



Global College of Ministry

EXPLORE

The Christian & Christian Living

He Gave All He Had

“...But such as I have Give I thee...”

(Acts 3:6)

Peter and John, on their way to pray, met a lame man begging for money. Peter said, “I don’t have any money to my name, but what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus rise up and walk!” What is interesting about this story is that Peter didn’t just stop at, “I don’t have any money.” He gave what he had to give. As a result of his willingness to give, the lame man was healed, and gave a testimony in the church.

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7)

The story is often told of Mary and Joseph making the long journey to Bethlehem for the census. Mary and Joseph are turned away by an innkeeper who proclaims, “There is no room for you in the Inn.” Songs have been written about this, and messages preached. As the Innkeeper turns the couple away, he remembers that he has a stable, and offers for them to stay there. The Innkeeper is blamed for being insensitive to Mary’s condition and not being able to discern that it was the King of Kings that would be born in that stable. However, there is another aspect. He could have sent the family away from his premises all together. But, when he saw Mary’s condition and assessed the situation, he offered the only available space in his inn - a stable. The Innkeeper’s suggested response reminds us that:

God never requires anything more from us, than what we are able to give.

How often have we declined to offer what we had because we didn’t think it was good enough? He can take our little and make it grow just by His touch. One man has said, “Little is much when the Master is in it.” How many times have you failed to give what you had because you did not feel it was enough? Even in areas of financial giving, be

reminded that if you can’t do something BIG, why not do something SMALL? If we all would give a LITTLE then a LOT would be accomplished. Don’t do NOTHING just because you can’t do EVERYTHING. And when it comes to you, God only expects you to give what you have. The few talents that you have when yielded to the Lord Jesus can accomplish much. You may feel that you are not rich enough, talented enough, or smart enough to be used of the Lord. Put these feelings aside, surrender yourself to God, and tell the devil, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Philippians 4:13) In the “Parable of Talents” mentioned in Matthew 25:14-30 everyone was given talents “according to his several ability.” (Verse 15). Not all had the same amount of talents but those who used theirs received more. The man who did not use his talent had it taken away from him and given to another. It has been said, “If you don’t use it; you lose it!”

“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Isaiah identified himself as a man that was undone, a man of unclean lips and living in the midst of people of unclean lips. After being touched by God, God looked for a man to send and Isaiah responded “Here am I; send me.” (Isaiah 6:5-8)

What would have happened if the boy with the lunch said, “I have some bread and a couple of fish; but what are they among so many”? (John 6:9) What would have been the rest of the story if he had insisted, “I have a little lunch but I’m not going to make it available. I can’t go hungry”? Instead he gave what he had and a miracle of supply took place; thousands were fed.

What would have happened if Joseph had said, “I’m just a carpenter. The Messiah cannot be born into my home. I couldn’t possibly take care of him?”

Moses said, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” (Exodus 3: 11)

“...Lord, I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” (Exodus 4:10) Finally Moses submitted and succeeded in leading the people out of Egypt. He became a great leader. He gave what he had!

Jeremiah said, “Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.” (Jeremiah 1:6) He finally yielded to the will of God and gave what he had!

Jesus observed people giving in the offering one day. Rich people cast in much money. Along came a widow lady who threw in two mites. He called his disciples and said, “This poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” (Mark 12:43-44)

How often have you approached the offering basket or had it passed to you and you have been embarrassed at how little you had to give. Jesus only expects us to give what we have to give.

Peter confessed in Luke 18:28 that the disciples had “left all” to follow Jesus. Jesus then comments that those who have left all will “receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” (Matthew 18:30)

Missionaries in Africa are often amazed with all the varieties of gifts that people can bring to a thanksgiving or harvest service. They are so honored with all the gifts the precious saints bring when they visit their churches. In both cases, there could be eggs, live chickens, vegetables, yams, goats, fruits, etc.

One missionary tells of a thanksgiving service where many gifts had been delivered including a huge basket. When it looked like all of the gifts had been given, the pastor prepared to go on with the service. He paused as a skinny, frail old man made his way to the front of the church. Empty-handed he went to the large woven basket and climbed inside. With no offering to bring the man had decided to give the only thing he had - himself. Giving ourselves is the most important gift that we can bring to the Lord. It is the gift of gifts.

A story entitled "For Always" by Will Fish, relates the activities of two teachers working in an orphanage in Russia. One day they were doing an art project with the children. Three small pieces of cardboard were given to each of the 100 children and they were to make a manger. Each child was given a small piece of cloth to make a little baby. As one of the teachers inspected the project he found a little boy finished with the task. As he looked into the little cradle he was startled to see two babies in the manger. When asked to explain why the two babies were in the manger the child began to repeat the story of Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus in the manger. He began to make up his own ending for the story. "And when Mary laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no mama and I have no papa, so I don't have a place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give him...I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I could keep him warm, that would be a good gift. So I asked Jesus, 'If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?' And Jesus told me; 'If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me.' So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him - for always. As Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks...The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon or abuse him, someone who would stay with him-FOR ALWAYS!"

When we sing, "I Surrender All!" we are giving our greatest gift, ourselves, and we can stay with Jesus- FOR ALWAYS!"

If You Do This...

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

Jesus Will Do This...

"...Observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

"What can I give Him, Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him?
Give Him my heart."
(C. Rossetti)

Study Questions

1. What did Jesus promise to those who “left all”? _____

2. Why should the Innkeeper not be faulted for putting Mary and Joseph in the stable rather than in the inn? _____

3. Give an example of someone who gave what they had to give in the Bible? _____

4. What excuse did Moses give when God called him? _____

5. What did the African man give in the Thanksgiving/Harvest service? _____

6. What do we learn from Misha’s story? _____

7. What are we doing when we sing, “I Surrender All”? _____

8. What would happen if we all gave a “little”? _____

9. What happened as a result of what Peter and John gave to the lame beggar? _____

10. What is the other perspective of the way we should look at the Innkeeper’s suggested response? _____

“Lord, I Will Give You All!”

God Lovers

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach”
(Acts 1:3).

“It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first,
to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3).

You find my name in two books of the New Testament. In fact, you can search the entire Bible through and find my name only twice. What is my name?

Do you need another hint? Luke wrote to me in Luke and Acts. You’ve got it. You probably figured out my name by looking at the key scriptures above; an easy give away. My name is Theophilus. You can call me “Theo” for short.

Who am I? That is a more difficult question. Some have argued my name is a general title or term for all believers. The view here is that I am not a real person but a generic “John Doe” or a common day name like “Kofi.”

Many claim that I am a God-fearer—a Gentile proselyte into the Jewish religion—or that the Book of Acts was written to people like me called “God-fearers.” My name, by the way, means “one who loves God”, “lover of God” or “beloved of God.” I am a God-lover!

Others speculate that my name refers to anyone who is trying to learn about God. Luke’s agenda in writing to me (they suppose) was that I might know the certainty of things I have been taught. Luke wanted me to be convinced about what Jesus did on earth, and continues to do through His church.

I have also heard, with interest, that some think I am a Greek gentleman, well educated, and interested in the gospel.

A few people have me penned as a Roman officer and say that the name “Theophilus” was given at baptism. They think I am a secret disciple and my name hides my true identity since it was dangerous for a Roman officer to be a Christian.

The personal and informal way that Acts is written has led most people to believe that I am a personal friend to Dr. Luke.

Some have guessed I am an official in the government who has been warned of the dangers of Christianity to society. The thinking here is that I am associated with a case being brought against Paul. They suppose I was not a believer in Jesus or an inquirer into truth. Lloyd Ogilvie in his masterpiece *Acts: The Communicator’s Commentary* suggests that this theory misses the

impact of Luke-Acts as dynamic teaching needed for a new Christian to be grounded in the faith. That's a thought! Why would a Roman official want to be referred to by a Christian name (and "lover of God" at that)?

He claims, "The style of Luke-Acts is not an argument against false information, but forceful teaching to a receptive learner. Luke warned Theophilus to understand the full story of what Jesus began to do and teach, as well as what He was continuing to do. He desired this "lover of God" to experience the fullness of what God in Christ had done and could do in his life. The same is true for us." Yeah, man. Now you are talking!

He believes that at the beginning of Acts, we are called to live in the skin of Theophilus. There probably is a little bit of Theophilus in all of us, or there should be. We all need to have a desire to know God, look into what He is doing, and to be a part of it. Paul had an intense desire like that. He wanted to know God.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Look at how the *Amplified Bible* puts it: "(For my determined purpose is) that I may know Him (that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly), and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection (which it exerts over believers), and that I may share His sufferings as to be continually transformed (in spirit into His likeness even) to His death, (in the hope)" (Philippians 3:10, AB).

Ogilvie further testifies, " I have read Acts hundreds of times in my own devotional time, studied it in the Greek, and written and spoken about it for twenty years, but still feel I have only begun to grasp what it means to my life as a contemporary Theophilus, one both beloved by God and a lover of God."

"So much of the church today is where Theophilus was when he was the first to read the stirring account of Acts. We have been instructed in the things Jesus did, but know far too little about what He continues to do today as indwelling Spirit and engendering power."

John W. Mauck, in *Paul on Trial* supposes that Luke expected me to read his first book and knew it would cause many questions about what happened to Jesus after He ascended into heaven. As I was reading one book John thinks, he (Luke) was writing the other.

I am surprised to find out what so many people think about me. Mauck suggests I am an investigator charged with the responsibility of gathering information for Paul's trial. He thinks I might even be a Roman lawyer hired to represent Paul in court. Luke and Acts were supposedly written to supply me with all the facts of the case.

When it comes right down to it nothing is really known about me. I remain a mystery. That brings me to the reality of the situation, and the main point of this lesson. It does not matter who I am. What counts is that I am a God lover: heart, mind, and soul.

Perhaps, the emphasis should not be on who I am but on what my name means. My name (like many others in the Bible and modern day) identifies a person, and causes him to stand out in the crowd.

- Names may come from prevailing circumstances at the birth of the child.
- Parents look at the meaning of the name. It identifies the character that parents want the child to copy.
- People have the tendency to live up to their name.
- A name could be something to inherit (a heritage).

Who is a lover of God? Someone that...

1. Has God at heart, and in his heart (Acts 13:22).
2. Obeys the Word of God (John 14:21; 21; 1 John 5:3; 20-21). He is a doer of the Word.
3. Conforms his life to the will of God (1 John 2:15-17).
4. Loves others (1 John 4:20).
5. Draws closer to God (James 4:8).

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38).

What a privilege to be “beloved of God”, the focus of God’s affection and the recipient of His loving-kindness. Who can explain it? I can’t. It’s a mystery. One thing is sure. I am a God-lover. What about you?

Study Questions

1. Who did Luke write to in the books of Luke and Acts? _____

2. What is the meaning of his name? _____

3. What does Lloyd Ogilvie claim about the style of Luke-Acts? _____

4. What did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 2:2? _____

5. According to Acts 1:3 what is contained in the Book of Acts? _____

6. Who is a lover of God? (Provide three examples used in this lesson) _____

7. What does a name do for a person? _____

8. According to Ogilvie, much of the church today is where Theophilus was when he first read Acts. Explain. _____

9. What is the main point of this lesson? _____

10. What is a God-fearer? _____

Additional Notes

Doing Good for Others

“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor”

(Acts 9:36-37, *NIV*).

Someone asks you to give a reference for an associate. The question is asked, “Is your friend someone that is a giver in society (often doing good for others) or someone out to see how he can take advantage of others?”

Dorcas was well well-known for doing good, and helping others. When she became sick and died her friends, mostly widows, prepared her body for burial. Peter was visiting nearby, and was asked to come. He immediately came, and was escorted into the room where Dorcas’ body lay. Her faithful friends were weeping and wailing. What would they do now without anyone to care for them? They showed Peter the fruits of Dorcas’ kindness; clothes she had made for them. Peter asked the widows to leave the room. He knelt, prayed and spoke directly to the body, “Dorcas get up!” She opened her eyes, and sat up. He took her by the hand, and helped her to her feet. Her friends were thrilled to see her alive.

What is a Christian? *Guideposts* define a Christian in four ways:

- A mind through which Christ thinks.
- A heart through which Christ loves.
- A voice through which Christ speaks.
- A hand through which Christ helps.

“The Christian who is pure and without fault, from God the Father's point of view, is the one who takes care of orphans and widows, and who remains true to the Lord-not soiled and dirtied by his contacts with the world” (James 1:27, *TLB*).

A Christian should manifest the fruit of the Spirit. The list includes, among others love, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. (See Galatians 5:22-23.)

Someone has said “It’s good to be a Christian and know it, but it’s better to be a Christian and show it.”

When was the last time you showed the world you were a Christian? What was the last unselfish act (act of kindness) that you did for someone else; something you did expecting nothing in return? Do you live your life in a way that people can tell you are a Christian without you telling them? Actions speak louder than words. Does the phrase, “Big talk, but no action” sometimes describe you?

Make Me Like Joe

Tony Campolo in *More Stories for the Heart* tells a story that beautifully illustrates doing good for others. Joe was a drunkard who was miraculously converted to the Lord. Prior to conversion he had gained a reputation as a dirty drunkard for whom there was no hope, only a miserable existence living on the street. Following his conversion to a new life with God, everything changed.

Joe became the most caring person in his local church. He did whatever needed to be done. This included sweeping the church, cleaning the toilets, or taking care of the children's Sunday school. He did each job with a smile, and a feeling of gratitude for the opportunity to help. He could be counted on to visit the homeless, witness to drug addicts, and to help those who wandered off the street and into the church. He took care of those who could not, or would not, care for themselves.

One Sunday morning, when the pastor was preaching an evangelistic message to the typical crowd, there was a man who stood, and came down the aisle to the altar. He knelt to pray, crying out to God to help him to change. The repentant man kept shouting, "Oh God! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe!"

The pastor leaned over and said to the man, "Sir, I think it would be better if you prayed, 'Make me like Jesus.'"

The man looked up at the pastor with a questioning expression on his face and asked, "Is he like Joe?"

God uses great preachers but he also uses those with the gift of kindness, the ministry of helps or service. (See Romans 12:7.) He uses ordinary Christians whose lives reflect His image.

Dorcas made a big difference in her community. She was an appropriate example of a Christian life yielded to service. Dorcas shows us a glimpse of what a Christian woman ought to be.

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy" (Proverbs 31:20).

The Bible refers to her as a "certain disciple" (Acts 9:36). This is the only time a woman in the New Testament was ever referred to as a disciple. This is not to suggest that women are seldom referred as disciples, but to show the respect Dr. Luke had toward a life marked with unselfish service and sacrifice to others.

She was always doing kind deeds and helping the poor. It was her lifestyle. The *NASU* says, "This woman was abounding with deeds of kindness, and charity, which she continually did."

Dorcas loved God! Her love for God was also reflected in her genuine love and concern for others.

How Can You Identify a Disciple?

A disciple is someone who embodies the qualities of love.

"What does it look like? It has hands to help others, feet to hasten to the poor and needy, eyes to see misery and want, ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like." (Augustine)

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:16-19, *NIV*).

What we would be willing to do for God is determined by what we would be willing to do for others.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

"The Christian who is pure and without fault, from God the Father's point of view, is the one who takes care of orphans and widows, and who remains true to the Lord-not soiled and dirtied by his contacts with the world" (James 1:27, *TLB*).

Vance Havner once said, "Too many Christians live their lives inside their heads; it never gets out through hands and feet and lips." Dorcas showed she was like Christ with her hands, feet, and lips.

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

Dorcas was “full of good works” (Acts 9:36) like a tree that is full of ripened fruit. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* points out, “Many are full of good words, who are empty and barren in good works; but Tabitha was a great doer, no great talker.” The smallest deed done is better than the greatest intention. We should be full of good words, backed up by our good deeds.

“They were alms-deeds, not which she purposed and designed and said she would do, but what she did; not what she began to do, but which she did, which she went through with, which she performed the doing of...This is the life and character of a certain disciple, and should be of all disciples of Christ; for, if we thus bear much fruit, then are we his disciples indeed.” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*)

You may ask, “What about me? I am a poor person, and have little money. If I give it to others I will not have any to take care of my needs.”

You break poverty by giving generously. Poverty is the fear of letting go of the little you have and that you will go without. The widow had only two small coins, but she gave all she had.

Jesus calling His disciples to Him, said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:43-44, *NIV*).

She could have excused herself from giving, “I am helpless! I am a poor widow lady.” But she gave what she had. Jesus never expects more from us than what we are able to give.

Dorcas was not merely commended for the money she gave, but for the deeds she did. It does not require money to do kind things for others. You can work with your hands, or walk with your feet, for the benefit of others. Dorcas was involved in making clothes. What talent do you have that can be freely shared with others?

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

When we obey God’s commandments we receive His blessings. His blessings are based on conditions, “I did! God did!” We do what God requires and He blesses us.

“For if you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give—large or small—will be used to measure what is given back to you” (Luke 6:38, *TLB*).

“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:8, *NASU*).

Dorcas understood the promises of God’s Word.

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Proverbs 19:17).

“He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse” (Proverbs 28:27).

In closing, let me share the words of a precious song:

“Doing good for others,
Who cannot help themselves.
Giving without thinking of return.
This old world of ours,
Would be a better place to live
If doing good was what we tried to learn.”
(*The McGruders*)

Study Questions

1. In the Book of Acts which lady was known for doing good for others? _____

2. What did the weeping widows show Peter when he came to the funeral at Joppa? _____

3. What did Peter say to the body? _____

4. How does *Guideposts* define a Christian? _____

5. According to Luke 6:38, what happens when you give? _____

6. Using the story of Dorcas as an example, what can be done with our talents? _____

7. Who is a Christian according to James 1:27? _____

Our Lifestyle Statement

(Adapted from Raymond Woodward's *Life Course 101*)

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”
(John 10:27).

Many people say that they believe the Bible, but beliefs are not worth much unless they are translated into **ACTIONS**. Based on what the Bible teaches, we feel very strongly about the following practices ...

A *attitude of submission*

The Bible teaches that every believer needs to be a faithful and committed member of a local church family, and strongly emphasizes that we must be submitted to God, to the spiritual leadership He has placed in His body, and to one another. By placing ourselves in submission to our pastoral leadership, we receive the spiritual protection and accountability we need.

“Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.” (Hebrews 13:17)

P *priesthood of every believer*

The Bible teaches that every Christian is called to “full time” Christian service, regardless of their vocation. We emphasize the truth that every believer is a minister by encouraging every member to find a place of service in the local church. Every believer has direct, personal access to God through the Bible and prayer.

“But you are God’s chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests and a holy nation. God has brought you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Now you must tell all the wonderful things that he has done.” (1 Peter 2:9)

O *overcoming spiritual life*

We understand that the only way possible to live the Christian life is by the power of the Holy Ghost within us. So we practice the daily spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible reading, and cultivate a dependence on God’s Spirit to enable us to overcome sinful thoughts and actions and do what is right.

“So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what

the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict.” (Galatians 5:16-17)

S *sole authority of the Bible*

Since God’s Word is the only completely reliable and truthful authority, we accept the Bible as our manual for living. Our first question when faced with a decision is, “What does the Bible say?” We practice daily Bible reading, Bible study, and Bible memorization. The Bible is the basis for all we believe.

“The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and helps us to do what is right.” (2 Timothy 3:15)

T *tithing to support God’s work*

The Bible teaches us to practice tithing for the support of the church, its leadership and ministries. We realize that giving ten percent of our income is God’s Biblical standard. Tithing is not the same as giving an offering. The ten percent tithe belongs to God already, and anything we give above that is an offering.

“A tithe of everything you produce belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.” (Leviticus 26:30)

O *outward appearance*

Real Christianity affects every area of our lives, major and minor. When the Bible’s standards of godly appearance are present in a believer’s life, they indicate that a real internal change has indeed taken place. In addition to glorifying God, our personal outward holiness has the effect of testifying to others around us.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

L *lifestyle of evangelism*

It is the responsibility of every Christian to share the good news of the Gospel with those God brings us into contact with. Witnessing is not only the words we say, but also the life we live in front of others. We should use every opportunity to influence others toward Christ and His church.

“Honor Christ and let him be the Lord of your life. Always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope.” (1 Peter 3:15)

I *individuality of every believer*

We understand that every believer grows at a different rate, and is at a different stage of development and commitment in their life with Christ. We therefore accept each person in their diversity, while encouraging all to grow to maturity in Christ.

“If our faith is strong, we should be patient with the Lord’s followers whose faith is weak. We should try to please them instead of ourselves. We should think of their good and try to help them by doing what pleases them.” (Romans 15:1-2)

C conduct becoming a Christian

God requires us to avoid things that defile our minds or bodies, since sinful thoughts and actions separate us from Him. Our old nature is not eradicated but merely subdued within us, so our flesh still has the ability to commit sinful acts. We alone make the choice to yield to God’s Spirit and conduct ourselves in ways that keep us close to God and away from sin.

“Therefore, come out from them and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don’t touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.’ Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete purity because we fear God.” (2 Corinthians 6:17 - 7:1)

Study Questions

1. In the blanks provided beside the following Scripture references, write the lifestyle practice it supports, with a brief explanation of each.

1) Romans 15:1-2 _____

2) Leviticus 26:30 _____

3) 1 Peter 3:15 _____

4) 2 Corinthians 6:17 – 7:1 _____

Obedience, the Best Medicine

“I was not disobedient”
(Acts 26:19).

Evangelist D. L. Moody, writing on “obedience” said, “My subject is one you will not like very well, but I have found a long time ago that the medicine we don’t like is the best medicine for us.” (*The D. L. Moody Collection*, Edited and Compiled by James S. Bell, Jr.)

“And the LORD GOD commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Man has always been required to believe and obey God. God warned Adam that he would die if he disobeyed by eating from the forbidden tree. This command gave Adam a choice. He could believe and obey, or not believe and disobey. As long as he believed and obeyed, he continued in fellowship with God and had eternal life.


“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).


Eating the forbidden fruit caused Adam and Eve to be driven from the Garden of Eden, breaking the fellowship they enjoyed with God, and brought them spiritual death.


God Said through Moses


God used Moses to write Deuteronomy, the “Book of Remembrance.” It was to be read to the children of Israel every seven years.

Deuteronomy encouraged God’s people to remember and obey the commandments of God. Faith and obedience allowed them to inherit God’s blessings and promises. Disobedience brought failure and judgment. As with other covenants, God’s covenant with Israel contained the promise of blessings for those who obey and curses for those who refused to do so. (See Deuteronomy 28: 3-19.)

 “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey” (Deuteronomy 6:3).

 “And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers” (Deuteronomy 6:18).

 “A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day. And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:27-28).

 “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it” (Deuteronomy 30:15-16).

“What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?”
(Mark 8:36 The Message)

Unfortunately, Moses failed to keep one of God’s commandments. He was told to speak to the rock in the wilderness. Instead, he struck it twice. Water poured out, and Moses instantly became a hero to God’s people. Although a success to man, he had failed God’s test.




Side Note on Prosperity

There is much emphasis on prosperity today. The blessing of prosperity is directly related to and the result of obedience. Some violate God’s Word, come under a curse (of poverty) for failure to pay tithes, yet wonder why they do not reap the blessings of prosperity.

“And when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey . . . I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you . . . He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers . . . Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul . . . See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess . . . this day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deuteronomy 30:1-3, 6, 9-10, 15-16, 19, *NIV*).

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

Obedience Continues

-  “But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents” (Joshua 22:5-6).
-  “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).
-  “And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey” (Joshua 24:24).





Long ago, when leaders came to Rome, they were asked, “Will you be at peace with Rome or not?”

If a time to think it over was requested, the Romans would take a rod and draw a circle around the man. They would then say, “Decide before you step outside this circle. If you do not agree to peace before you cross the line, Rome will crush your country with her armies.”

Failure to be at peace with God brings death to the transgressor. We must choose today whom we will serve.

God has provided us the freedom of choice. Each person must continually choose whom he will serve. It is not just a one-time choice. Believers choose time-after-time to continue to obey God.

Results of Obedience

-  “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death” (John 8:51).
-  “He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live” (Proverbs 4:4).
-  “If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures” (Job 36:11).
-  “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:3-4).

- 📖 “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments” (Deuteronomy 5:10).
- 📖 “But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there” (Nehemiah 1:9).
- 📖 “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” (Proverbs 3:1-2).
- 📖 “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:15-16).
- 📖 “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17).

Results of Disobedience

The consequence for disobeying God remains the same since the days of Adam—spiritual death, breaking fellowship with God, and missing His promises.

- 📖 “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).
- 📖 “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15).

Vance Havner in *Consider Jesus* said, “Our Lord bade us go not merely to teach them ‘all things whatsoever I have commanded you,’ but to teach them ‘to observe all things.’” He continued, “You have not really learned a commandment until you have obeyed it . . . The church suffers today from Christians who know volumes more than they practice.”

- 📖 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).
- 📖 “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Paul testified before Agrippa, “I was not disobedient.” We should strive to have the same testimony.

“Only he who believes is
obedient;
Only he who is obedient
believes.”
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Study Questions

1. What punishment did Adam and Eve receive for eating the forbidden fruit? _____

2. What does the book of Deuteronomy encourage us to do? _____

3. How often was the Book of Deuteronomy read to the Israelites? _____

4. What do covenants promise? _____

5. How did Moses disobey God? _____

6. What was the consequence of Moses's disobedience? _____

7. What are five results of obedience? (Check through the scriptural references given to find the answer.)

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

8. What are the consequences of disobeying God? _____

9. Vance Havner said a commandment is not learned until what happens? _____

10. According to Vance Havner, why does the church suffer? _____

It's Not an Easy Road

“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them
that they should not depart from Jerusalem,
but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me”
(Acts 1:4).

Acts began with a walk of obedience.

About 120 people walked a Sabbath day's journey to the upper room in Jerusalem. They waited seven to ten long days for the Holy Ghost, promised to those who obey God.

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32).

Acts is a story of obedience. Jesus commanded, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

That is exactly what they did. They spread the gospel throughout the known world. Most of this took place after persecution hit the church and forced them to be scattered abroad.

“As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:3-4).

The believers in the New Testament church suffered because of their obedience to God. They did it joyfully—both the obeying and the suffering for the name. In Acts 5, Peter and John were in jail. What was the charge? Healing a lame man in the name of Jesus. During the night, an angel opened the doors of the jail and released them.

"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life" (Acts 5:20, *NIV*).

This command, when obeyed, led to a cruel beating. Many think that obedience to God's commandments immediately brings blessings. At times, obeying God results in hardship and suffering. These men determined to obey God regardless of the cost and rejoiced at the opportunity to suffer for Jesus' name.

“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they

departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:40-42).

Jesus said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake” (Luke 6:22).

“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:16-19).

The Story of Two Sauls

The Bible records the story of two Sauls. They lived many years apart, but both had an experience with obedience.

King Saul started out well, but ended poorly. Through acts of disobedience, he lost everything. He was a leadership letdown.

“He who cannot obey must not command.”
(Ben Franklin)

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

“Every great person has learned how to obey, whom to obey, and when to obey.”
(William Ward)

Saul of Tarsus (later called Paul) started out poorly, but ended well. Through an act of obedience, he gained the blessings of God. He was able to say, “I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19).

Knowing Your Destiny

Rev. J. W. Ansah preached a message entitled, "Knowing Your Destiny in the House of God." He believes that if believers understood their destiny (calling), it would minimize murmuring and complaining.

Saul knew from the beginning of his Christian experience that he would suffer many hardships.

"For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

"Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28, NIV).

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10)

Serving God is not always an easy road.

How to Please God

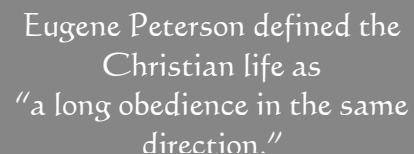
Abba Anthony was asked, "What must one do to please God?" His reply:

1. Be aware of God's presence.
2. Obey God's Word.
3. Continue. Do not give up easily.

George Barna in *Evangelism That Works* believes that success is faithfulness and obedience to God. When we reach the end of life, all that will matter is whether we gave God control of our lives and were obedient to Him.

Barna defines obedience as a personal commitment to:

- ✓ Christ as our Savior.
- ✓ Living a life of holiness.
- ✓ Consistent worship of God alone.



Eugene Peterson defined the Christian life as "a long obedience in the same direction."

- ✓ Pleasing God through our obedience to His commands.
- ✓ Performing selfless acts of service to others, motivated by and reflecting our love for God and His people.
- ✓ Sharing the good news of the gospel.

Study Questions

1. Acts is the story of _____.
2. Many think obedience immediately brings blessings. How is this a misconception? _____

3. What was the major difference(s) between the two Sauls? _ _____

4. What Ben Franklin quotation is referred to in this lesson? _____

5. What did Saul of Tarsus understand from the beginning of his Christian experience? _____

6. What three things did Abba Anthony say must be done to please God? _____

7. What did Paul say in Philippians 3:10? _____

8. How did Eugene Peterson define the Christian life? _____

9. According to George Barna, what is success? _____

10. List three things we should have a personal commitment to according to George Barna.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

When is it Right to be Disobedient?

*“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”
Acts 5:29*

The (Sanhedrin) leaders had given the people of God strict orders not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus. It was their law. The men of God found it impossible to obey this law and continued to preach and teach in the name of Jesus. They preached so much that Jerusalem was filled with their doctrine. When confronted for their disobedience they gave one united response, “We must obey God and not men.” The Apostles never did stop preaching and teaching the name of Jesus (even though it cost some of them their lives).

The Scripture requires us to be in obedience to government, leaders, parents, and (our) husbands.

- “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” (Romans 13:1-2)
- “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1-3)
- “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:22)

But...

- What happens when the leadership goes against the Word and Will of God?
- What happens when your husband does not want to obey the Word and Will of God and tries to get you to do things contrary to the Word of God?
- What happens (especially when you are an older child) when your parents want to keep you from obeying the truth of God’s Word?
- What about when the culture, or portions of the culture go against the Word and Will of God?
- What happens when your pastor wants to leave the truth and wants you to go with him?

In each of these situations we
need to boldly proclaim,
“We must obey God and not
men!”

God has ordained the governments of this world so that it can be the agent of justice, restraining evil, punishing wrongdoing, exalting righteousness, and protecting what is good in society.

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34)

Leadership

When the government fails to do what is right, we are not expected to follow it in the areas of the wrong. Some countries are allowing abortion, homosexuality and other things that the Bible clearly teaches against. We cannot comply with such things.

When a government, leader, or pastor leaves the principles of the Word of God, they have left their proper function and are no longer operating according to the plan and purpose of God. However, we are still expected to pray for government and those in control. Prayer changes things. We should continue to be obedient and submissive in any area that does not violate our convictions and the principles of the Word of God.

In Exodus 1:15-21 the king commanded the midwives that when the Hebrew women brought forth male children that they should kill them. The midwives refused to obey his orders. As a result **“God dealt well with the midwives...” (Exodus 1:20)**

**“And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.”
(Exodus 1:21)**

No Compromise

When the three Hebrew children were told to bow down to the image, and serve other gods, they refused. As a result of their disobedience they were thrown into the fiery furnace. They would not compromise! God went into the fire with them! They came out without even the smell of smoke on their clothes.

When a law was made that no one could pray to anyone but the king; a law that could not be canceled or changed; Daniel still prayed to His God.

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” (Daniel 6:10)

He refused to compromise the commandments of God. He continued to pray. This caused him to be fed to a den of lions. God backed Him up. The mouths of the lions were closed!

Husbands

It is often said that wives must submit to their husbands, even when this means violating the principles of the Word of God. We must endeavor to be submissive in every way possible, but we must still obey the Word of God. To **“submit”** means to bring yourself under the protection of someone else.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.” (Colossians 3:18)

Here Paul specifically mentions that we must submit to husbands **“...as it is fit in the Lord.”** In most of Paul’s teachings he assumes that both the husbands and wives are in the church; and that each want to do the will of God.

Culture

Following tradition and culture is appropriate until it violates the Word of God. Many times Christians are expected to follow pagan practices at weddings, funerals, etc. We should not partake in cultural practices that violate the principles of the Word of God.

“Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.” (Mark 7:13)

(Instructors should elaborate on practices within their culture, which are contrary to the Word of God.)

We should always endeavor to be submissive. However, our submission should not be in an area that would cause violation to the higher laws of the Word of God. Everything is subject to the higher power. Can you think of any power greater than the Mighty God and His power?

Study Questions

1. What does “submit” mean? _____

2. What did Daniel do when there was a law that no one should pray to any other god? _____

3. What did God do for the midwives because they refused to kill the Hebrew male babies? _____

