

A bald eagle is shown in flight, its wings spread wide, against a backdrop of a vast, snow-covered mountain range under a clear blue sky. The eagle's head is turned to the left, and its talons are visible. The overall scene is majestic and serene.

Rising
to GOD'S
best

Peter
Doseck

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Chapter One Faith & Obedience

There is a key in the kingdom of God that is often overlooked. We all know faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word. We know about meditation and confession of the promises. We know about prayer and fasting, giving and receiving, and faith and patience, but the underlying foundation stone we sometimes miss is obedience.

You could say that faith and obedience are spiritual twins. You may tell God you have faith, but until you obey, your faith will be lifeless and futile. James 2:17 says: "Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." I don't know about you, but I don't want dead faith hanging around my neck. I want to understand the importance of obedience so that I am not found lacking in any area of my life.

Obedience means "to carry out the will of another." In both the Old and New Testaments, obedience is connected with hearing. God believes that once a man hears a commandment, if he is a true servant of the Lord he will obey without considering the repercussions. This willing obedience is an active, positive response to what God has said.

To a child, obedience means doing what mom and dad want you to do instead of what you want to do. The mere mention of the word "obey" makes children cringe and picture all of the fun draining out

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of a day. Because of our upbringing, many adults share the same opinion about obedience. We assume it will vacuum the joy right out of us, when in fact obeying God will produce life and it more abundantly.

Obedience will not only produce blessing in your life, but it will confirm and establish your faithful nature. If you hear a word from the Lord, and you obey, you will be found faithful. But, if you find unbelief or disobedience rising up when you encounter a word from God, this will reveal a certain level of unfaithfulness in your life.

We have to remember that life is more than a collection of moments. Too many Christians are so focused on surviving one crisis moment after another that they forget about the ultimate goal of the believer, which is to reach Heaven one day and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Faithful servants are those who obey for a lifetime. They obey not just for the rewards of temporal victory, but for the rewards of eternity.

Submitted to the Lordship of Jesus

Jesus taught us that obedience confirms His lordship in our lives. In Luke 6:46 He said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" In other words, if we do not obey, we should not call Him Lord. This may seem harsh, but let's remember who said it. These are the words of Jesus, and we should be prepared to swallow them no matter how uncomfortable they make us.

I'm sure we've all had a bite out of the unfaithful pie, but it is devastating when we discover our

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weakness. The truth is, no matter how smart we think we are, or how long we have been walking the faith walk, we cannot afford the luxury of picking and choosing what we will obey and what we will ignore. Jesus is looking for a people who will obey Him without question, no matter the cost.

Obedience is a multifaceted thing. We must not only obey everything the scripture tells us to do, but we also must obey personal convictions given to us by the Holy Ghost. God gives us moral standards, emotional standards, actions of faith against fear, and the care of others, both brethren and enemies. If we fall short of the scriptures, or if we forego the personal convictions He sets before us, we are violating and resisting the lordship and government of Jesus in our lives.

When we don't do what we are expected to do, we rebel against the powers that rule over us. It's easy to see this in the world. If we fail to pay our taxes, we end up paying a fine on top of what we owe. When you do this, the government rightfully considers you rebellious and possibly even anti-government.

The same is true in the kingdom of God. When we don't do what Jesus asks of us through His Word or through our personal convictions, He considers it an anti-Kingdom statement. By refusing Jesus His rightful place in our lives, the one we gave Him when we made Him our Lord and Savior, we remove Him from the place of rule that He paid with His life to occupy.

In a nutshell, obedience is a reflection of the depth of our love for Jesus. Remember His words, "If you

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love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)
This makes it clear that we can only love Jesus to the extent that we obey what He says. In fact, we will never love Him when we refuse to obey. Again, harsh words, but they are not mine. They belong to the one you call Lord. The question is, what will you do about it?

Willing and Obedient

Isaiah 1:19-20 says: "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

Notice the combination of willingness and obedience. One without the other will not produce the good of the land. Only the intermingling of the two will bring about the reward of God's desire in your life.

This verse shows us two facets of obedience: "If you are willing and obedient..." is the requirement, and "...you shall eat the good of the land" is the result. Let's dig into this principle by looking at the requirement of willingness first.

I've heard some say, "Well, I don't want to, but I will." If I was you, I wouldn't waste the effort. You cannot do something successfully and obediently without first having the willingness to do it. Willingness is not a passive acceptance of an order, but it is an active response whereby you lay down your will and desire for that of another whose lordship you value.

The follow-through to willingness is the act of

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the will when you carry out the task obediently. This requires submission because the submitted will is what brings us to the place of humility. The Bible says: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (1 Peter 5:6)

Do you know that you can obey with a prideful and stiff-necked spirit? You absolutely can, and God does not want this kind of obedience any more than He wants your disobedience. He wants you to be a willing vessel, one who is pliable and moldable in His hands.

More than anything, God wants a willing heart. He does not want someone whose underlying response is, "I'll do it, but I don't want to. You are making me, and I have no choice, so I will. But the first opportunity I have, I will do my own thing." We don't want this attitude in our children, and God most emphatically does not want it in us.

Now let's look at the end result of Isaiah 1:19. It says: "...you shall eat the good of the land." This means you will eat of the property that God has assigned the righteous. You will enter into a place where all will be well, favor of a divine order will come upon you, and God will make you glad no matter where you are. These are the rewards of obedience.

Notice that the land of the willing and obedient is filled with good. Filled with good means just that. There is no lack, and there is no cutting back in the Kingdom. God doesn't live by our economic standards!

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The world is filled with plenty. How do I know? Because there are people who are digging for gold today just as fast and furiously as they have always been, and they are still finding fresh deposits. There is no lack of gold in the earth. There may be a lack of knowledge when it comes to locating it, but there is no lack in God's land.

It's the same in the kingdom of God. Since the Word says that you can eat of the good of the land, then you have to understand that there is good right where you are. You may not have knowledge of it, but it is there.

I assure you, there is an abundance right where you are. There is enough to meet your needs and extra to overflow into the lives of others. It is there awaiting your obedience, and it cannot be extracted by any other means. "If you are willing and obedient" is the driving force behind the life of abundance.

Here's a point many have missed. Obedience has no restrictions regarding the amount of good it can produce. A seed can produce 30-fold, 60-fold, or 100-fold. Obedience has no such limitation, which leads me to believe it has unlimited potential. One act of faith when sowing a seed can produce a 100-fold return. That's great, but one act of obedience can produce an unlimited supply, and I'd rather have the unlimited.

How is this possible? It is possible through the principle of a three-fold cord. Number one, obedience operates by faith, and we know that faith pleases God. Number two, obedience is activated by a humble spirit, and we know the reward of humility

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is that God will exalt us in due time. Number three, obedience requires immediate action, unleashing the rewards of the good of the land.

Sowing a seed only takes one element, which is faith. A willing and obedient lifestyle takes three elements, which produce a much greater and more consistent reward.

The hidden secret of this unlimited potential is that it will not be a one-time withdrawal, but it will produce an open Heaven from which you may withdraw for years to come. An obedient life is one of continuing, unhindered, and unlimited abundance.

I encourage you to incorporate the three elements of obedience in your daily life. Obey in faith. Obey with humility. Obey with immediate action. When you do there will be no limit to what God can do for you.

The Opposite Effect

Newton's law of motion says that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. This is really not Newton's law, but God's law.

Isaiah 1:20 shows us the equal and opposite reaction to obedience when it reveals the result of disobedience. The verse says: "But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

Were the people Isaiah was speaking to in this verse righteous? Yes, they were. Their standing with God was not in question, but the revelation of the verse showed them an underlying truth we must

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all be aware of, and it is this: disobedience opens doors in our lives that will bring about the opposite outcome from what God desires for us to have.

Obedience is a choice, and so is disobedience. You can obey, or you can disobey, but the choice is yours. God does not choose for you. He does not unleash good or evil indiscriminately. The choice is whether you want to eat of the good of the land, or if you want to be devoured by the sword.

Disobedience is a refusal to submit to God. It is a rebellious act against the government of God in a life. When someone refuses, resists, and rebels, that individual tries to supersede the wisdom of the ages. No one is smarter than God. No one can calculate the end from the beginning except the One who made the end from the beginning. It is far better to submit than to receive the outcome of our refusal.

A refusal to obey or a rebellion against what God has said is an attempt at self-rule. This self-rule is the twin brother of pride. So we have faith and obedience as one set of twins, and self-rule and pride as the other. Which do you think will prevail?

When someone lives by self-rule, they think they know more than God. When this individual refuses to submit to God, he operates as a self-willed entity. He rules his life with pride, and in so doing he opens doors he knows not of.

This man will not be able to protect himself from the plans and purposes of the enemy, and his lack of protection will lead to consumption by the sword. This man's life will be consumed with the very things he wanted to avoid by ruling his own life. He thought

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he could lead himself down a better path than the one offered by God, but his prideful, humanistic instinct led him to the very heart of that which he desired to avoid.

Isaiah 1:21 goes on to say: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." In this text a harlot is an idol worshiper, someone who has been faithful in a prior time but is now unfaithful.

This kind of self-will, pride, and refusal to obey God are on the rise in our world. This is no surprise because the Bible tells us that in the last days men will be lovers of themselves, revealing self-will.

Isaiah 1:21 and the following verses reveal a dire warning to all of us not to become self-willed. If we are self-willed - prideful, refusing God's rule, and rebelling against the authority of the scripture - God will consider us as worshipers of ourselves instead of worshipers of Him. Such an attitude will not be tolerated in the body of Christ.

Even Jesus committed Himself into the hands of God. He was God, and yet He humbly submitted to the authority of God. What if He would have become a preserver of self? What if He had chosen to go His own way? What if He had failed to fight against the impulse of self-preservation that clawed at Him in the garden of Gethsemane? He would have become a worshiper of self, and the world would have been lost.

We need to awaken ourselves. We need to shake ourselves and check every corner of our lives to make sure we have not fallen prey to the deception

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of disobedience. Man cannot rule himself!

You may think you are obedient to God, but look closely at your life. Do you obey what you read in the Word? Do you obey the Word preached? Do you obey the word of the Lord delivered by the gifts of the Spirit? Do you obey the personal convictions birthed by what God tells you in the still, small voice?

You cannot casually obey. Obedience requires submission, submission requires humility, and humility requires that you check your opinions at the door. You will never fall into obedience, but you must willingly choose to step into it daily.

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Chapter Two

The Cost of Disobedience

Disobedience changes one's identity from faithful to unfaithful, from righteous to unrighteous, and from blessed to cursed. Disobedience changes the character of an individual. This is why you must never allow yourself to weigh the options of disobedience. Always obey immediately, without questioning God or considering another way out.

Who wants to be known as unfaithful? Who wants to be known as cursed? Who wants to be known as one who once obeyed God gladly, but now disobeys Him all too easily? Not me, and I hope not you.

I don't want to erode my character. I don't want one thought of, "It's only one time" to steal my identity as an obedient son.

Groves of trees spring up, not as full-grown trunks, but as the result of a planted seed. One seed springs up and grows, but it does not choke out the field of wheat with its single root system. And so another seed is planted, and it springs up. Two little saplings don't take up much room.

Soon, your field is dead, and the trees of disobedience have overtaken the planting of the Lord. "Just one time" turned into many times, and many times weakened your resolve until you finally gave up and turned your back on the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

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The devil destroys people one seed of rebellion at a time. This is why we must obey. We have a choice, but we cannot afford to take it for granted. Trust me. I have counseled so many Christians over the years who wept with regret for taking the opportunity to do their own thing one time. Years later they awakened to disaster and heartache. One act of disobedience cost them everything.

God does not require obedience just to keep us out of trouble, but He requires it of us in order to take us into an experience. He wants us to eat of the good of the land even more than we want it for ourselves because He knows if we will obey and experience His goodness, we will be hooked for life. This is why He said, "If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures." (Job 36:11)

He also said, "Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God: it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endures to all generations."

There is an experience available for those who obey that far outweighs any short-term pleasure they may obtain from doing things their own way. The reward of obedience is prosperity and pleasure, the goodness of the Lord, and His mercy which is everlasting. I choose the good.

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Disobedience Brings Judgment

In 1 Samuel 15:1-8 we find the story of King Saul's demise. The prophet Samuel gave him the word of the Lord, and he instructed him to "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have" (see verse 3).

Samuel explained exactly what God meant by this, and he told Saul he was to kill everyone, both man, woman, child, and beast. Not one thing was to be left alive at the end of the day, but there was to be a total destruction.

Saul gathered his troops, and off he went to obey the Lord. In the heat of battle, though, Saul made some decisions that revealed his true heart.

In verse 9 it says: "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."

Notice it was Saul and the people who chose to spare the king and the best of the flocks and herds. Who gave the people a say in this? Evidently, Saul was more concerned about pleasing the people than he was about obeying God. He disobeyed a direct order, and God was not happy about it.

In verses 16-24 we discover what God thought about Saul's disobedience. Samuel confronted the king, and at first he tried to make excuses and say that he did obey, but the people implored him to bring God a sacrifice. Samuel quickly called him on it, so Saul had to admit that he had feared the people

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more than he feared God.

Regret was too little too late, because in verses 22-23, Samuel said this: "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 hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king."

Clearly, God considers disobedience to be a rejection of the word of the Lord. He doesn't call it a mistake, or a misstep, or a human failing. God looked at Saul, and He said, "He has rejected Me."

Saul refused to own up to what he had done. In his eyes he had only let one man live, and a few prime sheep and oxen for a sacrifice. When Samuel asked in verse 14: "What does this mean, this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?", Samuel wasn't confused about the sound, but he was confused about the heart attitude which had produced it.

In other words he said, "Didn't I make myself clear? Didn't you understand what you were to do? Why did you reject God and disobey? Why did you transgress the word of the Lord?"

Saul never did quite understand what he had done. He thought he had come close enough, with just a few exceptions. He thought pleasing the people would please God. In others words, he thought he knew better than God. He thought masking his sin with a sacrifice would make it all go away. He

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thought God was an "almost" God.

When God said, "Kill it all", He meant it. There was no room for discussion, conjecture, or choice by Saul. Kill means kill, and all means all. God always says what He means and means what He says. It is not up to us to make things easier on ourselves or more palatable for others, but it is up to us to do what we are told.

Disobedience changes things. The pure becomes defiled. The wine gets mixed with water. People become lukewarm who were once hot. People become hypocritical. They say they still serve God, but they do it on their own terms.

Titus 1:16 says: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Disobedience is sin. It is just as much sin as lying, stealing, or taking a life. There are no little sins and big sins, only disobedient acts that are designed to drain the blessing of God from our lives. Disobedience cost Saul his kingdom. For us, it can cost us our place in the Kingdom. It is certainly not worth the risk.

The Fall-Out of Disobedience

Romans 5:19 says: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

By the disobedience of one, havoc came for many. By one. Not by a troop, but by one. Think how important it is for each of us to obey. We do it

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for God, but we also do it so that our children, our extended families, and all of those with whom we and they come in contact will not be drawn away from the faith. It's about so much more than our own little lives.

Think of a man living by faith and proclaiming Jesus everywhere he goes. His children love him, and they serve God with all of their might. His friends and neighbors live peaceably with him, and even his in-laws think he is an alright kind of guy.

His wife loves him and dotes on him. She brags to her friends and tells them what a great husband she has. Her co-workers get a little annoyed hearing about it, but it makes them wonder what makes the difference in this family. They watch, and they consider, and they think about the faith she proclaims.

His children's friends come to church with him, his buddies at church think he is a pillar of the faith, and his brothers and sisters respect him, even though they pick at him for what he believes. When push comes to shove his family calls on him in their time of trouble for prayer because, even though he irritates them, they know he has an access to God that they do not possess.

Then one day everything changes. The man earns a promotion at work, and he becomes a line leader on his shift. He rejoices for the blessing of the Lord, and he tells everyone he knows how great His God is.

He takes the responsibility seriously, and he tries his best to forge relationships with all of those he oversees. He walks the line, looking over shoulder after shoulder, and he leans in to hear the concerns of

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many.

One conversation leads to another, and as is the way with conversations, building bridges to the future, he suddenly finds himself interested in a woman on his line in an unusual way. She makes him laugh. She strokes his ego, and she makes him believe he has a power of attraction he thought he lost years ago.

His inner man cries out, but he pushes the warning away. The Spirit of God sounds the alarm, but he disobeys the word of the Lord. Reading the Bible becomes dull to him, so he doesn't notice that the enemy is planning his downfall through his disobedience. The pressure of lust soon makes him cave, and he gives in to a temptation he would have never thought possible six months before.

The fall-out is immediate. His wife leaves him, and his children go with her. His family and his in-laws are all mad at him, his friends at church aren't sure how to respond to him, and he even loses his position at work. One man's disobedience scatters casualties far and wide.

His children are heart-broken, and their faith is shaken. Their friends don't go to church with them anymore because it's too difficult for them to explain why their daddy isn't with them.

His wife is devastated, and her co-workers shake their heads at her. They knew it was too good to be true, this God who blessed her with such a wonderful husband. Who is wonderful now? The thoughts they had considered before about taking what she said seriously are out the window as they lean in to hear

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every detail about the divorce proceedings instead.

His brothers and sisters are just plain mad. They knew he was a mess when he was a kid, but they thought maybe this Jesus thing was real. Now they don't think anything is real, except the contempt they feel for anyone who tries to preach the gospel to them.

Everybody at work thinks he is a fool. Didn't he know about this woman? Why would he give up so much for so little? Surely he must not have been the guy they thought he was, and surely His God must not have much power.

His neighbors feel sorry for him, living alone like he is. They avert their eyes out of embarrassment when they see him. He used to be so friendly and outgoing, even when he annoyed them by talking about His Jesus, but now he seems so sad.

One man's disobedience. Just one. This one act of disobedience will not only affect his children now, but statistically he has condemned them to a 25% chance of ever having a successful marriage themselves. One act has created a generational breaking of covenant from which this family may never recover.

The man might be restored to God with repentance and prayer, but he may never be restored to his family and his former lifestyle. All that they had is gone, and the new life they are relegated to will never be the same. The blessing they once knew may be lost forever.

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The Other Side

This is a gloomy story, but on the other side of the verse it says, "...by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Thank goodness for the rest of the revelation!

By one, many can be won to Jesus. Just as Timothy was a product of the faith of his mother and grandmother, you can be a light to the generations that come after you. Your children can see your faith through the obedience in your life.

When your children see you do whatever it takes to serve the Lord, they are impacted. When they see you refuse to give up no matter the cost, they are touched. When they see you forego personal comfort in order to obey the Word, they are branded for life.

Your obedient life is a root of faith that will spring up and produce after its own kind. Your love, humility, and faith in God will find their way into the lives of your children. Yes, they will still have opportunities to fail and choices to make, but the Bible promises that when we raise our children with obedience to God, when they are old they will not turn from it.

The Bible says something about Abraham that I will never forget. God proclaimed that Abraham would teach his children about who He was. He had complete confidence in Abraham. He knew Abraham would go wherever He told him to go and do whatever He told him to do; therefore, He knew his children would follow after him and do the same.

This unwavering obedience fell upon a young

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man named Isaac. He had two sons, one named Esau and one named Jacob. Jacob veered from the course of obedience for a season, but through the mishaps that resulted from his disobedience he came to a place called Bethel, and he called on the name of the Lord there, just as his grandfather Abraham had done. Jacob called on God, and he vowed a vow to present the tithe in response to God's help, even as his father and grandfather had taught him as a boy.

You and I have the ability to affect generations just as Abraham did. We do it when we obey. We do it when we let our children see us count the cost, and then we do what God asks us to do, even when it is not the thing we wish we could do.

I have a story I like to tell to illustrate what I mean. I love motorcycles. Several years ago my wife had a wreck on her motorcycle where she sprained one wrist and broke the other. I decided to sell her bike right away, but I kept riding.

I was notorious for getting on back roads and flying. Phyllis would ask me when I came home, "Did you wear your helmet?" I would answer with, "It sure was nice ridin' today!" trying to deflect the question. She'd ask me if I honored the speed limit, and I would deflect again.

One night I was riding home from church, and I was flying high. As I sped down the country road in the dark I heard these words, "Park this bike, and don't ever get on another one!" I was so afraid, I trembled on the inside the rest of the way home. I almost stopped the bike and threw it in the ditch, I was so scared. I was terrified to move another inch

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on the thing, so I sold it immediately.

That was years ago, so when I saw the Can-Am Spyder roadsters come out, I had a glimmer of hope for the thrill of the ride again. I knew it might be walking on the edge of obedience, so I thought I better seek counsel on whether it was a motorcycle or not. I looked around to see who had knowledge of such things, and I decided to go to my grandsons, the experts. I knew they would be reliable sources for information, being six and nine at the time.

I told them I thought the Spyderys were nice utility vehicles, and I asked if they agreed. Lincoln the nine year old said, "Pa Pa! They sell them at motorcycle places! If you get one, you will disobey God." Knowing that Lincoln was influenced by his grandmother, I approached Quinten, the six year old. I asked him how many wheels a motorcycle has, and he answered wisely, "Two, Pa Pa." I said, "Look here at this one. It's got three, so you know it can't be a motorcycle, right?" He said, "Pa Pa! You know that is wrong!"

The moral of the story is, until they start selling Spyderys at marinas, I am still grounded. Now, I hope you know I'm kidding about getting one. I would not disobey God, let alone disappoint my grandsons who are watching my every move. I told them, "You guys are right. It is a motorcycle, and I will not get one because it would be disobeying God." They said, "Good, Pa Pa."

This one act of obedience will register with them all of the days of their lives. Owning a motorcycle is not a sin for most people, but for me it would be

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because God convicted me, and He has not rescinded His ruling. For me, buying a motorcycle would be like stealing, or lying, or cheating on my wife. It would be sin, and it would not only derail my faith, but it would surely derail my grandsons' faith as they watched me do it. This is a price I will never pay.

You have to be ever vigilant, because it is impossible to measure the impact of your obedience or disobedience on your children and grandchildren. You have to look at it long term, knowing that if you begin to compromise for any reason, at first they may protest like my grandsons did, but if you persist in your actions they will soon believe that what you do is right in the eyes of God.

You can bring salvation, blessing, and abundant life to the generations that follow you, but only when you persist in your obedience to the Father. You are the nearest thing to God in the flesh they will ever see. You are an example, so you should take it very seriously.

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Chapter Three Consider Your Ways

Philippians 2:8 says: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This verse is so powerful. Jesus was God's Son before, during, and after the cross, and yet, He humbled Himself and allowed Himself to die. This was wholehearted obedience.

It did not matter to Him that He was about to lose it all. He just obeyed. It did not matter to Him that He was not guilty. He simply obeyed. It did not matter to Him that the mechanism of His death was reserved for thieves and murderers, and He being the Son of God was the Creator of all. He just obeyed, humbly and without murmuring or complaint. He made no defense for Himself, and He did not explain or justify what He was doing. He just did it.

We all bear our own crosses in life, but I wonder if any of us are able to bear them as humbly and obediently as Jesus bore His? We must consider our ways. Do we murmur and complain while we obey? Do we point out to others the justification for what we do so that they are aware of our sacrifice? Do we suffer alone, or do we drag others into our situation so that we will be noticed by men?

If we are ever going to arrive at a place where our cross becomes beneficial, not only to us, but to the

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kingdom of God and to others, then we must obey without any of the soul-satisfying nonsense that our flesh desires.

Jesus said this: "He that does not take his cross, and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me." To "take our cross" requires that we commit ourselves to an obedient lifestyle at all costs. If we don't, we may go through the motions of Christianity, but we will never have the effect in our lives of what God has designed for us to do and be as believers.

Had Jesus not been obedient to the Father, He would have been just another man who died on a cross on a gloomy afternoon, but because He was wholeheartedly obedient, His sacrifice on the cross was successful in redeeming mankind. This same principle is important in our lives.

We cannot take up our cross by reflecting only certain portions of it. We cannot pick up our cross on certain days and leave it lie on others. We cannot bear it when everything is going well and abandon it when things get tough. We must be obedient to the cross every day, which causes us to die to our outer man so that our inner man, the life of our resurrected man, may shine forth as we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

This does not mean we won't make mistakes, stumble, or fall short. We may resist our cross in some way for a season, but ultimately we will comply and do whatever it takes to carry it to our own personal Golgotha so that God may be glorified in us.

You cannot serve God half-heartedly. You cannot serve Him in one area of life, but be unwilling to

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serve Him in another. You cannot afford the luxury of choosing the arenas in which you will serve God. It does not work this way. You must serve Him every day, everywhere, and in every way.

Peer Pressure

With so much on the line, we may wonder why anyone would disobey God. The reason is simple: peer pressure. Disobedience is nothing more than giving in to the peer pressure of the devil, man, circumstances, or your own carnal mind.

Again, we must consider our ways. How much pressure does it take to get us to give up? How much time has to pass before we believe God has ignored our prayers? How many trials do we have to go through before we say there is no God? The stakes are high, but God has given us what we need.

It is in the nature of a Christian to obey. You have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. Your life in Christ began with obedience when you heard the gospel, responded, and committed your life to Him. Obedience was engrafted in your spiritual DNA, but the enemy has been lying in wait ever since, conniving and planning to tempt you to disobey.

The Bible tells us there is no temptation that has taken you but that which is common to man. This means the devil is limited to using the age-old strategy that he used on Adam and Eve. There's nothing new under the sun, and the temptation is still the same. He asks, "Has God said?" to this very day.

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What we have that Adam and Eve did not have is a road map. We see the pitfall that enticed them to throw away their relationship with God. We see what they did wrong, and we can avoid the same mistake.

If God says, "Don't", it means don't. If God says, "Do", it means do. Don't ever give in to the trick of "Has God said?" Yes, God has said, and we can read it in His Word.

We teach our children the basic principles of obedience, but then we are tempted to ignore them for ourselves. God tells us "Don't" and "Do" for the same reasons that we say the same to our kids. We say it for their safety, for their maturity, for their blessing, and for their overall well-being. This is what obedience is all about. God is not trying to keep you out of some hidden pleasure, but He is trying to keep you out of the grip of sin so that righteousness may have its full effect in your life.

When you are weak in the arena of peer pressure, the devil really does not need to do much to get you to disobey. Your mind will put so much pressure on you, by making you wonder what people will think about you if you do thus and so, that you will melt under the pressure and do what you know you should not do.

Why would you do this when people really don't think all that much about you? I'm not trying to be mean, but the truth is, people do not really dwell on other people as much as we think they do. They may cuss and fuss and make a stink in the moment, but it will quickly pass. We should never give in to the temptation to disobey over what someone else will

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think about us.

Jesus said: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6:26) When your neighbors speak ill of you, be encouraged. They must be seeing Jesus in you!

The Truth About Suffering

Hebrews 5:7-9 says: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Let me set this straight first. Jesus did not suffer in order for God to make Him obey. In verse seven it says He feared God, and those who fear God do not disobey. Jesus was obedient because He gave God reverence. He humbled Himself, He had a love for His Father, and He lived by faith. Jesus did not learn to obey through the consequences of suffering from disobedience.

What Jesus did discover were the rewards of obedience that He received when He obeyed in spite of His suffering. This is what Jesus learned. He had not known the rewards of obedience quite this way before. He found a new perspective when He obeyed in the midst of His suffering, and He gained a new

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revelation. You can, too, in similar circumstances.

If you are suffering, first you must know it has not been sent by God to teach you to obey. God did not create your situation, but if in the midst of the suffering you will humbly obey, you will learn about the rewards of obedience, and they are many.

When you emerge from a trial having obeyed in spite of the pressure all around you, it will produce a sense of joy and accomplishment unlike any other thing. When you obey in the midst of a terrible storm, it is a strength and character-building lesson you will never forget.

Grace and promotion can also come through a time of obedience in the midst of suffering, just as they did to the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:4-5.

1 Peter 5:8-10 reveals another reward for obedience. It says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."

God can meet your obedience in a fight of faith with a honing hand that will make you stronger and more adept for future spiritual battles. He can transform you and settle things within you so that the next time you face uncertainty, you will have a testimony from which you can draw wisdom. All in all, what the devil intends for your demise can turn

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out for your good, as long as you remain obedient throughout the suffering.

The Season Will End

Let me remind you that no suffering comes from God, but it is the adversary who is the afflicter. God does not use suffering to teach us. He may help us overcome our suffering, through which we will learn many things, but God never institutes suffering as a teaching tool.

The devil brings suffering, and he attacks everybody the same way. We're all in the fight of faith, and we're all in different stages of our battle on any given day. The Bible tells us to resist the devil, knowing he is trying to use our affliction to get us to cave in. The devil will not devour those who resist, but he will consume those who give up.

Let me say it this way. If you fall into disobedience due to peer pressure, you will be eaten up by the devil. Everybody knows it's wrong to listen to dirty jokes, but in a crowd a believer under attack might stand and listen because of peer pressure. A struggling believer might go to a movie, and when the bad language flies at lightning speed, instead of getting up and walking out he will sink down in his seat, embarrassed, but unwilling to make a move because of peer pressure.

Too many Christians cave in to peer pressure. They become disobedient, not realizing they are opening the door for the devil to swallow them up. If they would obey, even though it causes suffering; if they would obey in spite of the peer pressure around

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them, they would discover a work of God that is found in the scripture we just read. It says: "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."

There is always a season of suffering, but every season ends. You may have to remind yourself that the season will never be longer than you can bear, but if you endure to the end you will discover something amazing. God will perfect you, establish you, strengthen you, and settle you. When you are obedient and you allow the hand of God to move in your life, that which the enemy means for your downfall will turn into an opportunity for God to make you better than you have ever been.

The enemy may be strategically attacking you right now, trying to get you to cave in to peer pressure, but if you will resist the devil, stay obedient, and continue doing what God has asked you to do, then you will loose the hand of God to use the fires of affliction to temper you for future blessing. The fire can do one of two things: it can consume you, or it can make you better. No matter what you choose, you will not come out of the fire the same, so you might as well choose the right exit strategy.

Whatever you do, don't ever think God put something on you to give you a ministry to those in similar circumstances. No! The enemy attacked you to destroy your life, but because you were obedient through the trial God has perfected you, changed and adjusted you, and equipped you to minister to others.

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It's kind of like His spiritual slap in the face of the enemy. Instead of being rid of you, now the devil has to endure a new, better you.

The word "establish" in 1 Peter 5:10 means: to bring a consistency of mind, or a firm, fixed face like a flint. When you obey God through the sufferings that the enemy brings to you, your mind will begin to be consistently ordered of the Lord, and you will think the thoughts of God.

However, on the opposite side, if you cave in you will get into the habit of wavering and going from one thought to another without assurance. Consider your ways!

You want to obey so that you can allow the hand of God to do a work, not just to prepare you, adjust you, and equip you for others, but so that you can begin to have a stable mind and be temperate in all things.

The word "strengthened" means: to make one strong in spirit and in soul. Wouldn't you like to have a strong spirit? Not a spirit that caves in under the slightest pressure, but a strong spirit, an aggressive spirit, and one that refuses to be denied. Think of yourself as Superman, the man of steel. Bullets from the enemy will bounce off of you, and his greatest attacks will be diffused by your stamina and stability. What a deal!

The phrase "settle you" means: to lay a foundation of truth resulting in maturity and liberty. We all want to be mature believers, but if we don't endure the suffering and stay obedient to the end, the foundations of our lives will never be laid. We

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will remain immature, and we will be bound by the very things God has empowered us to overcome.

I want to be perfected, strengthened, established, and settled. This makes me look at suffering in a whole new light. No wonder Paul could say, "When I am weak, then I am strong."

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Chapter Four Seeded for Apostasy

Apostasy is a renouncing of your faith in any portion of truth. When people see the word "apostasy" they generally think of something drastic, like someone completely turning their back on the gospel and proclaiming themselves to be an atheist. In reality, apostasy can be a very subtle thing.

If the enemy can get you to listen to one dirty joke, for instance, he has set in motion the seed process, and the harvest he desires is for you to fall away from your faith. Every seed produces after its own kind. This principle was one of the first released in the earth at creation, and it remains to this very day.

One seed will multiply, and another seed will be dropped in the ground. Seeds will be sown one after another after another, until what springs up in your spiritual garden will barely resemble what you wanted it to be.

Thoughts produce more thoughts, just as seeds produce more seeds. One thought will lead to another, and if left unchecked, the seeds you allow to be sown in your heart will grow up, and they will choke the Word from its rightful place.

This is the deceitful trick of the enemy. He will try to convince you that the destructive thoughts are your own, when in reality they are his planting. They

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will become yours, however, if you dwell on them, and if you allow them to remain.

A seed is easy to pull out when it is first sown. The enemy can drop a seed into your mind, and if you pluck it up immediately it will not have time to produce a root. Because it has no root, it will not grow, and it will not hurt you. But, if a thought comes and you allow it to linger, if you consider it over the course of time, and if you allow it to form a root system, it will produce a harvest, and the harvest will be devastating.

When someone caves in to peer pressure and they listen to that first dirty joke, conviction will be immediate. They will feel horrible for giving in. If they deal with it then and there, the next time that particular temptation comes it will be easier to resist. But if they do not deal with it immediately, and if they let the conviction become the condemnation of the enemy, the next time the temptation comes, it will be harder to resist and easier to fall into it.

This is why you cannot allow thought seeds to be germinated. You may not be able to stop them from being tossed your way, but you can uproot them quickly and resist the attack of the enemy.

The strategy of Satan is clear. He wants you to renounce your faith. He wants the seeds of apostasy to grow up and bear much fruit. He wants to destroy you.

Now, the devil is a strategist. He knows if he came at you with both barrels blazing all at once, you would recognize his attack, and you would fight back. This is why he chooses to be subtle. This is why

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he lurks around the shadows like a lion approaching its prey in the dead of night. He knows he cannot get to all of your faith at once, and so he will pick one area where he sees a weakness, and he will approach carefully to set his trap.

He believes that if he can get you to live in unbelief in one area, he will someday have access to all. So, he is crafty. He is patient. He is determined.

Don't fall prey to his devices. Knowing what he is up to, you need to close every door where you know you are weak. If you don't, one day you will wake up to sin in that area, and when you pull back the cover you will see a whole lot of trouble lying in wait in every area. It's like the pride of lions. It's not the one you see who will kill you, but the ten hiding in the grass that will take you down.

If the devil can get you to disobey one time, the second time will be easier, and the third time even easier until it is a habit you cannot break. A habit produces tentacles that are rooted all over your heart, and it squeezes the life out of you.

You are a multifaceted personality, and every part of you is tied to every other part. You can't say, "Well, I am weak in this area, but I am strong everywhere else, so I know God understands." No, what He understands is that your weakness will kill you if you don't get it right.

The seeds of disobedience multiply quickly, and you cannot take the chance that you will be able to stop them from running amok in your entire being like cancer cells that multiply and move from organ to organ. You've got to kill the cancer, or it will kill

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you.

One act of disobedience is a renouncing of your faith in an area of your life. You may consider it a small thing, but in reality it is a devastating thing. Say, for instance, God told you to give \$20.00 to someone, and you refused. You may think it was just a mistake, but in reality it was a renouncing of your faith in the verse that tells you, "Give and it shall be given."

What will be next in your life? Will you withhold your tithe? Will you refuse to forgive? Will you refuse to pray? Will you lay down your Bible and refuse to study to show yourself approved? Will you lie? Will you steal? Where will it stop? If you renounce one verse, what will stop you from renouncing them all?

I know you may think I am overstating it, but I want you to see the gravity of the situation. God does not take your disobedience lightly. God does not want you to have less, but more. Only obedience will bring this type of reward.

Don't Be Darkened

Romans 1:21 says: "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Notice that they "knew God". These were not darkened sinners in the beginning, but because they did not obey, which is what it means to glorify Him as God, they became darkened in their hearts.

Make no mistake about it, disobedience is a

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refusal to give God His rightful place of honor. It is a refusal to be humble enough to obey, to be tender enough to love Him, and to be wise enough to set faith in motion.

Disobedience carries with it far deeper ramifications than we in our society think it does. It's time for us to obey quickly, rather than risk losing our focus while we consider the other ways something might be done, or run to someone asking for their counsel on the matter. Why not just obey when God speaks?

It is possible to spend so much time analyzing instead of obeying that we become fools. The next step for a fool, according to Romans 1:21, is to become darkened in our hearts. I shudder to think I might go there.

You may say, "Oh, you're a pastor. You would never become darkened in your heart." I want you to know that I never preach, teach, or write anything until it is first reflected in me. Before I put this message out to anyone else, I had to put myself through an intense examination.

I had to ask myself some very probing questions. Where do I drag my feet rather than quickly obey? Where do I dip into my own wisdom instead of immediately doing what God tells me to do? Where do I fall short and depend on the counsel of others more than on the counsel of God? These are good questions for you to ask yourself.

I am not afraid to repent of failures and to make adjustments when I discover something about myself that does not line up with God's expectation of me.

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I want to be more obedient than I have ever been. In fact, I don't just want to be more obedient; I want to be totally obedient.

We all need to obey quickly and quietly, just the way we teach our children to obey us. When the still, small voice says something, we need to do it. When a scripture comes to mind, we need to respond to it right away. We don't want to simply think it over, but we want to get about doing it. We want to be aggressively obedient.

When I was studying this subject, I wondered how many times a man can be disobedient before he is totally darkened and defiled. I wondered how many times a man would have to sin before his soul became unsure that he was right with God.

You might not realize that your soul knows better than you do the condition you are in. It doesn't care about the state of your life, but it knows about it. The reason is because your soul, which is your mind, will, and emotions, wants to be in charge.

Your soul will know when you are losing your boldness, becoming passive in your confession, and slipping slowly but surely into apostasy. It will know, but it will not do a thing about it because it does not care. It wants to rule and reign, and it does not see the need to give God His rightful place.

If you fail to recognize the seeds of disobedience in your soulish life, they will eventually put out the fire in your spirit. They will choke the place of assurance in your heart. They will rise up and cause you to think right is wrong and wrong is right. They will birth confusion, anger, and jealousy. They will

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provoke unforgiveness, slothfulness, and soon a complete lack of faith.

This is because sin is not just an act, but it is a motive. It is a reflection of the heart of man. 1 Peter 1:16 says: "Be ye holy; for I am holy." God's holiness is more than a collection of actions. His holiness is who He is. Notice it says, "Be holy", not "Act holy." To be something is far deeper than to simply act like something.

No one can be holy alone, but by the strength of the blood of the Lamb and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We can resist. We can overcome the world, the devil, and even our own habit of giving in to peer pressure. We can do it, if we will diligently seek Him.

You do not have to fall into the devastating arena of apostasy. You can remain steadfast and diligent in your faith. You can obey God at all times and in every season. You can walk in dedicated, consistent obedience for the rest of your life.

Chapter Five

The Obedient Life

1 Corinthians 2:13-16 says: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

To understand this verse you must first understand that there are three types of wisdom in the world. There is the wisdom that comes from God, found in James 3:17-18. This is beyond our understanding, and it delivers us from hell's plans and purposes. Then there is devilish wisdom which we find in James 3:14-16. Finally, there is the wisdom of man which we can find in 1 Corinthians 2:4.

In all, James 3:14-18 compares man's wisdom with God's, and it reveals that man's wisdom is sorely lacking. The word "spiritual" in verse 15 means: mature, rooted, established, and faith-filled.

This kind of maturity is only available when we obey God. Obedience produces an honoring of God's will in your life. When you honor God, you recognize

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and follow His rule. More than that, you give Him a place of respect and awe, a place of splendor, and a place of glory and value.

Three Things to Obey

Obedience is the only way for you as a Christian to live a life of maturity, faithfulness, and blessing. You may want these things, but until you humbly submit and obey, they will always be just out of reach.

There are three things that you must obey in order to produce maturity and blessing in your life. The first is the Word. The second is the voice of the Holy Ghost. The third is the counsel of fellowship in the body of Christ.

In order to walk in obedience you must first of all, without a shadow of a doubt, believe in the absolute soundness and unchangeable nature of the Word of God. You have to believe that if God said it, you must do it.

The Word of God is God's will. It is His nature, and it is His revelation of life and it more abundantly. If you cannot obey what is written in the Word, you will not successfully obey anything else in life.

The Word of God is not hard. It is not hiding the truth, but it is the truth. John 1:14 says: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Jesus is the Word, and the Word is Jesus. Jesus is the truth, and the truth is Jesus. Do you want to

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willingly and without hesitation obey Jesus? Then you must willingly and without hesitation obey His Word.

You must also obey the voice of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost helps you to walk in obedience day by day. By this I mean He gives each of us personal convictions that will take us to the place we need to go in the Kingdom. We are all called to obey the Bible, but we may have different convictions that are "musts" in our lives though not necessarily so in the lives of others.

My story about motorcycles is a perfect example. I cannot ride one, but you probably can. There is no "Thus says the Lord" about motorcycles in the Word of God, but there is one written on my heart.

The Bible talks about some people who could eat meat while others could not. Again, it wasn't something that was written, but it was a personal leading that kept each individual where they needed to be in their walk with the Lord.

There are things God has told you to do that are not required of me. And there are things I am required to do that you are not responsible for. We never want to lay our own personal convictions upon one another. At the same time, we never want to disobey and partake of what the Holy Ghost has told us to avoid just because we see someone else has the freedom to do it. Don't ever sacrifice your personal convictions in order to be accepted by others.

If God convicts you about praying an hour before you leave for work, you better do it. Your best friend may not have that conviction, and he will sleep until

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the last minute. Don't stop praying just because your friend is not praying with you. You do what the Holy Ghost tells you to do, and don't worry about everybody else.

Finally, the counsel of the brethren is important to help us obey, but we must be very careful who we choose to listen to. We don't want to take counsel from any old body, but we want to receive it from those that have been proven through the battles of faith. The Bible tells us to prove those who labor among us. Proving takes time, and it requires that the individual be well known.

This means you should not run to your friends for their opinion, unless you want the limitations of their experience. I would much rather hear what a battle-tested, faith-filled, proven man or woman of God has to say than somebody who is in the same boat as I am.

Proverbs 11:14 says: "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

There is wise counsel to be had when you need help to walk in obedience. Wise counsel will direct you to the Word. Wise counsel will ask you if you are listening to the voice of the Holy Ghost. Wise counsel will help you, stand with you, and be a level-headed accountability partner when you need it.

The Narrow Way

As believers we must realize that in an obedient life there is security. There is safety. There is judgment

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that brings us to a place of settled rest. This is what it means in 1 Corinthians 2:15 when it says: "He that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

To live an obedient life, personal judgment is a must. Obedience also demands personal sanctification. This means we are progressively changing from glory to glory. It also means that in order for us to take on more, we have to first put off something.

The Bible tells us that narrow is the way that leads to righteousness and eternal life. As you come down the narrow corridor, as it were, to Christlikeness, there must be less of you and less of everything you are involved in, so that there can be more of Him. There's only so much room in your heart and life. It makes sense that if you want more of Him, you will have to exclude more of the world.

You need to be focused and laser-like in your commitment to the end result, which is obedience in every area. You need blinders on when it comes to the world, situations, the devil, and even your own desires.

Walking the narrow way can be lonely, because not everyone will understand, and not everyone will be pleased with you. That's okay. As long as God is on your side, it does not matter who is against you.

You can be confident in your lifestyle through the judgment of the Word. You can be confident in your personal sanctification. When you have this confidence, you will have boldness to go before the throne to ask for help in your time of need.

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Frankly, when you are in the heat of battle it may be too late to consider your ways. This is why you must maintain judgment and sanctification at all times. Don't wait for trouble to get it right, but get it right now, and when trouble comes you will not be moved.

The Fear of the Lord

Only one thing will keep you on the straight and narrow for life, and it is a healthy dose of the fear of the Lord. Deuteronomy 8:6 says: "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him."

Too many Christians want what I call "mashed potato love". This is the lazy point of view in the church where people actually believe that God dumps all of us into one big vat, like a pot of boiled potatoes, and He mashes us up all together into one big lump. We're all going to Heaven this way, no matter how we live, because surely a loving God would not condemn anyone to hell.

This removes all need to honor God, to obey Him, or to perform anything other than what you want to perform. There is no fear of the Lord in this kind of thinking, which is exactly why it is so dangerous.

The fear of the Lord means: to reverence God or to stand in awe of Him. In other words, we are overwhelmed with who God is; not only the goodness of God, but also His wrath. The Bible clearly says that some will be saved by preaching about His goodness, but it also says that some will be saved by

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preaching about His fire.

It amazes me that the "gurus" of church growth will tell you that you should never talk about sin or hell in your messages because it scares people too much. This is so far removed from the gospel.

Jesus preached about hell, and He preached about sin. Evidently, He didn't go to the church growth seminar! His crowd sizes tell me the seminars are not what they are cracked up to be, because no matter how hard Jesus preached, people still flocked to hear Him.

No matter what, we must reverence God. We must give Him the superior place in our lives. We must stand in awe of His goodness, and we must tremble at His wrath. We must be willing to obey Him at every turn, no matter how hard the battle or how many people try to get us to go another way.

Over the years many men have encouraged me to leave my small town and take my church to a larger city. They have told me it's impossible to build a big church where I am, and that I need to go where the people are. My response is always the same: I'm afraid to move.

I know that God told me to build a church in Botkins, Ohio. For me to do anything else would be disobedience. I truly believe that if I packed up to go anywhere else in the world, God would kill me before I got outside the city limits. I mean it. I fear God, and I will never leave Botkins because of it.

I've had people ask, "But what if God tells you to move?" God told me to build here, and that is His directive to me. I'm not looking for anything else,

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and I am not interested in anything else. I don't know why it's so hard for people to understand. God is not in the mind-changing business. What He says, He means. Where I am is the best place for me to be because God is here. I know if I went anywhere else, I would be going there without Him, and I fear what that would be like.

In today's world, there aren't enough Christians who feel this way. For many, serving God and obeying Him are optional. People decide to go here and go there. They decide to try this and try that. Where is the obedience? Where is the listening for His voice, and then doing what He says? Where is the fear of the Lord?

I thank God that I fear Him. I do not ever want to be on the other side of God's blessing, and so I maintain an honorable reverence for Him. When peer pressure tries to push me the other way, I go back to the scriptures, and I look at what happened to people who disobeyed God. When I remind myself of the consequences of a disobedient lifestyle, I renew my fear, and I resist the pressure.

Teaching the Fear of the Lord

Have you ever seen a five year old child railing on his parents, disobeying and rebelling against them, and then there are no consequences for the child? Why does this happen? It's because the child has been taught there is no reason to fear, knowing there will be no repercussions for his behavior.

Too often parents fall into the trap of allowing

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behavior like this in public because they are embarrassed to punish their children in front of others. They will say, "You wait until I get you home!" But then they get home, they get busy, and they never deal with the behavior in the way that they should.

When we don't correct our children immediately, we create in them a fearless attitude. We teach them by our actions not to respect authority. What they see in us, they will assume they will experience in God, and thereby we sentence them to live without a fear of the Lord.

Children need to be corrected in the moment when they disobey. If you don't, they will not respect you, and ultimately they will not respect God.

Hear me. This is a very important issue because the consequence of sin is clear. The Bible says: "For the wages of sin is death" (see Romans 6:23). Did you read it? Death is the consequence of sin and disobedience.

God loves us and cares for us, but we cannot let the delay of His wrath deceive us into thinking He has winked at our disobedience; neither can we allow our children to develop this assumption based on the fact that we fail to correct them.

Children believe what they experience, not what they hear you say but never back up. Discipline will drive foolishness from the heart of a child, but just as assuredly, failure to discipline will drive foolishness into the heart of a child, such foolishness as the attitude that fearing the Lord is optional.

It's time for the body of Christ to get a healthy

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dose of the fear of the Lord back in our lives, and teaching our children to fear Him is an essential part of our return to this basic doctrine of the church. We need to teach the next generation that when they disobey, it is far deeper than someone not wanting to comply for a moment, but they are entering into rebellion, and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (see 1 Samuel 15:23).

The best teaching tool you will ever have is your example. Live what you want your children to learn. Do what you want them to do, and correct what you don't want them to do. Never leave disobedience or rebellion uncorrected, no matter how distasteful it is to you.

I remember one time when my daughter Nicole was having an issue with her grades. We dealt with it for months, and I laid out the consequences for failing to keep us informed about what was going on. We wanted to help her, but we could only help her by knowing exactly what was happening in her life.

For a season, it seemed like things had finally turned around. All we saw were A's and B's, and every time we asked her about it she said, "It's fine!"

One day I looked under her bed. Lo and behold I found a pile of papers marked with D's and F's. I was livid because I knew my daughter had lied to me. We had warned her about the consequences of lying, and yet she had chosen to do it anyway. Now I had to carry out my promised retribution.

I called her into the bedroom, and she immediately began to say, "Oh, daddy! Oh, daddy!" My wife stood behind her saying, "Now Pete, be merciful." The

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odds were against me, but I had to follow through on what I had said I would do if she ever lied to me.

Nicole began to cry before I ever touched her, and she put an exclamation point on the situation by wetting herself. Still, I knew I had to do what I had to do. I began to cry myself as I put her over my knee. My wife was still begging for mercy, and Nicole was wailing by now. I cried like a baby, but I gave her three good whacks, and then I let her go.

As hard as it was on all of us, she never lied again because she knew I meant what I said. Thank God we never went through that scenario a second time, and thank God my daughter grew to have a healthy fear of the Lord, knowing that I was a reflection of Him on earth.

This is not a game. Disobedience is rebellion. It is much more than simple compromise because its end-goal is to transform you from a godly person to an ungodly one, and it is born in a heart that is fearless toward God.

It's time for the church, the body of Christ, those born in His image and made in His likeness to refuse to tolerate disobedience anymore. If you have to, take yourself into the bedroom and give yourself a few good whacks to knock the slack out of your attitude toward disobedience.

You are a triune being - spirit, soul, and body. It's time for your born again spirit to take your unruly flesh and put it over the knee. Your flesh will wail, just like Nicole did. Your soul (your mind in the process of renewal) will beg for mercy, just like my wife did. You may even cry yourself through the

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whole process, just like I did, but do what you've got to do anyway.

It's time for you to obey the Word, without hesitation. It's time for you to obey the voice of the Holy Ghost, without hesitation. It's time for you to judge yourself, sanctify yourself, and give yourself a good whack now and then. It's time for you to live a lifestyle of consistent obedience in order to prepare for the great and notable day of the Lord.

Jesus is coming for a church without spot or blemish, one that is obedient and sealed in His heart; not one that is promoting their own desires. He is coming for a church that is seeking His will and not their own.

He wondered aloud one time if He would find faith when He returned. I sometimes wonder, too. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. We will obey. We will follow Him to the ends of the earth, if that is what is necessary. Will you come with us? Will you obey?