

Intro

Question - do you always obey everything your parents / those who look after you, say and tell you to do? I certainly did... (Ahem, maybe not!)

A Story (replace with a personal one as appropriate)

One time, my parents went away for a couple of days. They had a strict no-alcohol policy, especially in the house. However, when you're left at home for a couple of days, having some alcohol seemed a good proposition, so that night myself and my brother got some pretty easily. We invited a mate round and watched a movie and were feeling pretty good about ourselves. Our mate decided to go to the garage around the corner to get some food. He nearly dropped his food on the floor when he saw my parents at the garage. He legged it back to our house and gave us the bad news - 'your parents are back'. We were totally confused 'weren't they supposed to be in Bournemouth..? How.. What..?' A great panic overtook us as we knew we'd be in trouble if any alcohol was found. We didn't quite know what to do we were so frantic. Cue the quickest ever operation to remove any traces of alcohol from the house. We ran outside and chucked the empty cans in the hedge, pushed other cans behind cushions and under the sofa frantically. Next minute my parents arrived in the house with 3 suspicious looking individuals grinning nervously at them. They knew something was up, but never did find out what! As they unloaded their bags, we made off with the hidden cans. It turned out their friends were ill, so they'd come straight back home without calling us to let us know.

Although we didn't get caught, the disobedience created panic as we knew we'd done wrong. We were fortunate to 'get away' with it, although it didn't take away the guilt and the feeling that we'd knowingly disobeyed and deceived them. When I became a Christian a few years later, I recounted the story and apologised to my mom. She laughed!

Obedience

Obedience is a really simple thing that God asks us to do. Well, it's simple really, but we often do a pretty good job making it into something hard. Other times, what God asks us to do is hard, but he always provides the strength, help and the way to make it happen. Obeying means we do what God wants, we stay on the right path with him, there is no guilt, and God continues to lead us and move us onto the next stage.

Before we start today, is there something God has asked you to do that you have not done?

Exercise in Obedience

Ask for a volunteer and take them to a corner of the room. Tell them that they have to obey you in order to get the prize. Then blindfold them. Once you do this, ask the other young people to sit around the room in various places. Then go and stand in the opposite corner and call out to the young person to follow your instructions. Navigate them to you by maneuvering them around the other young people. This is a test of obedience. Once they safely arrive, give it up for them and give them a prize! (And remove the blindfold!)

Words of Jesus - John 14.21-24

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

So Jesus clearly links loving him with obedience. Jesus is saying 2 things here:

Firstly, Jesus says - if you love me, then you will obey me. When you obey me, you show that you love me.

If you think about a man and his wife. If the man says to his wife, 'I love you' but doesn't do anything to show that he loves her, he needs to make a change! If his wife asks, 'can you pick up some shopping' or 'would you do the washing up' or 'can you put the clothes in the washing machine' - and he never does anything like that, it shows he does not truly love her. However, if he does as she says, he is saying 'I love you - I have agreed to be your husband and I want to show my commitment to you' (even when he doesn't feel like it!!)

Sometimes people say, 'the proof is in the pudding'. This basically means that the proof of something is demonstrated in what you do / the results of what you do. If you say you are a great worship leader, but never lead worship - then your claim is a false one! The same must be true with our relationship with Jesus - when he calls, we must obey.

Secondly, Jesus is saying that when you love Jesus, obedience will naturally flow out of that. In the Old Testament, God had to say, 'thou shalt do this and thou shalt not do this' to make himself clear to Israel. Fortunately, Jesus made a new way to get us right with God. Now we can come into God's presence because of what Jesus did on the Cross. Our relationship with Jesus is the key. This is a relationship of love and obedience - a place where obedience willingly springs up out of your

heart and whole being, because of what Jesus has done. This is like an overflow of love for God and what he has done in your life - and it should become more natural the older you get, as you grow as a disciple of Christ. Think about Godly older people you know - their love for God means they do all kinds of amazing things for God.

If we think of the example of man and wife again - if a man really loves his wife, he will buy her flowers, do little nice things for her, do tasks around the home, help share her burdens, listen to her. The same should be true for you as a Christian in your relationship with God and what he calls / asks you to do.

Movie Clip

From 'Narnia'. The clip starts Chapter 22 at 1:54:37 and goes through to 2:00:23.

The start point is the evil queen attacking 2 birds in the air and ends when Lucy goes off to use her potion to heal people injured.

Be aware this is a battle scene with some slight gory-ness. The movie is rated a 12 (UK).

Basically, Peter tells Edmund to go back and look after the girls. Edmund sees a chance to kill the evil queen and takes it. However, she defeats him and he is left mortally injured. Fortunately, after Peter then battles the queen, Aslan arrives and wins the day. Lucy then uses her potion to heal Edmund. Peter hugs Edmund and says, "when will you learn to do as you're told..?!"

The purpose of the clip is to show that obedience is a good thing. Edmund disobeyed in his quest to try and help, as well as because of his independent minded-ness. After this episode, Edmund does what Peter says. he has learned obedience and is all the better for it. No matter what our motives, or what good we think we can do, we must always obey God first and foremost. Not obeying could even cost us our life, but will certainly cost us (and God's kingdom) something.

Elijah

Elijah was a man who obeyed God. If you want to go places then obeying God is the way forward, believe! If we look at 1 Kings chapter 17 through to 1 Kings chapter 18, we find that God kept telling Elijah to obey him, and each time, Elijah did exactly as God told him. This is a great example for us today.

Elijah had been to the King Ahab. King Ahab was another ungodly King, whose wife, Jezebel, from a place called Tyre worshipped a god called baal. To please her and her father, Ahab built an altar to this detestable god baal and led the nation into sin. God had said many times to the

people of Israel and Judah that idol worship was detestable - and they knew that. So when Elijah went to Ahab and had told him in verse 1 that there was to be no rain in the land, he was doing a very brave thing.

1 Kings 17.2-6 - Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

So we see the start of a very clear pattern that continues on. The word of the Lord came to Elijah, he told Elijah what to do and then we read, "So Elijah did what the Lord had told him." **Do you obey God so easily and freely?**

Elijah did exactly what the Lord had told him. He went where God did, he actioned what God said. Because of his obedience, God could take him on to the next step. We read about that from verse 7..

1 Kings 17.7-10 - Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him: "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." So he went to Zarephath.

As Elijah had prophesied in verse 1, there was no rain in the land. But God had a plan and through his obedience, Elijah would survive the lack of rain and its consequences. Again, we see that God spoke to Elijah, told him what to do, Elijah obeyed and therefore God was with him. In this case, God made direct provision for Elijah and the widow in Zarephath. **Elijah knew the voice of the Lord, heard the voice of the Lord and responded to the voice of the Lord. What about you and me today?**

If you do not obey God and hear his voice, how will you know what God is calling you to do next? God doesn't generally keep speaking to people who don't listen or obey what he says.

If Elijah had not obeyed God, he may have starved - the widow may have starved - Elijah wouldn't have been round to save the life of the widow's son as God used him to heal the son. **If you disobey God, it has consequences for you and for others.**

In the video clip, the disobedience of Edmund nearly cost him his life. What if a coach in the NBA (basketball league) had only a few seconds to make a play that would help his team win the game. He takes a time-out, gathers the team around him and pulls out a play that he is sure will win

the game. The players know the play and agree to make the play. However, if one key member of the team doesn't do their part by perhaps not putting up a screen or make a move - he disobeys and the consequences are that he loses the game for him and his team. Don't be like this. **Stay on track, stay with God's game plan and do what he says.**

1 Kings 18 - After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land." So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab.

Sometimes, it takes time for God to speak for the next move. We can feel like we're stuck in one place or situation. The temptation is then to go and do something else. But if God has spoken and told you to do something (and you keep right with him and listen to his voice) and he does not speak for a while, it's often a sign that you are doing what God wants. Within that, he may give you a lot of freedom. For example, Elijah was with the widow in Zarephath. We don't know what he was doing, the Bible doesn't say. But probably he was doing some work - maybe tent-making, or some kind of woodwork, or some kind of agricultural work. We don't know. He had freedom within what God had called him to do. But God had told him to go to Zarephath and that's where he stayed until God told him to go to King Ahab.

Maybe God has told you to do something. You've obeyed him. But now you don't feel like you're in the right place and are seeking God with all your heart. You're staying close to him, praying and reading the Bible. But you're not sure what to do. You probably need to wait, while pushing some doors as well. But you have freedom in that. For example, if God has called you to live somewhere, he gives you the freedom of what job to do, which friends to make etc. Sometimes we need to step out and God will guide us.

Elijah was being built up and readied for the next stage. This would be to go to the King, then have the big battle with the prophets of baal. Elijah would see God do a great victory in an amazing and supernatural way. This was part of his life's destiny. But Elijah had to wait while God aligned other things, to come together at the right time and right way - so that God would be glorified and the very evil prophets of baal destroyed.

God may be saying to you, 'wait, I'm sorting out stuff you can't see and putting it all together in my time. Wait where you are, learn the lessons that I'm teaching you and in time, it will all come together and your life's destiny will be fulfilled.'

End - Time of Prayer.

If you give a few options about what God might be saying, so that the young people / leaders / you can respond.

- Time of saying sorry for those who have disobeyed God, and turning around 180 degrees so that they will obey God.
- A new determination to obey God and do what he says, no matter what the cost.
- Asking God what is the next step in their life.
- Asking what they should be doing where they are now.
- Seeking God in a new and fresh way.