

A Passion to Obey Him

by Charles Stanley

A passion to obey God is an evolutionary process that involves fear, commitment, increasing knowledge of Christ, desire for God's best, faith in His promised blessings, recognition of past blessing following obedience, realization that it is always wise to obey Him, encouragement of others, concern for our testimony, and love and devotion to Christ.

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Description

In this sermon on having a passion to obey God, the speaker emphasizes the importance of teaching children from a young age about obedience to God. He highlights that while God has already forgiven our failures through the sacrifice of Jesus, it is our heart's desire that matters. The focus should be on obeying God, not on the consequences. The speaker also mentions that our obedience can serve as a testimony and encouragement to others who may be facing difficult decisions. As our knowledge and understanding of Christ increases, so does our hunger and passion to obey Him. Ultimately, the goal is to develop a desire for God's best in our lives.

Transcript

The title of this message is A Passion to Obey God. This is the second in our series on a passion for God. A passion, first of all, to know Him and now a passion to obey Him.

Now I want you to listen carefully. In this message, I want to give you three lists. So I want you to get out a pencil or pen and a piece of paper because you who are parents need to instruct your children very, very early in life on the whole issue of a passion to obey God.

All of us adults need to examine very carefully. Do we just like obeying Him at times? Do we just have a desire? Do we just want to? Or do we genuinely have a passion to obey Him? What I want to share with you is very practical. Not only will it be a method of developing a passion but also a way to evaluate that passion and of course the results of it.

I want to give you three lists and the first one is the evolution of a passion to obey God. Now it would be easy if we could say now from this point on just start obeying God. That is, just have a passion to obey God.

No one can issue that command to us and no one can give you and me a passion to obey Him. Now remember that a passion is not just a desire but it is a strong, intense, overwhelming emotional desire that is something that dominates and governs, something that permeates and saturates and influences and impacts every single aspect of our life. A passion to obey Him.

So what I want us to see here is this. It is something that evolves in our life. It is something that develops in our life.

It is an attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ that doesn't simply come with salvation though that's the beginning but it is an evolutionary process. It is a progression. It is the development of a strong, ever-growing, ever-intensifying desire and hunger and thirst and yearning to obey Him that dominates and controls and saturates every aspect of our life.

So where does it begin? What I want you to see is it begins on the very lowest level. That is the very foundation of the evolving of a passion to obey Him begins where probably most of us feel it and then I want to bring us to the ultimate and that is the high stage. These stages will not be the same in everybody's life.

They won't be necessarily in this consecutive or particular order but they're there and it begins with this and I want you to jot them down. There are 10 of them. First of all, this whole idea of a passion for God that is to obey Him evolves.

First of all, the first stage is a fear of the consequences of disobedience. When you and I growing up and we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, one of the first things that we learned or should have learned is to obey God because to fail to obey Him will bring very disastrous consequences in our life and so the beginning stage is a fear. The fear of the consequences of disobedience in our life as we see the result of the consequences of disobedience in someone else's life.

So it begins with fear. Somebody says, well, that's not a very good motivation. Yes, it is.

Listen, it's better to obey God out of pure fear than not to obey Him at all because God understands that fear is the beginning. That's where we get in as beginners to obey Him. First of all, because we fear.

Secondly, a commitment to obey Him. That is the passion to obey Him evolves. At some point, we make a commitment.

Lord Jesus, I want to obey you. I acknowledge that you're the Lord of my life. I acknowledge that you have the right to govern and to guide my life, that you have the right to call the plays in my life and therefore I choose to make a commitment to be obedient to you and sometimes that commitment we understand and sometimes we don't understand the consequences of that kind of a commitment, but that's part of it.

And so at no area and no place here do we suddenly reach some pinnacle, but it is an evolving process that goes on in our thinking as we think in terms of obeying Him. Number three, an increasing knowledge of Christ. That is, as you and I begin to obey Him, our knowledge and understanding of who Jesus Christ is, who He is in us, who we are in Him, what He's all about in life, His purposes, His goals, as we begin to increase in our knowledge and understanding of who the Lord Jesus Christ is, our hunger, our passion to obey Him will increase likewise.

Number four, then somewhere along the way, we develop a desire for God's best. That is, we're not satisfied with just what the world has to offer. We develop a hunger for God's best.

And my friend, when you begin to want God's best, naturally that's going to be related to obedience because you soon discover as I obey Him, something very good happens in my life. As I choose to disobey Him, somewhere along the way it becomes very evident that we suffer. And so the desire to want God's best is a stage and a part and an element in the evolutionary process of developing a passion to obey Him.

Number five, and that is faith in His promised blessings. That is, as you and I begin to read the scriptures, here's what happens. We begin to say, well, here's what God promised if they would do this, and they did this, and here's what God did.

And so what we begin to realize is in the scriptures, God makes promises of blessing to His children when they obey Him. And also He warns them, admonishes them of the consequences of disobedience. So first of all, we see that in the Word.

Before long, we begin to track that in our own life. We say, wait a minute. Here's what God asked me to do.

Here's what God challenged me to do. But here's what I did. And here was the consequence.

Now, here's what God challenged me to do. That's what I did. And this is the consequence.

So what happens is we begin to develop a faith in the promised blessings of God. That if we obey Him, He will bless us. Listen, this is an irrevocable principle of scripture.

That is every single act of obedience is rewarded. Otherwise, God would be in debt to us. When you and I obey Him, God rewards us.

We don't get all the rewards down here. Some of it we're going to get when we get to heaven. But reward and blessing always follows obedience to Him.

Then number six, which is similar to that. And that is the recognition of past blessing following our obedience. As we develop a faith in Him, then what happens? Then we develop what? We're able to trace back and look back and see what God is doing in the process.

That is, He is challenging us to be obedient. We obey Him and He blesses us in return. Then number seven, that is a realization that it is always wise.

Somewhere along the way, we begin to realize, you know, it's really always wise to obey Him. Somehow we think at times, well, you know, I'm going to do my own thing. I know this is what God says, but at this point, here's what I'm going to do.

And you and I know in our heart, there is no way to improve on God. There's no way in the world for God to tell us to do something. And we come out with a better idea.

Listen, you can improve on infinite wisdom. And so part of the process, this evolving process is somewhere along the way, we begin to realize it is always wiser to obey God. Then if you will jot down number eight, that is the encouragement of others.

One of the stages in this evolving process of a desire or a passion to obey Him is the encouragement of the people. Here's what happens when you obey Him. You don't start that with your children after they get to be 17.

While you're still able to rock them, while you're still able to talk to them and they don't have any earthly idea what you're saying, talk to those little minds that cannot understand at that time about obeying God. I want you to grow up to obey Him. I want you to grow up to be what God wants you to be.

They cannot respond, can't even speak. And what happens? You think, well, that's absolutely foolish. Oh, no, it's not.

God honors every father, mother, grandparent, whoever you may be, who is in the process of instilling within those little minds, the wonderful principles of scripture. You don't start when they're 17. If you want them to have a passion to obey God, you start so young that for them, all they've ever heard is obey God, obey God, obey God, obey God.

Doesn't mean they always will every single time as none of us do. But what happens is you have begun to etch in their thinking. You have begun to govern the direction of their life.

You begin to set in motion a direction for their life that it is always wise to obey God no matter where they go, what they do, what they're tempted with, what they're tried with, who says what, and challenges them deep down inside. There'll ever be that recurring voice, obey God, trust the Lord, obey Him. It is wise to obey God.

To disobey Him, you're going to suffer awesome consequences. They will never be able to escape it. And that's why you and I need to encourage one another.

And we certainly need to encourage our children along those lines. Then number nine, another part of the evolving process is our concern for our testimony. That is, we have the privilege of having an impact on someone else's life.

We have the privilege of bearing a testimony in someone else's life. And so that too becomes an influence and a part of the evolving process of developing a passion to obey Him. You think about the kind of impact that you as a mother, you as a father can have upon your children.

Very early in life, listen, not only are you saying, son, above everything else, I want you to obey God. If you don't do anything else, just obey God. Don't do what I tell you to do.

You do what God tells you to do. If a child hears that over and over and over and over, what happens in that little mind and that developing mind is that they see, first of all, that their dad, their mom reverences God, acknowledges God, that mom and dad are being obedient to God. And if mom and dad are being obedient to God, there must be some reason.

Then you get them in the scriptures. They see what's going on in your life. They hear you talking about obeying God.

And what happens? Something very, very strange happens. And what it is, is you set the sense of direction because of your concern. I believe every parent wants to be a good testimony to their children.

We want to be a good testimony and encouragement and a witness to other people who are in the process of trying to make very difficult decisions in their life. And when you own your job and your business and your home, you make a very difficult decision that is a decision to obey God. I guarantee you somebody out there else is watching and looking to see what you do.

So they'll decide, well, now, if I were in that kind of a situation, what would I do? Then they see God honor your obedience. Then what happens the next time they get in a similar situation? They say, well, I remember what happened. He obeyed God or she obeyed God.

And that's what God did for them. I'm going to do the same thing. That becomes a part of the evolving process in this whole idea of developing a passion to obey him, a strong, overpowering, sensitive desire to be obedient to him.

That desire to dominate into control, permeate, saturate, influence, impact every single aspect of our life. And then number 10. And this is the last one.

And I want you to see where we've come from. Number 10 is love and devotion to Christ. This should ultimately be the final and ultimate motivation for all of our development of a passion to obey him, that we love him.

That should be it. But look where we've come from. First of all, we began down here on the lowest stage, the lowest level of obeying him because we fear him.

That is because we fear the consequences. But we have graduated and we have evolved and we have moved up the ladder to now our motivation is not fear of the consequences, though we still understand that. But now our motivation is we just love him.

We love him for who he is. Therefore, our passion to obey him is motivated above everything else simply because he is Christ, because of who he is. And our love and devotion and loyalty to him is all the motivation we need for developing and for having a passion to obey him.

So somewhere along the way in that list of 10 stages of steps or elements, you find yourself. Are you still down here obeying him because you're scared not to? Or is it deep down inside that you have seen the consequences in other people's life as well as your own? And have you come to the place that you say, well, you know, it makes no difference what anybody else ever knows or not. I'm going to be obedient to God simply because I love him for who he is.

It is an evolutionary process. And my friend, listen, as a parent, we should get that process going very, very early in the life of our children. And then you and I, as their parents can, can encourage that and bring them through step after step as we interpret what's going on in their life.

And as the process begins to evolve, evolve, God will begin to grow and to build into them as well as into ourselves a passion to be obedient to him. That is overpowering everything else, every other influence in our life. The question is, can I do this, be this, go there? Can I have this relationship and be obedient to almighty God? Now, let me ask you a question.

How many of you have ever said in your life, Lord Jesus, I choose to be obedient to you regardless of the consequences. I'm going to do what you say do no matter what anybody else says or what happens. Or are you one of those persons who has said, I want to obey God? Listen, want to and making a

commitment to do it is entirely different.

You're one of those persons who've said, well, yes, I'm going to be obedient to him, but you already in your mind have set limitations. And so you've drawn a line out here and you said, well, I'm going to obey God, except when I can't see my way clear, then I'm not sure I'm going to do it. Or if he requires too much, I'm not certain that I'm going to do it.

Or if I'm afraid or if, you know, if I don't think I can do it. And what we do is we subconsciously draw a line. We subconsciously decide what our reservations are going to be, what our limitations are going to be.

And I want to ask you a very, very sobering question. If Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life, where did you ever get the idea that you had a right to draw a line on Christ and to tell him that you're going to obey him up to a certain point? You're going to obey him if you're going to obey him, except you're going to obey him when my friend, he is not the Lord of your life and my life in a practical fashion. If at any time and at any place we draw a line and say to him, Lord, I'm willing to obey you, but I just can't handle that.

I'm not saying that we won't have struggles in our life and I'm coming to that. But let me ask you a question. Have you ever in your life ever made a commitment to Jesus Christ? Lord Jesus, on the basis of who you are, the virgin born incarnate son of God, the savior of the world, the Lord of life and my very life, the judge before whom I shall stand one of these days and give an account of my life.

Lord Jesus, I choose here and now to make a decision to obey you the rest of my life, no matter what the consequences are. Now, you and I are not going to obey him every single time. But my friend, there is something about coming to a decision whereby you say from this point on that which ultimately governs my decision making process is basically one thing.

What does almighty God want me to do? And the problem in the church today and the problem among too many of God's people is we've never made a decision. We just make decisions week after week and we make decisions day after day, but we have never made the final decision. We've never made the most crucial decision of all.

Lord Jesus, because you are who you are, I choose that the bottom line of my life is obedience to you no matter what. How can we sing Jesus Christ is Lord when we've never made a commitment? How can we talk about loving the Lord Jesus Christ if we have reservations? We've drawn lines. We've set limitations.

He's not the Lord of my life if I have one single limitation, if I have one single reservation. And here's our problem. We listen to the world.

We are highly influenced by the world and we have a very nonchalant attitude about living obediently before God. I'm not talking about legalism. Have you kept the ninth commandment? Have you kept every single law in the Old Testament? No, no, no, that's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about just doing what you and I know to do and stop trying to rationalize our disobedience before him. Living the Christian life is serious business. And Jesus Christ is Lord is what he came to be in my life.

Salvation was to get us in a position whereby he could exercise his lordship and express his life. Salvation is just the beginning. People who are saved and sit down and just sort of satisfied because their name's in the Lamb's Book of Life and they go into heaven.

You've missed the whole point of the Christian life. He saved you in order to live in you and to express his life through you and to impact other people in this world through your life. So I want to ask you again.

Have you made a decision in your life, a commitment that you're going to obey God? Are you just still wanting to and would like to and you plan on it and count on you sometimes? Well, let me ask you a question. Who's running your show? I can tell you one thing. There are not two drivers in anybody's heart.

There's only one. It's either Christ or myself. And if I have made a commitment to obey him, I may stumble and fall all over myself and get mud all over my face.

But my heart, my desire, the intensity of my soul is to obey him and I will correct my failure and move on in obedience to him. That is an evolutionary process. And some of you have been going to church for 20, 30, 40, 50 years.

And you have never made a commitment in your life that Jesus Christ, who is Lord, is Lord. I choose to obey him no matter what the consequence. Then you wonder why your kids don't.

You wonder why they go away to college and blow it and embarrass you. I'll tell you why. Because they didn't see it and they didn't hear it and they didn't learn it.

And therefore, they didn't apply it. Do you know who Jesus is? Listen, he's not a buddy. Jesus Christ is God.

I have no rights except the rights to allow him to live his life in me. I want to give you 10 more points. How will we know when we have a passion to obey him? Number one, real simple.

The bottom line of my decision-making process will be obedience to God. That's what I've been talking about. The bottom line of my decision-making process will be obedience to God.

That is, no matter what the situation, what the circumstance, what I'm going to ask when I have a passion to obey him, what I'm going to ask is, can I do this and be obedient to God? Can I go here and be obedient to God? Can I develop this relationship and be obedient to God? Is this what God wants in my life? That's the bottom line. And my friend, as a child of God and as a follower of Jesus Christ, that's what it's all about. That's it.

So all decisions have to be sifted. Listen, every decision must be sifted through the will of God. Is this what God wants? If it is not what God wants, that's not what I want.

The second evidence of a passion to obey God is the instantaneous obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If I have a passion to obey him, when God says do something, my first response is going to be to do it. He said, wait a minute, I'm coming to what you're thinking about.

So just stay with me. The first response is going to be, if that's what God wants, that's what I want to do. That's what I choose.

An instantaneous response to obey the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Now, how often does the Spirit of God speak to you and you say, well, Lord, show me your will. And you don't want to know God's will because you want to do it.

You want to know God's will because you want to consider it. I want to tell you something. When Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life, I don't find God's will for my consideration, discussion, evaluation and objective examination of it.

I want to know the will of God in order to be obedient to God because I know that he is wise in what he tells me to do. A lot of people who just want to know it so they can think about it. No, we want to know it so we can obey it.

So first of all, the first evidence is the bottom line. My decision making process is what does God want me to do? The second evidence is, as we said here, the instantaneous response to the Holy Spirit to do whatever God says do. Now, number three, get this one down.

Even when we struggle, even when we struggle with the decision, the goal is obedience, not justification for disobedience. Even when we struggle with the decision, the goal is obedience, not justification for disobedience. Now, let me explain that.

There are times when God is going to challenge you and me to do things that are going to be very difficult. Sometimes they're going to be costly. Sometimes it's going to be painful.

Sometimes we're going to suffer. Sometimes the consequences are going to be more than we think we can handle. And sometimes our first response may be, oh, dear Lord, I must be misunderstanding what you're saying.

You couldn't be saying that to me. There is no way I could do that. That is our first response sometimes when God challenges us.

Now, our response is not sinful because sometimes God knows that what he's about to do is going to stretch us, challenge us, lead us into waters we've never waded through before, climb mountains that we never thought we could come over. And so our first response is not because we don't want to do it, but because as we look at ourselves, we don't think we're capable of doing what God has called us to do. So God understands that.

But what I want you to see is this. When you and I have a passion to obey him, even in our struggles and we are thinking, Lord, there's no way. Or when we fear the suffering, we fear the pain, we fear the loss, we can't figure out what the consequences are going to be.

Even when we're struggling, our goal is to obey him, to want to obey him, to get to the point we know we're going to obey him, not to justify disobedience. A man or woman has a passion for God. Their goal is to obey, never to justify their disobedience.

So I understand there's going to be struggles and I understand we're going to fail. That's not even the issue. Listen, God has provided for my failures and yours through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

And thank God, he says, my sin not in part, but the whole was nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Hallelujah. Praise God.

It is well with my soul. God has already taken care of their failures. It is the heart's desire.

Do we have an intense yearning, hungering, thirsting, burning, overwhelming desire to be obedient to God no matter what the consequences are. Even in our struggle, the goal must be a desire to obey him and not

an escape from the consequences of it. Now, number four, when you and I have a passion to obey him, our focus is going to be on obeying him, not on the consequences.

When we have a passion to obey him, our first concern, our focus is going to be on obeying him, not the consequences. Now here's what happens. Oftentimes, God will challenge us with something.

And the only thing that really concerns us, what are the consequences? What's going to happen to me? What's going to happen to my family? What's going to happen to my finances? What's going to happen to these relationships? Our concern becomes more on the consequences than on obeying God. It says that I am far more interested in me than I am in Christ. I'm interested in my plan and my program rather than in his, because all I'm focusing on are the possible consequences.

When, first of all, I don't even know what the consequences are going to be. I may think I do. So I'm focusing on these consequences that I think are going to be costly and painful.

When God wants me to focus on the thing that he called me to do, a man or a woman who has a passion for God will focus on obedience and not the consequences of that obedience, because they are learning and have learned that God will take care of all the consequences. Number five, a person who has a passion to obey him is committed to obedience regardless of the consequences. We are committed to obedience regardless of the consequences.

The consequences are not the determining factor. The determining factor is we've made a commitment. The determining fact is that Jesus Christ is Lord and the consequences don't really have a lot to do with whether I obey him or not.

Listen, if God is in control of all of our circumstances, I should never make a decision based on the consequences of what I think the consequences are going to be, but rather what did God tell me to do? Whatever God says do, a man or a woman with a passion to obey him is not focusing on the consequences, but focusing on obedience. Not concerned about the consequences, but concerned about obedience. And what do they do? They make the decision regardless of the consequences.

And I can think of times in my own life when I absolutely, no question about it, I was scared to death of the consequences. I thought, oh God, this is it. You're going to wipe me out for good.

I understand and he understood what I meant by that. And that was part of my ignorance and in the process of learning how God operates and works in our life. But you see, when we have a passion for him, that's not our concern.

We have a passion for him. We obey him and what? We leave the consequences to him. We just leave them to him.

First of all, you and I will never be able to figure out how consequences are going to work out in our life. Now, sometimes we can. But sometimes what we do is we make them a whole lot worse than God knows they're going to be.

And how many times have you said, oh Lord, this just no way. God, we moan and groan and we hesitate. We disobey and we rebel.

Then finally we yield and surrender. We think, my goodness, wasn't like that at all. How good could God be? You see, you can't figure out the circumstances.

That's why when you and I have a passion for him, we get beyond that. And so we say yes to God, regardless of the consequences, because we have learned that he's big enough to take care of them. And listen, because we also have learned that no matter how painful and difficult, no matter how much it may cost us and how much we have to suffer, he's going to take every bit of that, weave it into our life and turn it out for our good.

Therefore, we don't major on the consequences. We major on being obedient to him. Then let's move to number six.

A person who has a passion to obey God is continually seeking the mind of God. You see, how are you going to obey him if you're not continually seeking him, which means that person is going to be in the word of God, reading and discovering the principles of scripture. How did God operate in this situation? Why does God work in this way? A person has a passion for him, is continually seeking and sensitive to the mind of God, desires to know the mind of God, desires to know how he operates in the word of God, reading and applying and listening.

But a person has no passion for God, sort of going about doing their own thing, hoping they'll pick up the right idea and maybe they'll make the right decision. That's the difference in a passion for God and a person who does not have it. Many of God's people make decisions and here's what they do.

They make decisions and then pray, oh Lord, I just want you to bless what we've done. My friend, he's under no obligation to bless anything that he has not initiated. If it's initiated by man, then God must say, okay, let's see how well you can handle that.

And most of the time it doesn't work. Even when it may make an immediate public display of being good, ultimately God knows what the ultimate consequences are. And men and women who have a passion to be obedient to him, I believe, have an intuitiveness about them, a perception about them, a discernment about them.

And they are before long able to foresee and discern oftentimes what the consequences are going to be when people around them have no earthly idea of what's going to happen. That's God giving himself to a man or woman who has a passion to obey him no matter what. Then not only will be continually seeking the Lord God, but also a person who has a passion to know him will also have a hungering yearning desire.

Listen, a hungering yearning desire to know him better. That is, you and I'll never be satisfied just doing our daily Bible readings. Well, let's just get up in the morning and read a few verses so we can pray and go on to work right quick.

No, there's going to be this hunger in your heart to know him. There's going to be this desire in your heart to discover new things about him. Somebody says, well, you know, I've read the Bible through.

So what? Listen, so what? You take a straw and suck on it till you emptied the Atlantic, the Pacific and all the other oceans and rivers and streams and creeks and fountains on the face of this earth. Then you will have just begun to learn a little something about God. We'll never learn all the infinite wisdom that there is to know about him.

And you see a passion to obey him is accompanied by a passion to know him. And that's why we began this series with that title. A passion to know him.

Because you see, if I really have a passion to know him, I'm going to have a passion to obey him. And if I have a passion to obey him, I'm going to have a passion to know who is this Christ to whom I have made the commitment. Whatever you say, that's what I'm going to do.

No matter what the consequences are, that's what I'm going to do. My friend, if you have a passion to obey him, you're going to have a passion. You're going to have a deep yearning, hungering, thirsting desire to know him.

That will never be satisfied. Because you see, here's what happens. The more you know him, what the more you want to know him.

The more you enjoy him, the more you want to enjoy him. The more you obey him, the more you want to obey him. It is that insatiable, hungering, thirsting yearning.

It is on one hand, we're satisfied, but dissatisfied. I'm content in knowing him, but I'm discontent. The fact that I don't know enough.

There's more to discover about him. There's more in this relationship. There's more in this intimate relationship that I'm yet to discover.

A person who has a passion to obey him will also have a passion to know him even better than they know him now. Then number eight, watch this one. A person who has a passion to obey him, listen carefully.

The opinion of others will never be the deciding factor in their decision-making. The opinion of others will never be the deciding factor in their decision-making. And this is where a lot of people get in trouble.

What do you think I ought to do? Well, I think you ought to do this. What do you think I should do? Well, I think you ought to do this. Well, what's your idea? Well, this is what I think.

Well, how do you feel? Well, I don't think any of that's right. Let me ask you a question. How in the world can you obey God asking everybody else what you ought to do? And you see, listen, you and I ought to be mature enough as believers or at least maturing to the realization that God will show you exactly what to do.

You say, well, God doesn't speak to me. Yes, he does. You may not be listening, but I'm here to tell you he's speaking.

He's got a whole book, 66 of them wrapped up in what you and I call the Holy Bible in which God has already spoken to every single one of us. And he will also speak by his spirit to your spirit, giving instruction, clear instruction as to what you and I ought to do next. You see the opinion of others.

There are a lot of people who make decisions on the basis of whether they will be rejected or accepted by others. And I want to say this to my pastor friends who may be watching or listening. My friend, if you pastor your church and you operate on the basis and you make decisions on the basis of whether your people like you agree with you or not, you are destined for failure.

God called you to be the leader, not the follower. He called you to listen to him, follow him, obey him, lead others. And not simply to ask everybody's opinion.

That does not mean that we're not to seek godly counsel, but I'm here to tell you that ultimately the final decision is what does God want you to do? The people you work around, everybody you work around has got an opinion. The people you live around, your family, they've got an opinion. Here's the problem of making decisions based on other people's opinion.

Here's what happens. Let's say that you go through a difficult time. It is natural and normal, natural and normal for people who love you, who want to get you through something or help you out or let's get on through this in a hurry.

We don't want you to suffer. We don't want you to hurt. I don't like to see other people suffering.

I don't like to see other people hurt. And I'm prone to want to do that myself for someone else. Well, let's see what can I do to get you out of this one? Sometimes God says, take your hands off that.

I'm in the middle of this. I put them where they are. Don't get into this.

And sometimes I have to walk away, probably misunderstood. Sometimes say, I'm sorry, I can't do anything about that. You see, and listen carefully.

This is why you need to understand who you are in Christ. That if everybody else criticize you, so what? You are accepted by almighty God in Jesus Christ. If nobody else likes you, he loves you.

How much? Enough to die for you. If you make decisions based on other people's acceptance and rejection, I'm here to tell you, you're going to be turning this way and that way. And this wind blows and that wind blows.

You will never know whether you're doing the right thing or not. You'll never know. That's why God doesn't want you making decisions based on other people's opinions.

But what has he said to you? He may have said something to you through someone else, which is very clear. That's from God. Or he may have said something to you through his word.

But ultimately, let me go back to point number one. What's the bottom line? The bottom line is I choose to obey God no matter what the circumstances are. Listen to me, you can't ever lose abiding by that principle.

Never. There is no way to lose. You say, well, I've obeyed God and I lost.

Let me ask you this. But what did God do in return? Oh, well, that's a different question. My friend, if you obeyed God and lost.

Then God's in debt to you. You know what God does sometimes in our obedience? Sometimes he takes some things in order to give us other things that are far better for us than what we lost. That's not losing.

That's winning. You cannot lose being obedient to God. And if there's one thing you not need to instill within our children.

It is simply obey God. You never lose obeying God. You always ultimately win.

I didn't say you didn't hurt. You didn't suffer. You didn't feel pain.

I didn't say you wouldn't be persecuted, criticized and all the rest. But so what? If you've obeyed God, look at the reward that you have coming. You see, if we really have a passion for him, we are not going to make decisions based on the opinion of other people.

Now, number nine. Now, this is a very, very important point I want you to jot down. And let me see how we can say this.

So just jot this down. They will explain it. When you and I have a passion for God, that is to obey him.

The decisions that are very insignificant to others. Decisions that are very insignificant to others are often extremely significant to you and me. Because it's oftentimes and what appears to be an insignificant decision.

That is the whole turning point of our life. And here's what folks say. They say, well, fast and pray about that.

That's foolish. Well, anybody knows what to do. Or they'll say, well, I can tell you exactly what I would do.

Watch those kind. Or somebody will say, well, that's a simple decision. All you got to do is thus and so.

My friend, I can think in my own life. Of some crucial, critical decisions. That God has led me to make that would have appeared very insignificant to anyone else.

Let me give you one this morning. There's somebody sitting here today. There's no doubt in my mind about it.

When you walk out of this place, something will have happened in your heart. There's some of you who are listening. This moment is going to be a turning point in your life.

And suppose you decided I don't want to get up and listen to that program this morning. Somebody says, well, who cares what program you watch? God. God cares.

Because it just may be that he wants to say something to you that will absolutely deliver you from disaster in your life. And this is why I said to you the idea of coming to church every other Sunday. You've got more courage than I have, but you're also more foolish than I am.

Anybody whose ideas will just so we go, I mean. You don't have to go every Sunday, right? But suppose on the Sunday that you decide to sleep in. God had something very, very specific to do.

And you say, well, he'll do it next week. You think so? You know what our problem is? We don't understand that God's ways are not our ways. And listen, God isn't up in heaven tracking us down saying, well, let's see what he's going to do next.

Well, he missed this one. I'm going to get the other one. That's not the way God operates.

Listen, God has pivotal points of crucial decision in our life. And if you are not at the right place to make the right decision, when God issues the challenge, you are a loser and you can be a lifetime loser. Let me ask you a question.

Have you ever made a decision, Lord Jesus, because you say forsake not the assembling of yourselves together? God, I'm not about to miss if at all possible. Or do you get up and you say, well, that program lasted so long last night. Besides, I just hollowed my voice out at the ballgame.

I'll go next Sunday. Has it ever dawned on you that God not only has an opinion, but a plan for your life and those little insignificant things that you consider insignificant are not insignificant at all. You see, a man or woman who has a passion for him.

But other people think are insignificant, become extremely significant. There have been times I'd be sitting in my study studying and all of a sudden I had this feeling, just get up and talk to God. And I think, well, I've got to finish this.

Just go pray. I'll get over shortly. I think, no, God, you're trying to say something.

Get on my face before God opened the word. Just like he says, dear Charles. That somebody says, well, he did that tomorrow.

No, he won't. Let me ask you something. Do you think God is a bellhop? Is God some errand boy who only responds when I want him, when it's convenient to me and not to God? I'm here to tell you, we have a very non-biblical fleshly idea of who God is.

I'm here to tell you, he is the sovereign, holy one who governs this whole universe, who governs our life. And when we choose to act on the basis of our convenience, I'm here to tell you, we are lifetime losers. We need to get serious about what it means to be obedient to God.

And a person who has a passion for him thinks differently about these things. The things that seem to be insignificant are very significant. Then number 10, the last one, a person who has a passion to obey God is willing to accept adverse consequences joyfully.

A person who has a passion for God to obey him is willing to accept adverse consequences joyfully. You see, there have been times in my life when I knew that if I obeyed God, it was going to be very, very costly. And I can still remember this very morning how I felt on several occasions when I said, okay, God, I'm going to do what you say.

Though I'm scared to death. I don't know how it's going to work out. I don't know what's going to happen.

I can still remember how I felt. You know what? Sometime the fear increased after I said yes, because I knew there was no turning back. You see, if you have a passion to obey him, if you have a passion to obey him, there's going to be a joy even in the midst of pain, heartache, and suffering.

Now, number three, the expected results of a passion to obey him. So let me give you these quickly. Now, let me ask you something.

How many of you really want to know what the first one is? Say amen. Are you sure? Say amen. Let's see if you do.

The first result you can expect from obeying God is suffering. Not joy, not peace, not happiness, not good times, suffering. The Bible says those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer.

The whole idea of any kind of theology that says, boy, if you love God, he eliminates all the suffering. Somebody needs to read the Bible one more time. Listen, one of the results of a passion to obey him is suffering.

I'm going to give you 10 quickly. Number two. Number two is a growing faith, because when you begin to have a passion to obey the Lord, God begins to challenge you in your life.

And what happens? Your faith begins to grow. You begin to see how God is operating. He's told you to do this.

You did that. Here's what he did. What happens is you develop a stronger, deeper faith in him to be the God he says he is.

Number three. The third result is rewards. There is no way in the world to obey God by being blessed.

Blessing always follows obedience. And you say, well, what kind of blessing? It depends upon what the request was. What is it that you did? If you did something financially, more than likely, the blessing is going to be financial.

If you did something relational, more than likely, it's going to be relational. If you did something emotionally, more than likely, it's going to be that response. But God is the one who chooses the nature of the reward.

But blessing always follows obedience. Number four, an enlarged view of God. When you and I develop a passion to obey him, something happens.

Our view of God is enlarged. It doesn't mean that God gets into bigger. Nothing changes about him.

What happens is that as you and I obey him, God enlarges our capacity to understand him, to see him as he is, to perceive him. That is, we begin to see him in a whole different light. That's part of the reward of being obedient to him.

Then number five, a positive impact on other people's lives. The result of a passion to obey him is you and I will have a positive impact on other people's life. They watch what you do.

Then what happens? They are challenged to duplicate your obedience. They may not exactly understand as much as you understand. But they think, well, now, if you did this in his life, God, what you did in my life, I am sure that is one of the things that most influenced me in my own life growing up to want to be obedient to God, watching what God did in somebody else's life.

You'll have an impact on your family. You'll have an impact where you work. You'll have an impact among your friends.

You see, here's the interesting thing I've noticed. Even in the midst of a group of lost people who don't care anything about God, when you start telling and you start sharing what God did specifically in your life, it is amazing how curious they become. That isn't because they believe all that.

But here's what they're hoping. Deep down inside without admitting it. Oh, I hope it's true, because if I ever need God, I hope he'll do that for me.

That's their attitude. Some folks may not agree. Some folks may not believe it doesn't make any difference.

But you will have an impact on other people's lives as a result of being obedient to him. Then number six, a motivation for future obedience. I don't know of anything that motivates a person to obey the Lord anymore than what? Obeying him and then enjoying the consequences.

Now, we said the first result would be suffering. I'm not saying it's all suffering. It's not always suffering, but there will be suffering when you and I obey him and a passion.

Listen, a passion for him is going to bring about rewards and what's going to happen. Listen, if God never did anything else good, but just seeing him keep his promise as a result of being obedient, that in itself would be enough reward. Number seven, an increasing, listen to this now, an increasingly clear, an increasingly clear, specific instruction.

Write that down. Increasingly clear, specific instructions. Now, what I mean by that? Simply this, as you and I develop a passion to obey him, here's what God does.

He does what he's been doing, but we begin to hear it more clearly and we begin to hear it more specific. Somebody says, no, wait a minute. The only way God speaks is through his word.

I agree that God indeed speaks through his word primarily, but I also know that the Holy Spirit speaks to your spirit and my spirit. When we are in prayer, that's how we get strong impressions of what we're to do, what we are not to do. And that person who says, well, I don't believe God speaks to people today in that way.

Well, my friend, you have missed a great deal of life. Now, I'm here to tell you, since I was a kid on my knees before God, I began to know that God was impressing my mind and my spirit through his Holy Spirit, telling me what to do and what not to do. And every single time I've obeyed God, God has done what he said he was going to do.

And every time I disobeyed him, I suffered the consequences. And he is so meticulously, precisely clear oftentimes in what he says. And what happens is, listen, isn't this just normal and natural the way God would operate? The more obedient we become, the deeper our hunger, the greater our passion to obey him.

Listen, what does God do but unveil more of himself? We begin to see more clearly and we begin to understand more clearly. And we begin to understand things we've not understood before. And it becomes normal and natural for God to speak through our spirit and to our spirit in ways that before would have been strange.

But what happens? We're building an intimacy. We're building a relationship. And now we become more and more trustworthy to be able to be trusted with God's clearer instruction in an intimate fashion, not just through some scriptures we read, but from his spirit to our spirit.

Now, I know people say, well, let me tell you what God said. Totally off the wall. Because, listen, when anybody tells you that God said anything that's a contradiction of the scripture, just forget it.

God's never said anything to contradict himself. And one of the ways you and I will know, no matter what our passion may be to obey him, Satan will oftentimes try to distort what God is saying. If it doesn't match the principles of scripture, ignore it.

It's not of God. Then one other here, number eight. Listen to this.

One of the results of a passion to obey him is an awesome reverence for his faithfulness. How many times God has spoken to my heart about something. I've done what he said do.

And I come back to follow my face before him. An absolute amazement of how absolutely precisely accurate he is. An awesome sense of God's faithfulness.

How many times have you prayed about something and God has done what you said do. And you never even stopped to think, Lord, you worked at every single one of those details. You worked at every bit of this.

God, I'm absolutely amazed. Listen, aren't you amazed that God, who is infinite, whom you cannot see and you cannot touch, is involved in your personal life in such a way that he corrals and governs and guides the details of your life to work things out just exactly the way he says it's going to work out. An awesome reverence for the faithfulness of God.

And then let me give you two last ones. Number nine, a sense of security. When you and I have a passion for him, there is an indescribable sense of security.

What I mean by that, simply this. You know what happens? Your reasons for worry diminish. Your moments of anxiety diminish.

You know why? You can't find a thing to be anxious about. How am I going to be anxious if a sovereign God who saved me, loved me, lives inside of me, is in control of my life and I'm obeying him and walking in his spirit and doing what he says do? What in the world do I have to worry about? Because you know what? He's already assumed responsibility for all the consequences of that obedience. One last one.

And that is an increasing love and devotion for him. You see, the more you and I obey him, the more we're going to love him. Now, this is a very, very crucial moment because there's some folks sitting here today who are in the process of making a decision.

And one of the dangers is they've never made a commitment to obey God. And so before you walk out of here today, you either will or you will not make a commitment. And if you don't make one, you're going to walk into that decision with all of its pressure and with all the appeal that Satan can muster up.

And because you haven't made a commitment to obey God, what's going to happen is that all the influence is going to sway you to make a disastrous decision. Here's what I want to ask you. I want to ask you, first of all, is Jesus Christ your savior? Second, I want to ask you, is Jesus Christ really and truly? I don't mean some theological, philosophical, religious kind of jargon.

I'm talking about in a practical fashion, is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Question number three. Are you willing today to tell him, Lord Jesus, I choose to make a commitment to obey you, to let obedience be the bottom line of all my decisions from this moment on. The guiding principle of my life will be from this moment forward to obey you no matter what the consequences.

If you're not willing to say that, don't call him Lord. He is not. Because what you've done is you have reserved the right, predetermined, reserved the right to step out of his will when you choose to make your own decisions, when it's convenient to do what you choose to do, to either avoid or to gain.

Do not call him Lord. If you are not willing to say to him today, the bottom line of my life is to obey you no matter what the consequences. And listen carefully.

Somebody, you, you're going to walk out of here into a disaster if you don't make that decision. I am so convinced of that. As sure as I'm standing here, I am fully convinced somebody is going to walk out of here into a disaster.

If you don't draw the line and make the decision today, Lord, I choose obedience and I'll leave the consequences to you. Now, here's what it all boils down to. Either he's my Lord or he's not.

And I'm getting ready right now to make that decision. I don't care how much you pray, sing, talk about it. He's not Lord until you make that decision.

You want your kids to go away to college, come back moral, obedient, submissive, godly. But mom and dad, you better make that decision right now. You want God's best for your life.

You better make it right now. Here's what I want you to understand. Whenever God brings us to a solemn moment like this, when we know we understand the truth and it's clear and plain, and we know it's from God, not from a man.

God holds us in awesome accountability for how we respond. And because I love you, I plead with you in Jesus name. Do not walk out of this place until you've told him, oh, dear God, Lord Jesus.

From this moment on, the bottom line is obedience. Lord Jesus, when I think of who you are and when I think of what you're so willing to do in our life. Oh, dear Lord, help us to understand clearly.

There's only one way and that's your way. I pray for somebody here today who is unsaved. They may not understand what all this is about, but you help them to understand that first of all, there must be the forgiveness of their sins through faith in the death at Calvary.

Your death, Lord Jesus, which paid their sin debt in full. Grant within them the desire to know you as their savior. And oh, God, I don't know why on my heart there is such a burden this morning for somebody who is about to walk into a disaster.

Unless they decide right here and now, before they walk out of this church building into the world and into the awful, awesome, overpowering influence of others. Oh, God. That they may say, yes, Lord Jesus, obedience is the bottom line.

Somebody, Lord, to whom you've spoken many times about serving you. Maybe you've called the preach to the mission field. Those that you have dealt with over and over again about their giving until they have absolutely become numb because of their rebellion and disobedience.

Lord Jesus, surface in our hearts, every single thing with which we have conflict with you about. That we may choose death and we may choose to obey. Is my prayer in your precious name.

Amen.

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