

Week 1

A Simple Relationship

SOME OF THE MOST AMAZING LESSONS I have learned have come from children. The 10 year old poverty stricken Haitian girl who smiled at me during a mission trip taught me we can be content in the midst of horrible circumstances. My curious nephew who touches everything in my house reminds me that childlike curiosity stimulates continued growth. And the love I feel for my sons has been the Lord's tool to show me how much He loved me to give up His Son for my sin.

Children teach us the deep things of God. Christ himself saw an invaluable tool in children because He used them to teach His followers.

The very first characteristic we learn about Samuel was that He was just a child when he heard God speak. In a nation of adults God was looking for the simplicity of a child. At 12 years old, Samuel heard God speak.

DAY 1

A Simple Obedience



DAILY BREAD

He called a
child to Him.
Matthew 18:2

After Jackson's quiet time yesterday, books and toys were scattered everywhere. I asked him to clean up his play area. Excited to get up and move on with the rest of his day, he bounded to his feet and quickly put everything in its proper place.

When he finished, I smiled, opened my arms to him, and said, "Come here sweetie." But Jackson didn't want to come to me. In fact, my instruction seemed to repel him. He ran from me!

I marveled that he had easily made the effort to clean up his play area, but he fought against the simple obedience required to come to me. Then I thought, *how like our relationship to God.* We often run from God's request for our attention. We struggle against God's desire that we simply spend time with Him. Why is it sometimes difficult for us to follow the simple instructions the Lord gives us?

The Basics of Obedience

The disciples lived with Jesus. They saw Jesus heal and heard Him preach. They watched Him feed five thousand people with only five barley loaves and two fish. They even saw Him walk on water. Yet when Jesus wanted to teach them about obedience, He didn't dazzle them with miracles. He pointed to the basics of childhood.

In Matthew 18 Jesus used a child's willingness to obey to illustrate the beauty of simple obedience. For three years Jesus had been teaching and preaching. Thousands had heard His messages and seen His miracles. So why did the great teacher and miracle worker use a little one to show adults what true obedience looks like? Jesus called and the child came.

What does Matthew 11:20 tell us about how some adults responded to Jesus' teaching and miracles?

Which of the following best describes how you normally respond to Christ's Word?

- rebel
- question
- immediately obey
- argue with God
- run away
- other _____

Children have several traits that create the openness and willingness the Lord wants adults to recapture. They are naturally curious, using their curiosity to learn. They are excited by learning something new and delight in discovering new truths. That childish excitement is magical. It points to pure faith and total trust. My sister, the Lord wants us to regain these traits from childhood. I want a child's willing response to Jesus to impact my own relationship with Him.

What steps of simple obedience is the Lord requiring of you? (I've included examples from my list in the margin.)



- serve my family graciously, willingly, and as a priority
- regularly spend time with God
- control eating habits
- honor my spouse's authority

Let's commit to obeying the Lord when we hear His voice. We must repent for the times we have ignored, fought against, or criticized His instructions.

The Sacrifice of Obedience

Unfortunately, balking against the Lord's instructions often seems easier than following them because obedience requires sacrifice. While our personal sacrifices may differ, they will always be required of us.

Look back at the list I shared with you of simple ways the Lord has asked me to obey Him. To fulfill those, I must make some sacrifices.

- To serve my family, I must often forfeit my own desires.
- To spend time with Him regularly, I must say "no" to other activities.
- To control my eating, I must not overindulge.
- To control my spending habits, I must not buy every outfit that turns my head.
- To honor my husband's authority, I must release the desire to be in control.

Sacrifices often feel like I am giving up something valuable. I have to remind myself that joy and freedom always lie in obedience. Each of the sacrifices in my list ultimately results in my good. Each of the issues I surrender really contain poison that, if kept, will kill the wonderful future God has for me. Author Eugene Peterson expressed the idea wonderfully: "You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits" (Rom. 6:1, *The Message*).

What sacrifices are you currently making in obedience to the Lord?

Look closely at the following passages. What sacrifices did these individuals make by walking obediently with God?

Peter and the apostles (Acts 5:17-29,40) _____

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3:14-19) _____

Abraham (Gen. 22:1-3) _____

Joseph (Gen. 39:10-20) _____

Hosea (Hos. 1:2-3,3:1-3) _____

The Reward of Obedience

Obedience will not always be easy, but it will always be worth it. Obedience to God always brings reward.

Describe how the characters in the previous activity were rewarded.

Peter (Acts 5:40-42) _____

Daniel and his friends (Dan. 3:27) _____

Abraham (Gen. 22:16-18) _____

Joseph (Gen. 39:21; 41:41-42) _____

Hosea (Hos. 3) _____

Carefully read Deuteronomy 28:1-14. List the rewards promised to those who obey the Lord.

TAKE ACTION

By following the Lord in obedience, we are preparing or positioning ourselves to hear His voice. By sacrificing our own desires for His, we are aligning ourselves with His will and opening the door to receive His blessings. Remember the example of the little boy in Matthew 18? The disciples had a more intimate relationship with Jesus than the child did, yet Jesus chose the child to illustrate simple obedience. This shows us that intimacy with God doesn't always translate to practical obedience

In what areas do you feel your relationship with God is lacking in practical obedience?

Write a prayer asking God to help you become more obedient to Him in these areas.

DAY 2 A Simple Beginning



You've chosen this Bible study because you want to prepare yourself to hear God's voice and receive wisdom from Him. Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 respond to that need with the same basic message: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." In fact, the phrase "The fear of the Lord" is so important to the quest for spiritual wisdom that Solomon repeated it 11 times in Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." In Hebrew, "the fear" is *Yir' ah*, meaning "to reverence or respect." "Beginning" translates to *re' shiyth* which means "the essence." And "knowledge," *da'ath* in Hebrew, means "perception, discernment, spiritual understanding."

Based on these definitions, rewrite the phrase "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" in your own words in the margin.