**Obedience and Timing**

One of my favorite pastors says that obedience to our Lord is doing “God’s will, God’s way, in God’s timing.” This can feel like a tall order.

There are many examples of obedience in the Bible:

* Noah obeyed God’s strange command (Genesis 6)
* Abraham obeyed God’s call to sacrifice his son (Genesis 12)
* Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego obeyed God in the face of authority (Daniel 3)
* The disciples obeyed in many circumstances when it seemed odd or out of place.

What is your favorite example of obedience from the Bible?

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Beyond the examples in His Word, we also see Him command us to obedience:

**Deuteronomy 6:4-9** *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

**Ephesians 6:1-3***Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”*

**Colossians 3:22***Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.*

**Hebrews 13:17 (KJV)** *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*.

**1 Peter 4:16-17***Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

**Deuteronomy 4:1***“And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. (Moses delivering the LORD’s message)*

**1 Samuel 15:22***And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.*

**John 15:14***“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (Jesus’ speaking)*

**Galatians 5:13-14***For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.* *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

**2 John 1:6***And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.*

We see loss of blessings as a result of disobedience:

**Numbers 20:7-12 *…****and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”*

**Judges 2:1-3***Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.”*

**Joshua 5:6***For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; the LORD swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

**Nehemiah 9:20, 26-27***You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. “Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. (Israel confessing their sins to the LORD)*

**Romans 2:6-8***He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*

And we see the rewards of obedience:

**Genesis 22:17-18***I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” (The LORD speaking to Abraham through an angel)*

**Proverbs 13:13***Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.*

**Psalms 1:1-2***Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

**Luke 11:28***But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Jesus speaking)*

**Ephesians 5:6***Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

Based on all this scripture, it seems safe to say that obedience is a big theme in the Bible, and therefore, in the life of a believer. However, a passage that we didn’t discuss is probably the best example of obedience in the Bible, and that’s the example Jesus sets in Matthew 4:1-11, His temptation in the desert.

Maybe we don’t associate this passage with obedience at first glance, but leave it simply about successfully defeating temptation. However, all obedience is laced with temptation, isn’t it? By it’s very nature, obedience means I am doing something that might not be my first choice to do. When I obey, it usually means I am succeeding in doing something God calls me to do, or resisting something God warns me against. Temptation to do the opposite is always strong.

Consider the cookie jar. As a child I knew I wasn’t allowed cookies before dinner. To obey my mother’s rule meant I resisted the temptation to eat them anyway.

Bearing in mind the inextricable link between temptation and obedience, let’s look at Matthew 4:1-11

# Matthew 4:1-11 English Standard Version (ESV)

### The Temptation of Jesus

**4**Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2**And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3**And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” **4**But he answered, “It is written,

“‘Man shall not live by bread alone,  
    but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

**5**Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6**and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,’

and

“‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
    lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

**7**Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” **8**Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9**And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” **10**Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“‘You shall worship the Lord your God  
    and him only shall you serve.’”

**11**Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Let’s dive into this particular example and uncover the ways that God layered in lesson over lesson in this important beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Have you ever heard of Jesus being called the ‘second’ or ‘last Adam?’ In 1 Cor 15:45, Paul refers to Jesus as the ‘last Adam’

So what does it mean that Jesus is the "last Adam?"

Well, it has to do with the role that Adam played as a *representative*. When he was given commands by God in the garden of Eden, Adam didn't just stand there for himself, he stood there for the whole of humankind. He was our appointed representative before God.

It's kind of like an ambassador to the United Nations. When a country sends an ambassador, she doesn't just represent herself or her family, she represents her national people. Adam was doing the same thing: Adam stood as humanity's representative before God.

That means he sinned as our representative too. That's what the term "original sin" is all about. Because Adam sinned in the garden, you and I sinned in the garden. We're guilty of Adam's sin.

So when Jesus came to rescue sinners and pay the price for our sins, he was also paying the price for Adam's sin. This required him to take on that same *representative* role. Like Adam was the representative for humanity, Jesus was the representative of a *new humanity* before God. He was the "Second Adam" or, more literally, the "Second Man" ('adam’ is the Hebrew word for "man" or "person"; Paul is playing off this in 1 Cor 15). The first Man failed as representative, therefore everyone he represented failed. The Second Man succeeded as representative of the new humanity, and therefore every single one of us who puts our trust in Jesus Christ is made a part of this new humanity. Our representative succeeded where Adam failed! We have the righteousness of Christ that he earned gifted to us! This is the good news of the Gospel.

When we parallel the first and second Adam with their respective temptations we find some interesting lessons. Let’s have an overview:

The setting:

First Temptation (Adam and Eve) was in the Garden of Eden. This was a lush, beautiful place.

Second Temptation (Jesus) was in the desert. This was a dry and desolate place.

Which would you think should produce success? In which situation would you prefer to experience adversity?

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The Conditions:

First Temptation: the conditions were that Adam and Eve could eat everything (except that one fruit)

Second Temptation: the conditions were that Jesus could eat nothing (Matthew 4:2)

Have you ever been tempted or asked to be obedient when you were in a spiritually filled season? Have you ever been tempted or asked to be obedient when you were in a spiritually hungry or dry season?

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First Temptation: Adam and Eve were each others’ support system. They failed each other.

Second Temptation: Jesus depends only on God and scripture. They do not fail Him.

What does this teach us about our reliance on each other or ourselves vs. our reliance on God and scripture? Are there ways that we can help each other be obedient or should we only ever rely on God and scripture?

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Questions:

First Temptation: Genesis 3:1 Satan asks ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

Second Temptation: Satan questions Jesus Sonship: “If you are [really] the Son of God tell these stones to become bread…If you are [really] the Son of God, throw yourself down.”

In both cases Satan is questioning the voracity, authenticity and authority of the Word of God.

How does this inform your understanding of temptation and obedience when the enemy is at work?

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From the first to second example, from the first to second Adam, we see lessons in obedience. What sticks out most to you from this comparison?

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Now let’s talk about obedience as it relates to timing. Remember that phrase my favorite pastor said: obedience is doing ‘God’s will, God’s way, in God’s timing.’ Even if we can get the first two down, the third often trips us up. In the comparison we have been drawing between a failure in obedience (the Garden) to perfect obedience (the desert), timing is a factor.

The timing of the first temptation in the Garden shows us our need for salvation, right from the beginning of creation, so there can be no doubt.

The timing of the second temptation shows us fulfillment of, and example of salvation. Fulfillment of (capital S) Salvation comes in Jesus Christ, the only perfect example of obedience, even to death. The example He sets is also our (little s) salvation, the only way we can subvert temptation and manage obedience is through scripture. We are saved once and for always by Jesus death on the cross. We are saved day by day through the Holy Spirit working out God’s will and God’s way in us. We know those things through His Word.

Now we are going to expand our view even more. Jesus fought temptation in the desert through scripture, looking back each time to what God had said in His word, written many years before. However, Jesus Christ is also timeless, so He knows what was and is now and is yet to come. Consider the questions of the enemy in the context of future fulfillment:

#1 Turn the stones to bread. In other words, provide food miraculously here to deal w your hunger.

Matthew 4:3

**3**And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

Mark 6:38-44 [loaves and fishes]

Jesus knew He could and actually WOULD do what Satan was suggesting, but not in this time, rather God’s timing.

#2 Throw yourself down because the ‘angels will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ In other words, miraculously provide for your own well being.

Matthew 4:5-6

**5**Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6**and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,’

and

“‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
    lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

Matthew 4:11:*Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

Luke 22:43 *An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.*

John 2:19-22*Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+2" \l "fen-ESV-26105c" \o "See footnote c)] and will you raise it up in three days?”  But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

Again, echoing in these words of scripture we hear Jesus say ‘I can and I will, but not in your timing, Satan, instead, in my Father God’s perfect timing.’

#3 Satan offers the world, which in this era is his dominion (John 12:31), to Jesus. He only asks for His worship in return.

Matthew 4:8-9

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

Revelation 20:6: *Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with himforathousandyears*.

Jesus knows He will reign over this earth in God’s timing. He again says, I can and I will, but not in your timing Satan, rather in God’s timing.

Consider the importance of timing. If Jesus had been impatient to fulfill the things he knew he could, what might have been the ramifications?

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Are there things in your life from the past or even right now, that you can now recognize as important in the timing of your obedience?

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Quotes About Obedience

*“I find the doing of the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about His plans.”*

**~ George Macdonald**

*“How many observe Christ’s birthday! How few, His precepts!”****~ Benjamin Franklin***

*“Beware of reasoning about God’s Word – obey It.”****~* Oswald Chambers**

*“Why do you need a voice when you have a verse.”* **~ Jim Elliot**

*“Just as a servant knows that he must first obey his master in all things, so the surrender to an implicit and unquestionable obedience must become the essential characteristic of our lives.”*

**~ Andrew Murray**