

## LOVING JESUS IS OBEYING HIS TEACHINGS

John 14:15-31

Key Verse: 23

“Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.’”

What is the nature of a relationship with God? Recently you may have heard the tragic stories of Joshua Harris and Marty Sampson, 2 very influential Christian figures, who after years of whole-hearted service for Christ decided they could no longer live by what the Bible teaches and walked away from the faith. Many are asking how could this happen? We live in a time that Biblical Christianity is under attack and there is a strong pressure for us to simply conform our beliefs to affirm culture. However, the words of God weren't written by man, their wisdom is higher than the heavens are above the earth, so how can man rewrite? It is timely that we are talking about THIS passage at this time. Jesus teaches us that a relationship with him cannot be separated from obedience to all of the Bible's teachings. In this time we must seriously consider what should be a Christian attitude toward the word of God and how we can have a real relationship with Jesus in an age of doubt and cultural pushback. We want to think about 2 points: how we can really love Jesus and how the Spirit enables us to do so.

### 1. How we can really love Jesus (15, 21, 23)

After a difficult discussion with his disciples in chapter 13, Jesus began to teach them, saying “Do not let your hearts be troubled...believe in me...I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14 1, 6). But their hearts *were* troubled and filled with grief (16:6). While he was with them, they could love him physically and emotionally but what could they do when he was gone? When Jesus was resurrected Mary Magdalene tried to hold onto Jesus forever humanly, but Jesus said, “Don't hold onto me, for I have not ascended to the Father” (Jn 20:17). Our way of relating to Jesus is not like any human relationship. Our primary point of contact with Jesus is through his word, the Bible. So, we relate to him through his word. Jesus says, “If you love me, keep my commands” (15).

Several years ago, Gary Chapman wrote the groundbreaking book “The Five Love Languages,” that stated that because everyone has one primary way that they feel loved, even if you are showering them with love but in a way that's not their language, they will not feel loved. I can do acts of service for my son all day long and he will look at me nonplussed thinking “Dad, can we play now?” because his

love language is quality time and then physical touch. There may be many ways to love Jesus and relate to a God that we cannot see, but Jesus has already told us the way that we are to love him: it is to keep his commands. In Greek the word is “tereo” which means “to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard.” The same word is used 4 times in this passage (15, 21, 23, 24) translated as both “keep” and “obey.” Jesus wants us to take in his commands and guard them, watch over them, as something precious to be heeded.

Then what commands is Jesus referring to? We should not understand this to mean a list of moral rules like the 10 commandments. In verse 23 Jesus says, “obey my teaching” which can be translated “my words.” So here, these commands encompass all of Jesus’ “words” and “teachings.” Further, in verse 24 Jesus says, “These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.” So, broadly this is about our attitude toward all the Bible’s teachings as further revealed through Jesus. Most prominent among Jesus’ teachings is his new command, to love one another (Jn 13:34). We studied about this central teaching of Jesus 2 weeks ago. Who have you started to love as a result of hearing this teaching? When you reflected on Jesus’ word, whom did God bring to your mind? How have you begun to practically love this person? Obeying Jesus’ command to love one another, is loving Jesus. Has he felt a passionate love from you these past two weeks as you radically put this into practice? Jesus teaches us how he wants us to behave as fathers and husbands, how he wants us to behave as singles, how he wants us to behave as employees, how he wants us to behave as bosses. Jesus teaches us all to forgive without end, make disciples, not to be ashamed of his name and to lose our life for the gospel. How much have we been loving Jesus through our obedience? For the most part, these commandments have to do with our inner life, not our outward circumstances. In this way, whether we are married or single, no matter where we work or live—obedience to God’s Word is the most important thing.

We must have a basic attitude as those who love Jesus, to obey everything that the Bible teaches in every situation, period. I talked about Marty Sampson, the prolific Christian songwriter who is doubting his faith. When I looked at all his issues with the Bible, and criticisms against God, I’ve gotta tell you, they’re thoughtful questions, I’ve asked every single question he asked, I’ve thought every single criticism he’s made and every snide remark. I say in CBF “doubt is good. If you’re not doubting, you’re not thinking.” The Bible is completely countercultural. Everything in the Bible goes against everything that society is teaching us; so, you will have to wrestle with it at some point or you are not really trying to understand it or really walk in obedience. So, several top apologists said to Marty, “Doubting is normal. The answers are there if you’re willing to do the

research.”<sup>1</sup> If you come to God and his word in the time of doubt, your faith is greatly deepened and you learn to trust, depend on and obey the Bible more. So, rather than despair over Marty Sampson (and others like him), we should pray for him, that this may be the time of breakthrough for him, into a deeper walk with Jesus. The real tragedy with Joshua Harris, the groundbreaking author of “I Kissed Dating Goodbye” who started the huge purity culture movement, is that he resigned from his job as a Lead Pastor in order to go to seminary and study theology to deal with his doubts. But his conclusion several years later was that he’d rather hold onto his views, especially on sexuality and marriage rather than obey the Bible. He concluded that societies’ views and the Bible’s teachings were incompatible and decided to go with society, divorce his wife and leave the faith.<sup>2</sup> Of course, we should also pray for him to come back but his disobedience to God’s word has caused irreparable damage to his wife and innocent children and is a grievous sin that shouldn’t have happened. The point is that we must have a decision to obey the Bible no matter what. Anyone who knows me, knows that my Christian life is marked by doubt, but I KNOW that Jesus is truth, I know I love him and he loves me, so I know that his word is truth and I know that if I wrestle with it and obey it, it will always prove right in the end.

What if we refuse to obey? Can we really say that we have a relationship with Jesus, if we refuse to obey his commands? This passage would say no, that’s not actually love. Jesus isn’t our buddy or dad, he is our God and our Lord. The way in which we relate to Jesus is through obedience. Sometimes people say, “I just want to focus on having a personal relationship with Jesus not on commands.” But what they mean is, “I want to feel good, not struggle.” Some say, “Older people never get emotional during worship, their love for Jesus is cold.” But their lives are marked by obedience to God. Many missionaries went out into the mission field leaving behind promising, comfy lives purely out of love for Jesus. They struggle to wake up early and pray for all nations. They struggle to live out the Bible’s teachings each day. They go out and invite students amid persecution and constant rejection because they love Jesus and want to obey him above all else. I mean that sounds like real, passionate, burning love to me. Who do you want? The one who says, “I love you soooo much!” or the one who lays down his life for you? Verse 21 says, “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” John wrote later in 1 John 5:3-4, “In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/top-apologists-reach-out-to-hillsongs-marty-sampson-doubting-is-normal.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://albertmohler.com/2019/08/01/briefing-8-1-19?fbclid=IwAR1LrG91edcK7XEPUI1d69\\_PyrtNvwf8WGFfB3j64Y4WHnFQL0Wt5mXnQ](https://albertmohler.com/2019/08/01/briefing-8-1-19?fbclid=IwAR1LrG91edcK7XEPUI1d69_PyrtNvwf8WGFfB3j64Y4WHnFQL0Wt5mXnQ)

burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” Obedience to Jesus’ commands is not a burdensome duty, because as we obey we are loved by the Father, and Jesus loves us and reveals himself to us. So, because we love Jesus we obey, and as we obey we are loved more and we begin to know Jesus more. The more we know him, the more we love him. The more that we love him, the more that we want to obey him, the more that we will know him. We cannot really know Jesus until we intensely struggle to obey his word.

Love, especially love for Jesus, is not *primarily* an emotion but a decision. Now of course we are commanded to delight in him, sing to him, worship him, love him with every emotion, thought and muscle in our body—our love for Jesus should be burning hot. In CBF when I’m doing praise and in my messages I can get pretty emotional, you know kids don’t believe you if your emotions don’t match your teachings. I mean if your kids see that you’re more excited about the Cubs than Jesus, I mean if they saw you cry with joy a couple years back but they’ve never seen you cry over our living hope in Jesus...you know they’re gonna pick up on that. But we can’t force emotion. Emotion can’t be commanded, but loving Jesus and loving God is commanded in the Bible. It means that love is primarily a decision we make. Emotion does not create love, but, when we choose to love, the emotion comes. A. W. Tozer said, “Flowers and bird songs do not make spring; but when spring comes, they come with it.” Emotional love for Jesus is like being on a honeymoon, it is sweet and makes us feel good. But eventually in a relationship the honeymoon is over and we have to work through making this relationship work in the day to day life. It requires practical commitment and sacrifice. And as we do this, not always fun practice daily, we start to learn that there is a deeper more profound love that is not based on emotion.

St. John of the Cross wrote famously about the “dark night of the soul” which gave a name to a phenomenon that many mature Christians had experienced. Peter Scazzero in a more recent book “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality,” calls it going through the wall, and says that every Christian as they mature will have to go through this. He says, “God brings us to a wall where all the feelings of him evaporate, and the door of heaven seems to be shut to our prayers.” God brings us to this place so that we may not worship the feeling of God, which are not God himself, and learn to separate ourselves from dangerous idolatries. He goes on, “This is God’s way of rewiring and ‘purging our affections and passions’ that we might delight in his love and enter into a richer, fuller communion with him.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Peter Scazzero. Zondervan 2017. P 103

Jesus didn't spend a lot of time telling us to love emotionally, but he does talk a LOT about obeying. In the parable of the 2 sons, it wasn't the son with the good words but the one who **did what his Father asked** that entered the kingdom (Mt 21:28-31). Jesus said, "For whoever **does the will of my Father** in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Mt 12:50). Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who **does the will of my Father** who is in heaven...Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Mt 7:21,24). So, if you feel like expressing your love for Jesus and you're like me, you want to sit down and write a song (or something similar). But instead think about that one thing he's been nudging you to do—that you really don't want to do—and go **do** it. That's real love.

At the same time, the pitfall that we must avoid, is to obey Jesus' commands but without love—this is becoming a Pharisee. The Pharisees kept all the rules outwardly but Jesus said that they neither loved God (Jn 5:42) nor knew God (Jn 8:19). Obedience is not love. Rather, obedience is the proof of true love. Verse 23 says, "Anyone who loves me WILL obey my teaching." In fact verse 15 can also be translated, "If you love me, you WILL keep my commands" (ESV). This obedience isn't like a top down authority based on fear, it is based on love. This passage echoes Deuteronomy 6, where God also commanded us to love God with all of our being and to keep his commands. But in the Old Covenant, we were commanded to obey or we would die, and so we obeyed by our own strength out of fear, or habitually like the Pharisees. But in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, God's commands are written on our hearts, the motivation, the means and the power to obey comes from God and only the decision, or maybe the surrender, comes from us. This brings us to our second point.

## 2. The Power to Obey Jesus (16-31)

Jesus knows that to keep his words in a fallen world requires a divine source of power and rather than blame us, he gives us the help we need because he wants us to get the win. Verse 16 says, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever." Let's say we have a problem with another person and God prompts us to forgive them, he will not force us to obey, twist our arm, take control of us, manipulate us, or zap a certain region of our brain to simply change us in spite of ourselves. God gives us a nudge through the Holy Spirit (or sometimes it feels like a shove or if he really loves us, it feels like he's sitting on top of us smiling) and then it is our decision to obey or not. Once we decide to obey, we may enter into a difficult battle in prayer. Then the Holy Spirit works and as we wrestle to surrender our will, God replaces our

will with his love and his strength and we supernaturally can do what we could not do on our own. Then, the obedience is 100% our effort and 100% God's power and victory. Keeping God's commands is not easy but it is possible. As we go through this struggle again and again, God's character is imprinted on us in place of our sinful will—we call this the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

The Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth” (17a). The Spirit leads us to Jesus' teachings, helps us to obey his teachings, to believe and be reborn. The world cannot accept him because they don't want to see spiritual reality but instead enjoy the flesh (17). But for those that believe, Jesus says, he lives with you and will in fact be in you (17b). The word Advocate, in verses 16 and 26, is “parakletos,” it is also translated Helper, Comforter, Counselor. It means “summoned, called to one's side; one who pleads another's cause before a judge, counsel for defense, legal assistant; advocate.” When we believed in Jesus we were marked with a seal of salvation, the promised Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). When Satan tries to accuse us the Advocate rushes to our side to speak on our behalf saying, “Absolutely not! Your Honor I can truly confess that Nathan Pozo has believed in Jesus and is completely justified and is free from all condemnation, Satan's accusations have no grounds!” In this difficult world full of so many spiritual traps and pitfalls the Spirit is always at our side and working in our heart, helping, comforting and giving us counsel for life's difficult decisions. What an amazing blessing and honor it is to have the very Spirit of God within us—what greater help can we have in this world?

In verses 18-20, Jesus taught that it is through his resurrection from the dead that he would open the way to eternal life and rebirth through the Spirit. On that day, Jesus “breathed on them and said, ‘receive the Holy Spirit’” (Jn 20:22). As Jesus is in the Father, and He and the Spirit are one, so Jesus invites us into the perfect love and unity of the Trinity (Jn 17:21-23). God literally comes to us and makes his home with us (23b) and Jesus fully manifests himself within us (21 ESV).

However, Judas (not Judas Iscariot) asked a question many have asked, “Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” We cannot understand why Jesus has mercy on some and not others, that is the mind of God which we cannot comprehend. But Jesus says simply, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching...Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching” (23a-24). Appearing to the world would not bring about the desired result. After his resurrection Jesus appeared to more than 500 of the believers at the same time (1 Co 15:6). Yet at his ascension, it says “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted” (28:18). When it comes to faith seeing is not believing. The inner manifestation of the Spirit of Christ can only happen in a heart that is

disposed to love and obey Jesus. So, we must pray not that Jesus would show himself more but that the people of the world may have soft open hearts to receive him.

Jesus promised that though he would leave them, the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and remind them of everything that Jesus had said (26). The primary role of the Spirit of truth is to remind us of Jesus' words and reveal to us their meaning and application—the Spirit only says what he receives from Jesus, the Spirit is always in agreement with the word. We must ask the Holy Spirit to come and lead every Bible study that we teach, direct every sermon and convict us as we read his word—the Holy Spirit is the best Bible teacher. Especially, the time of testimony writing is one on one Bible study with the Holy Spirit, who pierces our heart with the word of God and reveals the core issue that we need to repent of as we reflect on his word with the intention to obey one word of God. The result is peace that transcends all human understanding (27). This also is a fruit of the Spirit.

Look at verses 28-31. The most powerful argument for our obedience is Jesus' own example. Though he knew all that Satan was about to do (28-30), Jesus said, "he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me" (31). Jesus didn't just say love is obedience, Jesus became obedient to death though he is in very nature God (Php 2:5-8). If this is how Jesus loved God, then shouldn't we do the same?

In a time when "obey" has become a dirty four letter word and when society is heavily pressuring us to bend our teachings to the flow of society, and when culture is telling us that the word of God is outdated and cannot be inspired, thank God that we could study *this* passage. The modern idea that we can love Jesus and reject the Bible is impossible—Jesus IS the Word, how can you love Jesus and reject Jesus at the same time? The idea that I can love Jesus and not obey him is impossible. These are Jesus' own words about himself. In the midst of so many sad modern stories, we must make a decision that we are going to treat God as God. If we love Jesus there is simply no other way. May God guide us and protect us as we navigate the dangerous waters of our modern pluralistic society. Amen.