THE FREEDOM OF OBEDIENCE

INTRODUCTION:

There’s something in all of us that resonates with freedom, but rebels against obedience. For that reason, let’s pose a question: Can there really be freedom in obedience? Now that we’ve had conversations about training our minds and our hearts, we’re ready to deal with the reality of our wills and the choices we make every day. We’ll soon discover that it’s not simply about living with or without rules; it’s more about whose rules we choose to live by.
ICE-BREAKERS:

When you were young, what was the one “rule” in your household that you wished you could change, or the “rule” you constantly rebelled against?

What are some of the early lessons we learned ourselves, or that we teach our kids that can only be accomplished through the hardships of obedience?

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE:

If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)

There is freedom to be found inside of truth, but freedom only comes when we allow that truth to rule and have authority in our lives. As we journey through the three elements of spiritual maturity, you can see how all three must be at work to grow up in our faith. Loving God with our hearts and knowing the truths of scripture is incomplete. This knowledge and intimacy will leave us short of the bigger life unless we also surrender our will to His. As we also train in holy obedience, its then we can begin to experience the fullness of spiritual maturity at work in our lives.
WATCH THE VIDEO

SESSION 5

Use the notes space provided to record key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, work your way through the questions and scriptures in the Group Discussion section.

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GROUP DISCUSSION

First, take turns answering this question: What stood out to you from the teaching video?

After watching the teaching, how would you answer the question we posed earlier: Can there really be freedom in obedience?

Do you struggle with listening to the rules set by others? How is it difficult for you to surrender your will [decisions] to those of someone else?

What do you think of when you consider someone/something having “authority” over you? What parallels can you draw from Pastor Kevin’s story about his son trusting and obeying his instructions?

What would it take for you to give God full authority to speak into and direct your life? What is stopping you from getting to that place?

How can knowing God and knowing the bigger picture help you obey Him? Why is it so hard to obey someone without an established relationship of trust?

Read these passages in Matthew;

“Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do.” (Matthew 7:21).

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”
“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”
(Matthew 6:8, 10)

Why is it important to see Jesus’ emphasis on obedience as a necessary part of our relationship with Him?

How does maturity form in us when we move beyond intimacy with Him and knowledge of His truth and put it into practice through obedience?

When we get serious about obeying Jesus, are we trying to earn something from Him, or are we trying to express something in response to what he has already done for us? Explain your choice.

Read Matthew 7:13-14 (MSG)

“Don’t look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don’t fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.

Most of our immaturity in the arena of obedience can be traced to our responsiveness to anything that offers immediate gratification. Training towards a grown-up faith requires a different approach.

What are examples of ways we embrace short-term commitments and avoid discomfort and pain? Is this the way to spiritual maturity, why or why not?
In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you’ve learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then, think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you’ve learned.

How can you avoid the temptation to “make your own rules” this week?

How can you train this week in all three elements and ensure that your obedience doesn’t become mechanical?

During his teaching Pastor Kevin said, “That is holy obedience. That’s why believers who grow up in their faith strive to consistently follow Jesus’ teachings on money, marriage, family, values, sexuality, relationships, business, and so on. Mature followers of Christ seek to be holy as He is holy. That requires obedience to Him.”

How can you train in your ability to consistently follow Jesus’ teachings when it comes to these topics? Is it knowledge or obedience that might be a next step towards greater maturity? Explain.

How would you explain holy obedience to someone who isn’t here in this session? Moreover, how do we encourage fellow Christ-followers to train harder in obedience?

Since we have previously decided we won’t say “I’ll try to obey God,” what are some points you’ve learned in this session that could serve you as training in obedience to Christ?

Spend some time praying about those you know who might need to hear about the insights you are learning during these sessions. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind people you can pray for.

A step towards greater obedience may require accountability. Consider making a plan of action this week when it comes to simple obedience and ask a friend or spouse to encourage you and check-in. Then, at your next meeting, talk about your progress and challenges.

Close your meeting with prayer. Ask God to help clarify the solid lines and the boxes in the lives of those in your group.
FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Take some time between now and our next meeting to dig again into God’s Word on your own. Explore the Bible passages related to this session’s theme on your own (suggestions would be Genesis 3:1-24 and James 1:21-27). Jot down your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. You may even want to use a Bible website or app to look up commentary on these passages. If you like, share what you learn with the group the next time you meet. For more on obedience, read Chapter 5 of “Grown Up Faith.”
If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

(John 8:31-32)
DAILY DEVOTIONALS

1

James 5:16

Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with (MSG).

Respond:
Is there someone in your life you know you could confess sins to? Have you done that? If not, take a few moments to ask God to send someone like that into your life. And think about being that kind of person for someone else.

2

Philippians 2:13

That energy is God’s energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure (MSG).

Respond:
What are some recent instances in which you know God was at work reinforcing your will to do His will rather than leaning toward your desires?

3

Matthew 7:21

Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—doing what my Father wills (MSG).

Respond:
What does the balance between heart, mind, and will look like in your life right now in your relationship with God? Where are improvements needed?
James 1:25

But whoever catches a glimpse of the revealed counsel of God—the free life!—even out of the corner of his eye, and sticks with it, is no distracted scatterbrain but a man or woman of action. That person will find delight and affirmation in the action (MSG).

Respond:
In what ways is obeying God a life of genuine freedom?

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age” (MSG).

Respond:
How are you taking seriously the need to obey this command from Jesus as He was leaving earth?

Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotional time this week.