

FOLLOWING JESUS
A Disciple's Handbook

Lesson 2:
“Following Jesus in Loving and Obeying”

Loving and Obeying Introduction

Read John 14:21-24

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word.” These words, from the mouth of Jesus, have powerfully echoed through the ages into the hearts of disciples who long to love and follow their Master. Loving and obeying are two sides of the same coin. Those who love the Lord Jesus obey the Lord Jesus. In His Supreme Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus charged his followers to make disciples by teaching them to observe (obey) all things He commands.

Jesus has given us the most beautiful example of loving and obeying His Heavenly Father. His disciples diligently followed His example by loving and obeying their Lord. The same wonderful Lord calls us to love Him by obeying Him today.

Loving and Obeying Defined

Understanding *love* in its purest form is only found in the character of God, which we find in the Word of God. The New Testament's primary word for love is *agape* (ah-gah-pay), which describes the Father's love for the world, Christ's love for His followers, and the kind of love Christ demands in return. This kind of love isn't focused on what it can get, but what it can give. This love has a divine source in our lives: the Holy Spirit. (Read Galatians 5:22.) By believing in Jesus Christ, we are born again into God's family and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, supplying us with this love. As we walk by (remain in, live in, abide by) the Holy Spirit, this divine love that we have been shown by the Father and the Son is made readily available for us to lavish back on our Lord and on those around us.

The words for *obedience* in the New Testament have mostly to do with intently listening to a command, vigorously protecting what's been said, and thoroughly carrying out the command to completion. The writers of the New Testament considered being a bond-servant of Jesus their highest honor and most preferred title, and it was inconceivable to claim to love Jesus without diligently obeying Him. Obeying Him was considered the highest honor of love and devotion! Obeying Jesus isn't a dry, sad, burdensome life. (Read 1 John 5:3.) Motivated by the divine fruit of love from the Holy Spirit, obeying Jesus is life's most meaningful and satisfying exploit. It is the high call of this life. It is a portrait we paint, showing the world how good the Lord is and how much we love Him.

Loving and Obeying in the Life of Jesus

Jesus said that He only did what He saw the Father doing and only said what He heard the Father saying. (Read John 5:19; 12:50.) Jesus told His disciples that He constantly remained in the love of His Heavenly Father. How did Jesus so steadily receive and reciprocate such awesome love? He said, "I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." The word *kept* means to attend to carefully, take care of, guard, pay special attention to, watch over, and hold fast to something. Jesus faithfully loved His Heavenly Father by faithfully obeying His Father's commandments.

Loving and Obeying in the Lives of Jesus' Followers

Jesus left His disciples a supreme commission to make disciples by teaching them to observe (keep, guard, and obey) His commandments. (Read Matthew 28:18-20.) The early church and New Testament writers lovingly followed Jesus' example of loving obedience to the Father. Jesus' early disciples were obedient to the apostles' teaching about Jesus. (Read Acts 2:42.) Peter and John were obedient in the face of persecution. (Read Acts 4:19-20; 5:28-29.) The Apostle Peter was obedient to the vision Jesus showed him and the leading of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius' house. (Read Acts 10:1-48.) Jesus showed Paul a vision for his calling and Paul thoroughly obeyed. (Read Acts 26:12-19.) The church at Rome was called to follow the example of the loving obedience of Jesus. (Read Romans 5:19; 6:17.) The writer of Hebrews, the Apostle Peter, and the Apostle James all joyfully called disciples of Jesus to follow Christ's example of loving obedience and to be diligent doers of His Word. (Read Hebrews 5:8; James 1:22-25; 1 Peter 1:2.)

Loving and Obeying in Our Lives

Any of us would feel honored to have an accomplished scientist, a world-class athlete, or a famous author as a close friend. Jesus – Lord of all the universe – calls us into a friendship as intimately close as a branch to a vine. Think about that for a moment. The Lamb of God, whom angels offer praise to day and night, wants to be your intimate friend. The key to this friendship is simple: "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (Read John 15:9-14.)

We must remember that nothing we endeavor to do – even our attempts at loving and obeying Jesus – can be done in our own strength with our own wisdom. We must allow God's truth spoken in His Word to settle into our hearts today. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit." (Read Zechariah 4:6-7.) As disciples of Jesus, we must allow His Holy Spirit to empower and guide us into lives of loving obedience. We obey our Lord Jesus because we love our Lord Jesus.

MEMORIZE: *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (John 14:21)*

KEY TRUTH: By the power of the Holy Spirit, we obey our Lord Jesus because we love our Lord Jesus.

YOUR RESPONSE:

This is how you can respond in loving obedience to Jesus as you apply the truths from this lesson to your life.

- As you daily study the Word, ask the Holy Spirit to show you Christ’s commands. (Read Psalm 119:33-40.)
- Ask in faith for Jesus to give you fresh daily fillings of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Spirit to provide you with the knowledge of what you must lovingly obey, the wisdom concerning how to lovingly obey, and the power and endurance to lovingly obey. (Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.)
- Make repentance for disobedience a constant practice. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any attitudes and actions that “fall short” of loving obedience. Confess, repent, receive forgiveness, and freshly commit to loving and obeying Jesus. (Read Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:9.)
- Actively seek to learn from those who lovingly obey Jesus more than you do. Ask questions. To the degree they imitate Christ, imitate them. (Read 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:17; Hebrews 13:7.)

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Lesson Reinforcement

Review each section from the lesson on the previous pages to fill in each blank below. This will reinforce the truths from this lesson in your life.

1. As we _____ (remain in, live in, abide by) the _____, this divine love that we have been shown by the _____ and the _____ is made readily _____ for us to _____ back on our _____ and on _____ around us.
2. The words for obedience in the New Testament have mostly to do with intently _____ to a command, vigorously _____ what’s been said, and thoroughly _____ the command to _____.
3. Jesus faithfully _____ His Heavenly Father by faithfully _____ His Father’s commandments.
4. The early _____ and New Testament _____ lovingly _____ Jesus’ example of _____ to the Father.
5. As disciples of Jesus, we must allow His Holy Spirit to _____ and _____ us into lives of _____. We _____ our Lord Jesus because we _____ our Lord Jesus.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Life Reflection

Using the journaling section on the pages at the end of this lesson, write in your own words your responses to the following questions.

1. What have you learned and what has impacted you personally from this lesson?
2. In reading the scripture references in this lesson, what are you sensing and seeing the Holy Spirit highlighting and revealing to you that will enable you to better follow Jesus?
3. As a disciple and follower of Jesus, what steps of loving obedience do you need to take to see what you have learned in this lesson become ongoing practices and patterns in your life?