

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 in the hearts of disciples who long to follow their Master and fulfill His divine purposes for their lives. Jesus emphasized that loving and obeying are two sides of the same coin. Those who love the Lord Jesus obey the Lord Jesus. In His Great and Supreme Commission, Jesus charged His followers to make disciples by teaching them to observe (obey) all things He commanded. (Read Matthew 28:18-20.)

The example they were following was His, for Jesus had modeled beautifully how to love and obey by the way He had loved and obeyed His Heavenly Father. His pursuit became their passion in loving and obeying their Lord. The same Lord calls us to love Him by obeying Him today in like manner.

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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 for Himself and others. This kind of love isn't focused on what it can get, but what it can give. This love does whatever it takes for as long as it takes for the benefit of the one being loved. This love flows from a divine source in our lives: The Holy Spirit. (Read Galatians 5:22.) When we come into Christ Jesus by faith, we are born again into God's family, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, supplying us with this divine love. As we walk by (remain in, live in, abide in) the Holy Spirit, this divine love that we have received from the Father through the Son is readily available to richly release back to our Lord and those around us.

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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 servant and follower of Jesus to be their highest and most cherished honor. In their minds, it was inconceivable to claim to love Jesus without diligently obeying Him. Precise and particular attention to the details of Christ's demands were seen as the mandate and mission of every devoted disciple of the Lord Jesus. (☐ Read Romans 1:1-7; Jude 1-2.)

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.) He did this because He loved the Father and sought to meticulously obey Him in every word and deed. Jesus told His disciples that they were to constantly remain in His love as He had remained in the love of the Father. He told them that He remained in the Father's love by keeping all of His Father's commandments, and they would remain in His love by keeping His. (☐ Read John 15:9-20.) This is how Jesus so steadily received and reciprocated God's awesome love. In these scriptures, Jesus uses the word "kept" to describe His complete obedience. 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 in everything.

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Loving and Obeying in the Lives of Jesus' Followers

As stated earlier, Jesus left His disciples a Great and Supreme Commission to make disciples by teaching them to observe (keep, guard, and obey) His commandments. 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.)

In all of these examples, we see Jesus' disciples understanding the principle and power of loving and obeying through an abiding devotion to the will and work of Jesus. Loving and obeying Jesus is voluntary, but never optional for the true disciple. For only in loving and obeying King Jesus is His kingdom rule released and established in the earth.

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Loving and Obeying in Our Lives

Jesus, the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords, the very Ruler of the universe, offers intimate friendship to any and all. The key to this friendship is simple and yet profound: believe Him, love Him, and obey Him in everything. (☐ Read John 15:9-14.) This is our passion, this is our pursuit, this is our prize. But this can never be achieved by our own work or our own wisdom. This must come by the truth of God's Word and the work of God's Spirit in our hearts and lives.

As disciples of Jesus we must allow His Holy Spirit to empower and guide us into the same life of loving obedience that Jesus embodied and exemplified while here on earth. The endless supply of God's love in Christ Jesus is ours for the receiving as we open every corner of our life to the Spirit's work. It is in this and this alone that a life of loving and obeying can be firmly established and deeply enjoyed.

... believe Him, love Him, and obey Him in everything.

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)*

Use the following lines to write out the scripture to help you commit it to memory.

KEY TRUTH: As disciples of Jesus we must allow His Holy Spirit to empower and guide us into the same life of loving obedience that Jesus embodied and exemplified while here on earth.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Actively seek to learn from those who lovingly obey Jesus more than you do. Ask questions. To the degree they imitate Christ, imitate them.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Lesson Review

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

1. The New Testament's primary word for _____ is _____, which describes the Father's love for the _____, Christ's love for His _____, and the kind of love Christ _____ for _____ and _____.
2. The words for _____ in the New Testament have mostly to do with _____ to a command, _____ what's been said, and _____ out the command to _____.
3. Jesus _____ loved His Heavenly Father by _____ His Father's _____ in _____.
4. _____ and _____ Jesus is voluntary, but never _____ for the true _____.

5. As _____ of Jesus we must allow His Holy Spirit to _____ and _____ us into the same life of _____ that Jesus _____ and _____ while here on earth.

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?