

Wednesday, March 14, 2018: Discussion Guide for “Obey: Because We Love Him”— Sermon preached on Sunday, March 11

Text: John 14:15-31

Brief summary (what’s the point of this text/sermon?):

In this sermon we explored another facet of our 2018 theme (**Love God. Love People. Change the World**). It’s easy enough to say that we ought to love God—we all agree with that—but *what does that mean?* What does that look like practically?

In some circles—probably because of a reaction to an overly legalistic approach to spirituality—obedience has been under-emphasized. Wanting to steer clear of earning our salvation through works, some Christians have come to believe that God isn’t that concerned about what we do.

The evidence in the Bible is different, however. God has always been quite concerned about his people doing what he tells them to do, and that didn’t change when “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Simply put, God wants and expects obedience.

In the sermon’s text, Jesus said some very clear things about obedience, including this first line: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (v. 15). We discussed how Jesus taught that obedience flows instinctively and naturally out of our love for Jesus. It shouldn’t be forced. We shouldn’t have to “white-knuckle” it, because that usually doesn’t work for long. But true love leads to doing what Jesus says.

How do I live out the implications of this passage? (Discussion starters for applying the sermon)

1. How could our obedience to God be a bad thing? (Hint: it has to do with *why* we obey)
2. The sermon mentioned different motivations for obedience: (1) we fear God; (2) we feel guilt; (3) we want to get something from God; (4) we think obedience will give us a better life; (5) we trust that God has good reasons for commanding us to do something; (6) we’re thankful for what God has done for us; (7) we love God and want to please him.
 - a. Briefly discuss how these different motivations relate to our obedience.
 - b. Which of these (if any) are bad motivations? Why?
 - c. Which of these do you believe are the highest motivations? Why?
 - d. Do our motivations for obedience change as we mature in the faith? Why?
3. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Discuss how this is less a command than a statement of how things are. In other words, Jesus isn’t so much telling us that if we love God, we ought to obey him (though that’s true), but that when we love God, we *will* obey him. Discuss that distinction. Why does it matter?
4. If we’re struggling to obey God in some area of our lives, what should we do?
5. Immediately after Jesus’ statement about love and obedience he says that he will give us “another Helper, . . . even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16,17). What connection is there between our obedience and the Spirit whom God gives to believers? (Ezekiel 36:26-27 is relevant here; cf. Romans 8:12-13)