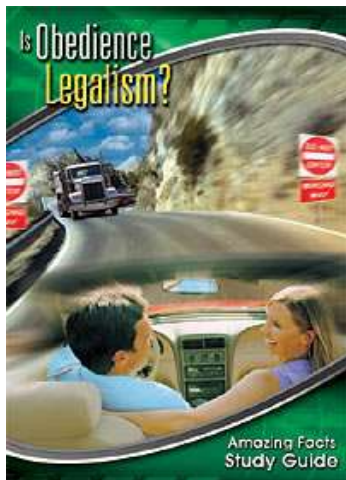


Is Obedience Legalism



Lesson 14

People might feel like they can get away with violating a traffic law or cheating on their taxes, but God and His laws work much differently. God sees everything we do, hears everything we say, and He really does care about how we behave. While the Lord offers forgiveness for our sins, there still are deadly consequences for breaking God's law. Amazingly, some Christians say any attempt to obey God's law amounts to legalism. Yet Jesus said if you really love God, you'll do what He asks. So is obedience legalism? Take time to read this Study Guide carefully... eternal consequences are at stake!

1. Does God really see and take note of me personally?

"Thou God seest me." Genesis 16:13. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou ... art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." Psalms 139:1-4. "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Luke 12:7.



God knows and cares for YOU personally.

Answer: Yes, God knows each one of us (every person on earth) better than we know ourselves. He takes a personal interest in every human being and carefully watches all that we do. Not one word, thought, or deed is hidden from Him.



Search the Bible for God's will. It is your only safety.

2. Can I be saved in His kingdom without obeying His Word, as found in the Holy Bible?

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matthew 19:17. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:9.

Answer: No! Scripture is very clear on this point. Salvation and the kingdom of heaven are for those who obey the Lord's commands. God does not promise eternal life to those who merely make a profession of faith or are church members or are baptized, but rather to those who do His will, which is revealed in Scripture. Of course, this obedience is possible only through Christ (Acts 4:12).

3. Why does God require obedience? Why is it necessary?

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:14. "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Proverbs 8:36. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive." Deuteronomy 6:24.



Only one path leads to heaven. The Bible is the map that shows us the way.

Answer: Because there is only one narrow path that leads to godlikeness, and thus to His kingdom. All roads do not lead to the same place. The Bible is the map and guidebook with full instructions, warnings, and information on how to safely reach that kingdom. To disregard any part of it leads away from God and His kingdom. The universe of God is a universe of law and order. Natural, moral, and spiritual laws are involved. Breaking any of these laws always has certain fixed results. If the Bible had not been given, people would sooner or later have discovered (by trial and error) that the great principles of the Bible exist and are true.

These Bible principles are written in our nervous systems, glands, and minds. When ignored, they result in shattered nerves, disease, and unhappiness of every kind. So the words of the Bible are not merely advice which we can accept or ignore without consequences. The Bible tells what these consequences are and explains how to avoid them. A person cannot live any way he wishes and still become godlike any more than a builder can ignore the blueprints for a house without running into trouble. This is why God asks all to follow the blueprint of the Holy Scripture. There is no other way to become like Him and thus be fitted for a place in His kingdom. And there is no other way to true happiness.



Sin can be safely destroyed by God only after all people understand and admit that He is just, loving, and merciful.

4. Why does God permit disobedience to continue? Why not destroy sin and sinners now?

"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 14, 15. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Romans 14:11.

Answer: God permits disobedience and sin to continue until all people everywhere are at last fully convinced of God's justice, love, and mercy. All will finally realize that God, by requiring obedience, is not trying to force His will

upon us, but rather is trying to keep us from hurting and destroying ourselves. The sin problem is not settled until even the most cynical and hardened sinners are convinced of God's love and confess that He is just. It will take perhaps a major catastrophe or worse to convince some, but the horrible results of sinful living will finally convince all that God is just and right. Then, and only then, can sin and disobedience be safely brought to an end by the Lord.

5. Will God actually destroy the disobedient?

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Peter 2:4. "All the wicked will he destroy." Psalms 145:20. "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

Answer: No question about it. The disobedient, including the devil and his angels who sinned, will be destroyed. This being true, surely it is high time to abandon all fuzziness regarding what is right or wrong. People had better stop letting their own foolish whims and egotistical notions guide them and pay attention to God's great book. And they had better do it now--there is not much time left!



All who knowingly choose not to follow Christ will finally be destroyed with the sin they love.



God promises that if I seek His Word for truth and sincerely follow it, I will not end up in error.

6. I want to obey all of God's rules. How can I be certain I will not overlook one?

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." Matthew 7:7. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, ... rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." John 7:17. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." John 12:35. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me." Psalms 18:44.

Answer: God leaves no room for doubt. He promises to keep me from error and lead me safely to all truth if I: (1) pray earnestly for guidance, (2) sincerely study God's Word, and (3) follow truth as soon as I am shown.

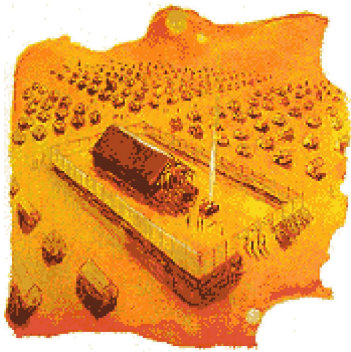
7. Does God count me guilty for disobeying Bible truth that has never been made clear to me?

"If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." John 9:41. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." Hosea 4:6. "Seek, and ye shall find." Matthew 7:7.

Answer: If I have had no opportunity to learn a certain Bible truth, God does not hold me accountable. But the Bible teaches that I am responsible to God for all the light (knowledge of right) I have and all I can have! Many people who refuse or neglect to study, seek, learn, and listen will be destroyed by God because they have "rejected knowledge." To play ostrich in these exceedingly crucial matters is fatal. It is my responsibility to hunt diligently for truth.



Playing ostrich in spiritual matters leads to tragedy and destruction.



Only two of the thousands of Israelites who left Egypt followed God fully and were able to enter the promised land of Canaan.

8. But God isn't particular about obedience on every point and in small details, is He?

"Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt ... shall see the land ... because they have not wholly followed me: Save Caleb ... and Joshua ... for they have wholly followed the Lord." Numbers 32:11, 12. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14.

Answer: Indeed, He is particular. God's people in Old Testament times learned this the hard way. Those who left Egypt for the promised land of Canaan were 603,550 in number. Of this group, only two (Caleb and Joshua) fully followed the Lord, and they alone entered Canaan. The other 603,548 died in the wilderness. Jesus says we are to live by "every word" of the Bible. There is not one word too

many or one word too few. They are all important.

9. When I discover new truth, I wait until all obstacles are removed before embracing it. This is best, isn't it?

"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." John 12:35. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Psalms 119:60. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me." Psalms 18:44.

Answer: No, once you are clear on a Bible truth, it is never best to wait. In fact, procrastination is the devil's most dangerous trap. It seems so harmless to wait, but the Bible teaches that unless a person acts immediately upon light, it quickly turns to darkness. Obstacles to obedience are not removed while we stand and wait; instead, they usually increase in size. Man says to God, "Open up the way, and I'll go forward." But God's way is just the opposite. He says, "You go forward, and I will open up the way."



Unless I follow light as soon as it is revealed, it eventually turns to darkness.



Satan invented the lie that obedience is impossible.

10. But isn't full obedience an impossibility for a human being?

"With God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." 2 Corinthians 2:14. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, ... bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Isaiah 1:19.

Answer: None of us can obey in our own power, but through Christ we can and must. Satan, in order to make God's requests appear unreasonable, invented the falsehood that obedience is impossible.

11. What will happen to a person who willfully and knowingly continues in disobedience?

"If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Hebrews 10:26, 27. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." John 12:35.

Answer: The Bible leaves no room for doubt. The answer is sobering and shocking, but true. When a person knowingly rejects light and continues in disobedience, the light eventually goes out, and he is left in total darkness. A person who rejects truth receives a "strong delusion" to believe that falsehood is truth (2 Thessalonians 2:11). When this happens, he is lost from that moment.



If I ignore God's loving warnings, I
will perish.



No child will fully obey his parents
unless he loves them.

12. I thought love was more important than obedience. Isn't it?

"Jesus answered ... If a man love me, he will keep my words. ... He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." John 14:23, 24. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3.

Answer: No, not at all! In fact, the Bible teaches that true love to God cannot exist without obedience. Nor can a person be truly obedient without love. No child will fully obey his parents unless he loves them, nor will he love his parents if he does not obey. True love and obedience are like Siamese twins. When separated, they die.

13. But I always thought that true freedom in Christ released me from obedience. Doesn't it?

"If ye continue in my word, ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." John 8:31, 32, 34. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Romans 6:17, 18. "So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." Psalms 119:44, 45.

Answer: No. True freedom comes only from obedience. It means freedom "from sin" (Romans 6:18), or disobedience, which is breaking God's law (1 John 3:4). The citizens who obey the law have freedom. The disobedient are caught and lose their freedom. Freedom without



Only the citizen who obeys the law has freedom.
Likewise, true Christian freedom means freedom from
disobedience.

obedience is like the false freedom of the drifting balloon or the driverless car. It leads to confusion and anarchy. True Christian freedom means freedom from disobedience. Disobedience always hurts a person and leads into the cruel slavery of the devil.



Loving children obey their parents even though they may not always understand their request. The same is true of children of God.

14. When I believe God requires a certain thing, should I obey even though I do not understand why He requires it?

"Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord ... so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live." Jeremiah 38:20. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Proverbs 28:26. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Psalms 118:8. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Romans 11:33, 34. "I will lead them in paths that they have not known." Isaiah 42:16. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Psalms 16:11.

Answer: Most assuredly! We must give God credit for being wise enough to require some things of us we may not understand. Good children obey their parents even when the reasons for their commands are not clear. Simple faith

and trust in God will cause us to believe that He knows what is best for us and will never lead us in any wrong path. It is folly for us, in our ignorance, to question God's leadership, even when we may not fully understand all His reasons.

15. Who is really behind all disobedience, and why?

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." 1 John 3:8, 10. Satan ... deceiveth the whole world." Revelation 12:9.

Answer: The devil is responsible. He knows that all disobedience is sin and that sin brings unhappiness, tragedy, alienation from God, and eventual destruction. With bitter hatred he tries desperately to lead every person into disobedience. You are involved. You must face the facts and make a decision. Disobey and be lost, or accept Christ and obey and be saved. Your decision regarding obedience is a decision regarding Christ. You cannot separate Him from truth, because He says, "I am ... the truth." John 14:6. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Joshua 24:15.



The devil wants you to disobey God because he hates you and wants you to be lost.

16. What glorious promise regarding a super-miracle does the Bible give God's children?



Following the miracle of the new birth (conversion), God continues working miracles to bring us Christian growth.

"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6.

Answer: Praise God! He promises that just as He worked a miracle to bring us the new birth, He will also continue to work needed miracles in our lives (as we gladly follow Him) until we are safe in His kingdom.

17. It brings me joy to know that Jesus not only provides the new birth to those who accept and follow Him, but He also continues to work needed miracles in their lives until they are safe in His kingdom. I want to begin lovingly obeying and following Jesus fully at once.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Will any be lost who truly think they are saved?

Yes! Matthew 7:21-23 makes it clear that many who prophesy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works in Christ's name will be lost but will think they are saved. Christ said they are lost because they did not do "the will of my Father which is in heaven." Verse 21. Those who refuse to obey God will end up believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12) and thus think they are saved when instead they are lost.

2. Since there is only one right way, what will happen to sincere people who truly think they are right when they are wrong?

Jesus says that He will call them to His true way, and His true sheep will hear and follow (John 10:16, 27).

3. Aren't sincerity and zeal enough?

No! We must also be right. The apostle Paul was sincere and zealous when he persecuted the Christians before his conversion, but he was also wrong (Acts 22:3, 4; 26:9-11).

4. Isn't it a scientific impossibility that God can see everyone at the same time?

So was Noah's Flood (it had never before rained--Genesis 2:5, 6), but it happened anyway. Conjuring up "scientific" reasons for disobedience is the favorite pastime of the class mentioned in Romans 1:22, who "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

5. What will happen to people who haven't received light?

The Bible says that all have received some light. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:9. Each person will be judged according to how he follows available light. Even the heathen have some light and follow the law, according to Romans 2:14, 15.

6. I have asked God to give me a sign if He wants me to obey. This is safe, isn't it?

No! It is not. Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Matthew 12:39. All teachings

should be checked by the Bible, and if in harmony with God's Word, should be accepted and followed (Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 2:15). People who won't accept the plain teachings of the Bible would not be convinced by a sign either. As Jesus said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Luke 16:31.

7. Hebrews 10:26, 27 seems to indicate that if a person willfully commits just one sin after he knows better, he is lost. Is this correct?

No! Anyone can confess such a sin and be forgiven. The Bible is speaking here not of one single act or sin but of a presumptuous continuation in sin and a refusal to surrender to Christ after one knows better. Such action grieves away the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) and hardens a person's heart until one is "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19) and lost. The Bible says, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Psalms 19:13.

8. Doesn't a person have to be educated to understand the Bible?

No! Even the simple can understand it if surrendered to the Lord (Psalms 19:7; 119:130; Matthew 11:25).

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. People will be saved who (1)

- Cast out devils in Christ's name.
- Claim to love Christ.
- Accept and obey the Lord.

2. What three things listed below will assure me of receiving full truth? (3)

- Ask my psychiatrist.
- Pray for light.
- Do what my minister says.
- Give liberal offerings at church.
- Punish myself.
- Receive a better education.
- Ask God for a sign.
- Study the Bible.
- Follow the truth that I now understand.

3. God holds me accountable for (1)

- Doing what my minister suggests.
- Following in my parents' footsteps.
- The light that I have and can have.

4. When I discover new truth, I should (1)

- Ignore it.
- Wait until I feel impressed to accept it.
- Accept and obey it at once.

5. Full obedience to the Lord's commandments is (1)

- Not possible under any circumstances.
- Legalism and of the devil.
- Possible only through Christ.

6. Willful disobedience (1)

- Leads to darkness and eternal destruction.
- Is okay for zealous church workers.
- Is overlooked by God if I am stubborn.

7. Genuine love for the Lord (1)

- Is better than obedience.
- Makes obedience unnecessary.
- Causes me to obey Him happily.

8. True Christian freedom means (1)

- The right to do as I please in everything.
- The right to disobey God.
- Freedom from disobedience and slavery to the devil.

9. When a point of truth becomes clear but I do not understand why God requires me to obey it, I should (1)

- Wait until the reason becomes clear.
- Reject that point of truth.
- Accept it and obey God's Word.

10. Who is really responsible for all disobedience? (1)

- The government.
- My parents, who trained me wrong.
- The devil.

11. Why is obedience necessary? (1)

- Because God is bigger than I am, and I am afraid of Him.
- To keep God from getting angry.
- Because I love God and want to follow His rules for Christian behavior.

12. Why doesn't God destroy the disobedient right now? (1)

- He is afraid to.
- He enjoys watching wickedness develop.
- He is waiting until all are fully convinced of His love and justice.

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