



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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## God's Expectation of Us, Lesson #1

### God expects man to FEAR HIM AND OBEY HIM

You can't say you love Jesus and then go live like the devil. You can't say you're a Christian and then keep on living a self-centered life. You can't say you're a follower of Jesus and then pick and choose the verses that you want to listen to and ignore the ones you don't. Jesus says you're his friend if you obey him and his commandments.

Why do we obey God? Nonbelievers get this wrong all the time. They say, "I don't want to be a Christian because I don't want to obey God. You believers obey him out of guilt or fear or obligation, and I don't want that for my life."

Why do we really obey God? Because he loves us! He wants the best for us. He loves you like nobody else will ever love you. The Bible says the only reason there's love in the world is because God is love. We don't obey God out of fear or guilt or obligation. We obey God out of love because he loved us and saved us.

John 15:9-11 says, "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me ... When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"

God doesn't want you to obey him because you're afraid of him. He doesn't want you to obey him because you're scared of punishment. God wants you to obey him because of love. It's his love that leads to true joy.

### God expects man to PLACE HIS TRUST IN HIM

We cannot trust someone we don't know, and that is the secret of learning to trust God. When someone says, "Trust me," we have one of two reactions. Either we can say, "Yes, I'll trust you," or we can say, "Why should I?" In God's case, trusting Him naturally follows when we understand why we should.

The main reason we should trust God is that He is worthy of our trust. Unlike men, He never lies and never fails to fulfill His promises. "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19; Psalm 89:34). Unlike men, He has the power to bring to pass what He plans and purposes to do. Isaiah 14:24 tells us, "The LORD Almighty has sworn, 'Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.'" Furthermore, His plans are perfect, holy, and righteous, and He works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His holy purpose (Romans 8:28). If we endeavor to know God through His Word,

we will see that He is worthy of our trust, and our trust in Him will grow daily. To know Him is to trust Him.

We can learn to trust God as we see how He has proven Himself to be trustworthy in our lives and the lives of others. In 1 Kings 8:56 we read, "Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses." The record of God's promises is there in His Word for all to see, as is the record of their fulfillment. Historical documents verify those events and speak of God's faithfulness to His people. Every Christian can give personal testimony to God's trustworthiness as we see His work in our lives, fulfilling His promises to save our souls and use us for His purposes (Ephesians 2:8-10) and comfort us with the peace that passes all understanding as we run the race He has planned out for us (Philippians 4:6-7; Hebrews 12:1). The more we experience His grace, faithfulness, and goodness, the more we trust Him (Psalm 100:5; Isaiah 25:1).

A third reason to trust God is that we really have no sensible alternative. Should we trust in ourselves or in others who are sinful, unpredictable, unreliable, have limited wisdom, and who frequently make bad choices and decisions swayed by emotion? Or do we trust in the all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful, gracious, merciful, loving God who has good intentions for us? The choice should be obvious, but we fail to trust God because we don't know Him. As already stated, we cannot hope to trust in someone who is essentially a stranger to us, but that is easily remedied. God has not made Himself difficult to find or know. All we need to know about God, He has graciously made available to us in the Bible, His holy Word to His people. To know God is to trust Him.

## God expects man to LOVE HIM

First, loving God requires knowing Him, and that knowledge begins with His Word. It may sound glib, but to know Him is to love Him.

To love God is to worship and praise Him. "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'" (Luke 4:8). The book of Psalms provides many beautiful examples of how to worship and praise our Creator (e.g., Psalms 8, 19, 23, 24, 67, 99, 117, and 150).

To love God is to put Him first. The number-one commandment is to love God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). It's an undivided love. God is our priority. If we love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, then we won't allow other things to crowd in. Our love for God is manifested by loving people (Mark 12:31), but we do not love the things of the world. "Earth has nothing I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25). We cannot love this present world and God at the same time (1 John 2:15); love for what the world offers can lead us astray (2 Timothy 4:10).

To love God is to desire Him, to yearn for His righteousness, His Word, and His grace. "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God" (Psalm 42:1). Once we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8), we want more of Him. If we love God, we will be like Mary of Bethany, "who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said" (Luke 10:39). If we love God, the psalmist's description of the Word of God will resonate within us: "[it is] more precious than gold, than much pure gold; . . . sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb" (Psalm 19:10).

Suppose a man is separated from his sweetheart and receives a letter from her. His first action will be to eagerly open the letter and pore over its contents. His love for his beloved will naturally cause him to love her correspondence with him. The same is true with our love for God's Word. Because we love the Author, we love His message to us. We read it avidly and often, we hold it close, and we hide its words in our hearts.

Finally, to love God is to obey Him. Jesus tells us, "If you love me you will obey what I command" (John 14:15, 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3). However, this is not a matter of merely following rules and registering good deeds. It is about having God's love written indelibly on our hearts. We naturally wish to please those we love. When we love God, we will want to please Him and obey His commands eagerly. "I delight to do your will" (Psalm 40:8).

### God expects man to be OBEDIENT TO HIS WILL

Obedience to God proves our love for Him (1 John 5:2-3), demonstrates our faithfulness to Him (1 John 2:3-6), glorifies Him in the world (1 Peter 2:12), and opens avenues of blessing for us (John 13:17).

Faith is necessary to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and if our faith is genuine and true, we will live a lifestyle characterized by righteousness, modeling the example set for us by Jesus Christ. We obey His commands, not because we have to, but because we want to, because we love Him. We are enabled to obey because, once we believe in Christ and are saved, we are remade. We are not the same people we once were. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

When we obey the Lord, we can live a life of joy, without shame, rooted deeply in the Lord and confident in our eternal hope. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Our obedience is actually part of our assurance that we truly know God (1 John 2:3).

When God’s children obey their Heavenly Father, He is glorified. Jesus told us that the plan is for others to “see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Of course, performing “good deeds” requires obedience to the One who calls us to good deeds. A Christian’s testimony of holiness is a strong witness that God is at work in the world.

“Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him” (Psalm 128:1). The Bible often tells us that God blesses and rewards obedience. James 1:22-25 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. . . . Whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.” See also Psalm 119:1-2.

God is gracious. If we haven’t been living for Him, if we haven’t been following His commandments, if we’ve been living in and for the world, we can be transformed by the blood of Jesus Christ. We can ask God for forgiveness, and He will give it. And He will choose to forget the sin, just as if we had never committed it in the first place. God is glorified when He extends forgiveness, because it is written, “I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. . . . Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:16-17).

## God expects man to DESIRE HIM

Grasping for a relationship with God isn't always easy. If we are honest, it can sometimes even seem impossible. Yet, in the Bible we are commanded to seek after God with all our heart, mind, and soul (Deuteronomy 4:29). But how are we to pursue a God that we can't hear, see, or physically feel? Here are a few biblical tips to help you pursue God wholeheartedly:

1. Pray that God will give you a desire for Him. We can see many times in Scripture where people prayed for God to give them a longing for Him. A great prayer to memorize and pray often is found in Psalm 63:1-8 where it says, "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you" (vv.1-3).

2. Remove (or put in check) the things in your life that you love more than Him. It is easy to love the good things that God gives us more than we love Him. Our possessions, things that bring us pleasure, or even our loved ones, can often become idols of our heart. We must ensure we are not loving anything more than God, for when we do we replace God's rightful place in our lives with something less than Him.

3. Spend time in meditation and prayer. Some of the great puritan believers of old (such as John Owen or Jonathan Edwards) spent hours in prayer and meditation each day. They would spend time praying through their life and asking God to reveal to them where He was needed most. Through concentrated times of prayer they found their desire for God grow to the point where they longed to return to their prayer time again and again and again.

4. Get around others who desire God. A Christian is not supposed to live life alone. We are meant to be connected to others that are desiring God and longing for His Word in their life. If you are primarily surrounded with people who do not know God, you are bound to begin to dwindle in your desire to know Him.

A love for God doesn't grow on accident. Like a new born child, God gives us life but we must continue to nurture and grow it to maturity. If you would like more help in your walk with God and some tips for discipling your own soul, feel free to email me and I'll see if there are some ways I can encourage you with prayer and resources. In the end, strive for God with all your strength and I know His Spirit will meet you in biblical and unexpected ways.

### Application/Activity

In our discussion on Joshua, we went over his faith in God and his humbleness. This week's application/activity is a combination of both faithfulness and being humble. I want you to get five one dollar bills and place them in your wallet or car. I want you to spend the next seven days looking for someone in need (usually on a street corner). Give them a one dollar bill and tell them you will be praying that God will improve their situation. Then, after you have left them, voice this prayer: "Lord, please help this person. Please improve their situation. I pray that they will come to know and love you." Have **FAITH** that God will have them use your money wisely. Be **HUMBLE** enough to give our your earnings.