1. *Is my teaching biblical?* Thoroughly biblical. God's Word is powerful. Our ideas aren't. Have I invested the time and hard work that's necessary to insure that my teaching is biblical?

2. *Is my teaching purposeful?* Will this lesson help people obey the Lord? Am I teaching to give information or facilitate transformation?

3. *Is my teaching prayerful?* The fact is, I can't change anybody. Jesus knew that. Which is why He concluded verse 20 with this amazing promise, "And surely I am *with you always*, to the very end of the age." So I must ask myself this. Am I teaching this lesson in absolute dependence upon Him? Have I been on my knees during the week calling out to Him: "Lord, prepare me and prepare the hearts of the people I'll be teaching. Cause the seed of Your Word to fall on fertile soil and bear fruit. If You don't, nothing of eternal value will happen."?

Here's a second mark of a good teacher.

B. A good teacher sticks to the right curriculum: **His commands**. What did Jesus tell us to teach as we make disciples? Notice the end of verse 20, "Teaching them to obey *everything I have commanded you*." There it is. His commands are our curriculum. Which commands? Teach *everything* (or *all things*, KJV) I have commanded you. We're not to give disciples the clef-notes version, but the whole package (or as Paul put it in Acts 20:27, "the whole counsel of God").

Here's part of the problem. We tend to be selective in our teaching. We tend to view certain portions of the Scriptures as more relevant than others. We may never say it, but we might think it, "I like the verses that talk about God's *love*, but I'd just as soon stay away from those that depict His *wrath*."

When I was growing up, I don't ever recall saying to my mother, "Thanks, Mom, for fixing the green beans." No, I didn't particularly like green beans. I liked the cubed steak, mashed potatoes & gravy, and the chocolate cake. But I needed the green beans, too!

When it comes to disciple-making, Jesus told the eleven to teach "everything I have commanded you." His commands are our curriculum.

But what are His commands? The apostles knew. As we scan through Matthew's gospel we discover three basic commands that form the framework for the curriculum Jesus used in disciple making.

*1. Follow Me (4:19).* Here's where it all starts. Before you can make disciples you must *be* a disciple, a follower of Christ. You must admit your utter sinfulness and acknowledge Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Hear His call: "Follow Me." Why would we not want to follow Him? He Who left the splendor of heaven, died on a cross in the place of sinners, and rose again *deserves* for us to follow Him!

Again, have you settled this issue? Are you a follower of Jesus? Jesus said (Matt 16:24), "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." That's His first command: Follow Me. Here's His second...

*2. Seek first God's kingdom (6:33).* In Matthew 5-7 Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Basically, the Sermon on the Mount is "Kingdom Living 101" for disciples. Here King Jesus tells those who've followed Him what kingdom living is all about:

In chapter five--Be salt. Be light. Don't be angry with a brother. Don't lust. Don't divorce. Don't break oaths. Don't retaliate. Love your enemies.

In chapter six--Give to the needy, but not so as to bring attention to yourself. Pray. Fast. Don't serve money, but rather store up treasure in heaven. Don't be a worrier, but trust God.

In chapter seven--Don't judge others. Before trying to remove a speck from a brother's eye, make sure you don't have a log hanging from your own. Ask, seek, and knock--you can't make it without Him. Watch out for false teachers. Make sure you're not kidding yourself because not everyone who calls me "Lord" is truly my disciple.

That's kingdom living. Disciples need to be taught in practical terms how to live for the king. In fact, as you continue to move through Matthew you'll find Jesus elaborating on the commands He gave in the Sermon on the Mount.

First, Jesus commanded, "Follow Me." Then He commanded, "Seek first God's kingdom." Third (and finally), He commanded His disciples...

*3. Do with others what I've done with you (28:19).* Go make disciples. This is the Master plan of evangelism. His commands are our curriculum.

You say, "Sounds like quite a task!" Indeed, it is. Jesus spent three years pouring His life into twelve men. And He commands us to do likewise. In order to value obedience, we need to know the Teacher. Then we need to know His teaching.

### III. We need to do what we know.

Obedience doesn't just happen. It takes the kind of resolve the psalmist exhibited in Psalm 119:167-168, "I

obey your statutes, for I love them greatly. I obey your precepts and your statutes, for all my ways are known to you."

Here are three reasons why we need to *do* what we know.

A. It's proof that we know Him (Matt 7:24-27; John 14:15ff.; 1 John 2:3-6). Listen to Jesus in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." Not *if*, but *will*. What if we don't obey Him? It indicates we really don't love Him.

Verse 21—"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

You say, "Jesus makes it sound like love is conditional." The truth is, true love meets conditions. We show we love by obeying His commands.

There's a free-thinking, feeling-oriented brand of Christianity in churches these days. "If I don't feel like going to church, I don't. If I don't want to do Christian service, it doesn't matter. The important thing is that I love Jesus. And He knows my heart."

The apostle John hit that nail on the head in 1 John 2:3-6, "We know that we have come to know him if we *obey his commands*. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not *do what he commands* is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone *obeys his word*, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him *must walk as Jesus did*."

Obedience, then, is mandatory. The person who loves Jesus obeys. Obeys what? Our obedience should show up in three areas.

1. *We're to obey the gospel (2 Thes 1:8)*. Typically, the Scriptures talk about *believing* the gospel, but if you really believe it you will *obey* it. Paul states in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."

Conversely, note how Peter describes those who aren't believers in 1 Peter 4:17, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those *who do not obey the gospel of God*?"

2. *We're to obey delegated authorities (Eph 6:1, 5; Heb 13:17)*. Children are to obey parents (Eph 6:1). Slaves are to obey masters, "just as you would obey Christ," Paul states (Eph 6:5). Citizens are to obey governing authorities (Rom 13:1). Church members are to obey church leaders.

Hebrews 13:17 explains the latter, "*Obey your leaders* and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. *Obey them* so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

The Bible does not endorse a "Nobody tells me what to do, I'll do what I want" attitude. We are to show obedience to God by obeying His delegated authorities.

"Always?" you ask. "Men aren't perfect. Are we to give absolute obedience?" No.

3. *When there's conflict, we're to obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19; 5:29)*. When the court system of the day gave the order to stop preaching about Jesus, Peter and John replied in Acts 4:19, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God." Later they stated it even more bluntly (Acts 5:29), "We must obey God rather than men!"

There's the first reason we must do what we know. It's proof we know Him.

B. It's the key to blessing (John 15:10; Deut 28:1-2). Jesus put it this way in John 15:10, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."

Is the love of God real to you? If not, answer this. Are you obeying Him? If you want to experience the love of God you must obey Him.

Obedience brings blessing. Moses told the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28:1-2—"If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God..."

Conversely, disobedience brings curses (Deut 28:15).

One day a woman in a crowd came to Jesus and shouted (Luke 11:27-28), "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." Jesus responded with this staggering announcement, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and *obey* it."

It may not always be easy to obey, but it's always worth it. It's the key to blessing

C. It's the goal of our mission (Rom 1:5; 16:26). We're not after mere professions and more names on a church roll. The goal of missions is obedience.

It's true. Listen to Paul in Romans 1:5, "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles *to the obedience* that comes from faith." Yes, a person is saved by faith, not works. But true faith works. True Christians want to obey the Lord.

Paul finished the letter on the same note in Romans 16:26, "But now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe *and obey him*."

Which brings us back to teaching. If obedience is the goal of our mission—and it is, to produce Christians who obey Christ's commands—then we need to give attention to teaching Christ's commands. Strong churches have strong teaching ministries. Strong churches produce people who are serious about applying what they learn. In the words of James 1:22, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. *Do what it says*."

Titus 2 illustrates this. Titus was doing church planting work on Crete. Paul gave him this counsel in verse 1, "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine." Teach the older men (2). Teach the older women (3). And so on. Teach, teach, teach.

Warren Wiersbe offers a sobering warning, "The church that fails to teach people the whole counsel of God is not obeying the Great Commission."

In order to value obedience, we need to know the Teacher. We need to know His teaching. We need to do what we know.

Implications: Ponder three questions...

1. *Do you have a learner's heart?* You can't obey what you don't know, and you don't know what you haven't learned. We must be learners.

And since we never *arrive*, here's a practical suggestion. Make Sunday School a priority in your weekly schedule. That's a great place to learn God's Word. We have three excellent adult Sunday School classes, as well as quality teaching ministries for teens and children. Our teachers work hard to prepare lessons that are biblical and practical. The Sunday School format allows for valuable interaction and discussion in a small group setting. By design our Sunday School classes are both learning centers and caring centers. I challenge you. Resolve to be a lifelong learner.

2. *Do you have a doer's heart?* Are you living in light of what you know? Is there any known area in which you are not living in obedience?

Suppose your car was stuck in a ditch and I said, "I've got a chain. I'll pull you out. It's a good chain. Ninety-nine of the one hundred links are good." Would you let me help? Not until I fixed my chain! So in our lives. Ninety-nine acts of obedience do not justify one act of disobedience.

I challenge you today. Resolve to be a doer of the Word, and not just a hearer.

3. *Do you have a teacher's heart?* The Lord said to *teach others to obey*. If you've been a Christian more than a couple of years, you know plenty of truth to get started. Resolve today to make teaching a priority in your life. Start spending time with a younger disciple. Be a teacher.