

# FATHER KNOWS BEST

## OBEDIENCE



**BIG IDEA:** Many students today balk when they hear the word *obedience*. Frequently the reason for this is they often do not know what true obedience is. To some, it is telling God what they will and will not do for Him. Others think obedience implies giving up fun and personal possessions in order to appear humble and simple. Still others maintain the goal of obedience is adhering to a list of do's and don't's.

True love for Christ is a *response* to His love for us. As we experience His love, we will find our hearts overflowing with love for Him. It is our underlying motives which determine if our actions are done out of love for God and a desire to honor Him or if we do things to make us more acceptable to Him, to others and to ourselves.

This lesson will help your group see that healthy obedience springs from responding to God's love. Healthy obedience is maintained by relying on God's resource for obedience—the Holy Spirit.



**DESIRED LIFE CHANGE:** As a result of this study, the students in your group will begin to see that Christ's love for them is their first and foremost motive for obedience. It's the solid foundation for all other motivations. They will discover that true obedience is rooted in their love for God and desire to please Him in thought, word and action.



**AUDIENCE:** This lesson is designed for students who desire to please God through practical obedience.



**LEADER'S PREPARATION:** Familiarize yourself with Psalm 81. Use a commentary or other Bible study resources for further insight into this psalm. Also, use a Bible encyclopedia (such as the *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*) or a Bible dictionary (such as *Unger's Bible Dictionary*) for your study on *obedience*. Be prepared to share your story related to this topic. Let your group see how these truths have changed your life. NOTE: Familiarize yourself as well with the scripture passages on page 3, the *Proper Motives*, section.



### AT A GLANCE

As your group interacts in this study, they will observe . . .

**This is my WORLD:** I often deal with improper motives for obeying God.

**This is my NEED:** I need to understand that true obedience is a heart attitude that willingly responds to God's love for me.

**This is my ANSWER:** The secret of a fruitful life in Christ results from obedience to His Word and action prompted by the Holy Spirit.

**This is the DIFFERENCE:** True obedience demonstrates my love for God and my desire to please Him.

**This is what I'll DO:** I will choose to obey God's commands in a current situation in which I am having difficulty obeying.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION – WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?



Many students have skewed perspectives when it comes to obedience. Often, those faulty perspectives can be traced to improper motivations for obeying God.


Some improper motives for obedience might be: 1) "I'm afraid of what others might think of me if I don't obey." 2) "God will be angry with me if I don't obey." 3) "I couldn't approve of myself if I didn't obey."

4) "I'll obey to be blessed." (Adapted from Robert McGee, *The Search for Significance*, Dallas: Rapha, 1990, pp. 261-264).

The goal of this study is to help your group recognize improper motivations for obedience and replace these with proper motivations that seek to please God because of His infinite love of us.

**STATE:** In this lesson, we'll explore what God's heart is toward us in the area of obedience.


- 1 **READ**
- 2 **STATE:** Put yourself in Eric's shoes.
- 3 **ASK**
- 4 **ASK:** Why does Eric respond this way? Why does he think this and feel this way?
- 5 **ASK**
- 6 **ASK**
- 7 **READ**
- 8 **STATE:** Often we consciously or unconsciously transfer our thoughts and feelings about authorities to our view of God.
- 9 **ASK**
- 10 **STATE:** Based on our experience with human authority, we might view God as a *drill sergeant*, full of commands and imperatives (*you must, you shall, you will*), or *laissez faire* (passive, uninvolved, with an *anything goes* mentality).


VERSION 2.1

# FATHER KNOWS BEST

**TOOLBOX**  

- THINK
- OBSERVE
- CLOSE-UP
- WRITE
- DISCUSS
- FEELINGS
- BRAINSTORM
- REFERENCE
- PASSAGE
- ARTICLE
- BIG IDEA
- CROSSROAD

ERIC'S STORY


"I'm your father and you'll do what I say," said Eric's father very firmly. Eric slumped away, feeling angry and dejected. He thinks, *I'll do it for now, but one day, I'll be free to do as I please.*

REFLECT

What does Eric  
Do?  
Think?  
Feel?

BRAINSTORM

What other authorities, institutions or rules do we *obey* simply because we *have to*?

Laws (government, traffic)  
Rules (sports)

EXPLORE

Why are these rules given?  
To prevent chaos.  
To provide order.


EXPLORE

In His Word, God has given us many instructions on how to live.

How do they make you feel?

COMPARE/CONTRAST

How can our experiences with human authority affect our view of God?

BRAND


11 **BRAINSTORM:** Other views or ideas.

**TRANSITION STATEMENT:**

Let's examine Psalm 81 and see what insights about obedience we can discover.

1 **READ:** For background information.

2 **READ** Psalm 81.

3 **OBSERVE:** Have the group work through the passage using the 5 W's and the H observation method. Sample questions:

WHO is being addressed in the passage?

WHAT is the occasion?

WHEN did this occur?

WHERE does the psalm take place?

WHY was it written?

HOW does it relate to obedience?

Prepare other observation questions on your own.

Refer to this box as needed to help clarify obedience.

4 **ASK** POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

**His heart:** God's people would hear, listen, submit to, and follow His commands.

**His plan:** satisfy, bless, provide, protect.

**God's people:** stubborn, disobedient, lack of submission to God.

Exploring the Truth

PSALM

A song that was sung at Jewish festivals to celebrate God's acts of deliverance for His people.

PSALM 81

1 Sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob!

2 Begin the music, strike the tambourine, play the melodious harp and lyre.

3 Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast;

4 this is a decree for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob.

5 He established it as a statute for Joseph when he went out against Egypt, where we heard a language we did not understand.

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6 He says, "I removed the burden from their shoulders; their hands were set free from the basket.

7 In your distress you called and I rescued you, I answered you out of a thundercloud; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah*

OBSERVATION

WHO?

WHAT?

WHEN?

WHERE?

WHY?

HOW?

DEFINITION

**Hear/Listen:** (In Hebrew) Shama has the basic meaning "to hear." This is extended in various ways, generally involving an effective hearing or listening: (such as ) to obey.

*Theological Wordbook of Old Testament, p. 938.*

8 "Hear, O my people, and I will warn you— ***if you would but listen to me, O Israel!***

9 You shall have no foreign god among you; you shall not bow down to an alien god.

10 I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. *Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.*

11 "But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me.

12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.

13 ***"If my people would but listen to me,*** if Israel would follow my ways,

14 how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes!

15 Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him, and their punishment would last forever.

16 But you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

*(emphasis added)*

SUMMARIZE

God promised to provide for and protect His people if they would obey Him.

What do you learn about:

God's heart?

God's plan for His people?

God's people? Why?

5 **ASK:** How would you summarize what the psalmist is communicating?

**TRANSITION STATEMENT:**  
It's important to understand the reasons for God's commands.

**2 STATE:** Think of three or four other things that God's Word either commands us to do or not to do. Write them in these boxes. (See sample responses.)

**1 READ**

Relating the Truth

**BIG IDEA**  
 Every command is an expression of God's love for me, given for my protection and provision.

COMMAND	PROTECT	PROVIDE
Don't love money	From temptations and traps, never satisfied	Contentment
Don't cheat	Integrity Relationships Character	Good reputation
Don't engage in premarital sex	Guilt Shame Disease	Healthy foundation for trust and commitment within marriage
Honor your parents	Family harmony Making unwise decisions	Family unity Personal security

**CONSEQUENCES**  
 If I choose my way . . .  
 -Sin  
 -Fear  
 -Rebellion

**CONSEQUENCES**  
 If I obey . . .  
 -Peace  
 -Joy  
 -Contentment

**PROPER MOTIVES**  
 Sin is destructive—Galatians 6:7-8  
 Discipline from God—Hebrews 12:5-11  
 God's commands are good—Romans 7:12  
 Rewards—1 Corinthians 3:11-14  
 Honors God/reflects who we are—1 Peter 2:9  
 Love for God—Matthew 22:34-40

**HIGHEST MOTIVE**  
 His love for me  
 my love for Him

**3 ASK:** By obeying these commands, how will God protect you and provide for you? Write your answers. Share your answers with the group.

**4 ASK:** What are some consequences of obeying or not obeying God's commands?

**5 ASK:** What do you think are some proper motives in wanting to obey God? Allow group members time to write down their answers.

**7 ASK:** What did Jesus say was the highest motive in obeying God? **Read** Matthew 22:34-40.

**6 STATE:** Put a star next to what you believe is the highest motive.

**TRANSITION STATEMENT:** Let's see how you can apply this truth to a current situation you might be facing.

**1 READ**  
Personalize (just for them).

Applying the Truth

**MY LIFE**

What command am I currently having difficulty obeying?

**CONSEQUENCES**

If I obey . . .	If I don't obey . . .
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Because of my love for God and His love for me, I will pursue obedience by . . .

*The blessings of obedience always outweigh the costs of obedience.*  
—Charles Artmann

For further thought:

**EXAMINE**

Examine the life of Christ for other examples of obedience.

Consider: Luke 22:39-46  
John 17:1-6

State His specific acts of obedience.  
What are His motives?

*If Christ be God and died for me, then there is no sacrifice too great for me to make for Him.*  
—C.T. Studd

*To know Christ is to love Him. To love Him is to trust Him. To trust Him is to obey Him.*  
—Bill Bright

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the *New International Version*, ©1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Published by Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**2 RESPOND**  
Allow your group members some time to work through these boxes.

**ACTION POINT:** Follow up individually this week with your group members regarding these issues.

**3 OPTIONAL:** This can be done in your group or individually.

**4 ASK & DISCUSS**



**BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

*The Search for Significance* – Robert McGee (*Rapha/Word*)  
*The Christian and Obedience*– Bill Bright (Step 6 in the series *Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity*, New Life Publications)  
*A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* – Eugene Peterson (*IVP*)



**TOPIC CONNECTIONS**

Related *InterACTA* small group studies: *Book of Jonah series*, *New I.D.*, *No Compromise, No Excuses*, *Opportunity Knocks*, *Walk This Way*.

**DIGGING DEEPER: OPTIONAL GROUP INTERACTION TIME**

How much are you motivated by each of these six reasons to obey God? Reflect on these motivations and rate each on a scale of zero (no motivation to you at all) to 10 (a persistent, conscious, compelling motivation):

- \_\_\_ The love of Christ compels me to obey.
- \_\_\_ Sin is destructive.
- \_\_\_ The Father will discipline me if I continue in a habit of sin.
- \_\_\_ His commands for me are good.
- \_\_\_ I will receive rewards for obedience.
- \_\_\_ Obedience is an opportunity for me to honor God.

Do any of these seem purer or higher to you? If so, which ones? Why? Which of these do you need to concentrate on? What can you do to further develop this motivation?

—(*The Search for Significance*, p. 260).

The following excerpt from Eugene Peterson’s book, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, would be an excellent tool to help your group deepen into the subject of obedience. You may want to copy this to give them at the end of the study and encourage them to read it and be prepared to discuss it at the beginning of the next group meeting for a short review of this topic.

“Christians who master Psalm 132 will be protected from one danger, at least, that is ever a threat to obedience: the danger that we should reduce Christian existence to ritually obeying a few commandments that are congenial to our temperament and convenient to our standard of living. It gives us, instead, a vision into the future so that we can see what is right before us. If we define the nature of our lives by the mistake of the moment or the defeat of the hour or the boredom of the day, we will define it wrongly. We need roots in the past to give obedience ballast and breadth; we need a vision of the future to give obedience direction and goal. And they must be connected. There must be an organic unity between them.” (p. 165)

“For Christian living demands that we keep our feet on the ground; it also asks to us make a leap of faith.

A Christian who stays put is no better than a statue. A person who leaps about constantly is under suspicion of being not a man but a jumping jack. What we require is obedience—the strength to stand and the willingness to leap, and the sense to know when to do which. Which is exactly what we get when an accurate memory of God’s ways is combined with a lively hope in his promises.” (p. 166)

—Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, (InterVarsity Press, 1980), pp. 165-166.

**O V E R V I E W O F M E E T I N G T I M E**



**Planning your group session**

	INTERACTION AS A GROUP	INTERACTION WITH THE STUDY & WORD	INTERACTION WITH GOD	UPCOMING INFORMATION	OTHER IDEAS
	Ice breaker? Refreshments?	Provided. Add personal story?	Worship / Praise / Prayer time?	Next meeting? Special event?	Music / Video?
<b>Allocating your time</b>	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.

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