



## The Freedom of Obedience

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Genesis 17:1-11; Romans 4:7-17

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### Prayer:

So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. **Colossians 1:9-12**

### Discussion Starter

- Have you ever had rules imposed on you that seemed ridiculous? Did you ever discover the motivation behind those rules and did this discovery change your view of those rules?
- Have you ever imposed a rule on someone else who didn't seem to understand the importance? What was it like to have the best interest of someone else in mind and them not understand your motivation?

## Sermon Summary

Everybody wants a promise. Nobody wants a sign. Yet they always come (or go) together. A promise is a big horizon with new possibilities. A sign is the personal, often private and expensive discipline or restraint that is connected to those possibilities. It's a self-imposed act of obedience done because we believe the promise AND because we are loyal to the promise-maker.

Slaves struggle with the sign because they still have an adolescent view of obedience. They see it as compliance to a law or to an authority. They hope for a reward or they fear a reprisal. Either way their obedience is to them like a commitment or a fence that keeps them from doing what they want to do. So with obedience they pay the price - they practice, they sacrifice, they train - in hopes that they will someday reap the benefits. But children obey because, in their obedience, God shapes their desire and their will to live according to the promise. As a result, their obedience widens their possibilities leading to even more freedom and creativity, to authenticity and spontaneity and beauty. They practice what is true and the Truth sets them free. They do what they must in order to succeed and they actually like it. Obedience to God opens the door to new possibilities. It is the way into true freedom.

## Sermon Review Questions

- Are you a slave to someone's rules? Whose rules and why?
- Are you a slave to your own impulses?
- What has God promised you that you still believe, and you still think about all the time? Can you say it in a sentence?
- What discipline or restraint are you willing to impose upon yourself out of obedience to the promise, out of loyalty to God? What would it mean for you do it?
- What rules or practices do you already have and, perhaps, haven't liked? Are you willing to keep doing them only this time out of love for God?

## Habit

Practice daily listening for God's promise as you read the Scripture. Whenever you think you hear something, write it down and sit with it for a few weeks. If it keeps recurring in your reading and listening, share it with some others who know God and you well.

Practice a specific discipline or restraint based on the promise of God. Share this with someone you trust and who can keep you accountable.

## Quote

"The sermon on the Mount is not a set of principles to be obeyed apart from identification with Jesus Christ. The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is getting his way with us."

Oswald Chambers, *The Psychology of Redemption*