

## Life Lessons from Dessert Wondering: To Be Obedient

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We see on TV about certain dogs that are used for special jobs like bomb sniffing or drug sniffing. I had a classmate when I was taking Criminal Justice who trained dogs to sniff for human body parts. They would order human body parts through the state and they would come to her house. They would bury the parts at different locations and their dog had to sniff them out. They had taken their dog to the 9/11 site in New York City to help find victims after the towers had collapsed. Their dog got wounded paws from all the broken glass even with special booties on. Some years ago, we were looking for a subject who we thought had drowned in one of our lakes at the park. The police used mini submarines and divers, but couldn't find the person. Even when they had a dog in a boat who could sniff to a located of a body underwater, started to act different, the divers couldn't find anything. Later, we found the body and the dog was right, but the divers didn't see the body because of murky conditions. All these dogs get trained and they are trained to be obedient to their trainers. The classmate had brought their dog who could smell for body parts to class. We were not allowed to pet the dog and the dog would not move unless told to by the trainer. The dog was obedient to every command given by the trainer. In the watered down theology we have today, it teaches all about the love of Jesus. The theology dwells so much on the love part of Jesus, they forget all about being obedient to Jesus. Many don't like this term "obedient". I Googled the term and Oxford has this definition: complying or willing to comply with orders or requests; submissive to another's will. In America, many believe in Individualism. This means being independent and self – reliant. So, being obedient to someone else's will would rub many today the wrong way. We'll love Jesus, but we still want to be independent and self – reliant. We still want control of how we live and what direction we go. This creates a pressure point in our relationship with Jesus. This is actually is a love issue even though we hear about Jesus and love all the time. If we love Jesus with everything we have, we also have to be obedient to His will.

How can we say we love Jesus, but at the same time disregard some of His commands because they cramp our lifestyle? This is like saying we love our mother, but are not obedient to them. That is not real love. Israel had the same problem in the Old Testament. God wanted their obedience, but Israel wanted their independence and being self – reliant. Let’s look into this further.

Let’s turn to Deuteronomy 6: 1 – 12 where we read this, “**6** “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules<sup>[a]</sup>—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, <sup>2</sup> that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. <sup>3</sup> Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

<sup>4</sup> “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

<sup>10</sup> “And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, <sup>11</sup> and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, <sup>12</sup> then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)

We’ll first look at verses 1 – 4. In verse 3, Moses tells Israel to “hear” so that it may go well with them. The Hebrew term for “hear” is a very strong term. It means to listen intelligently with the implication to obey. In other words, Israel is

to listen very carefully to the laws of God and obey them. This is very important. How often do wives ask their husband if they are listening to what they're saying and the husband answers with a quick yes? Then the wife asks husband to repeat what they said for the past hour and the husband is silent because he wasn't really listening. This is horrible, but this happens to us as well when we listen to God. We only listen to what we want to hear. Moses is telling Israel that they must listen to God if they want it to go well with them. They must listen to God and then they must obey.

One of the reasons for this is found in verse 2 where Israel must teach these commands from God to their children or we can say to the next generations. In fact, God has Moses state that Israel to suppose to pass these commands from God to their children so that they may "fear" the Lord. Obedience and fear of God go hand in hand. The Hebrew term for "fear" is "yare" which has two meanings. This term can mean terror and fright. On the other side, this term can mean revere and respect (Strong's Concordance). When we hear the term "fear" we think of terror and fright. An example is when we watch scary movies when we were children. The worst one for me was the old movie "Frankenstein" with Boris Karloff. I would have nightmares of Frankenstein chasing after me and for a child, that can be very scary. I can still watch that movie today and still feel a little uneasiness while watching it. As I was thinking about this Hebrew term that is used for God is actually the correct term to be used today. We should have a real fear (terror and fright) of God when we are sinners and are unsaved. When we allow Jesus into our hearts, then that fear gets mixed with the other definition of fear – revere and respect. We've tried to take out the fear part of knowing God, but it is needed for us to have a healthy relationship with our Lord. Before I knew Jesus, I was scared of God because He had the authority to send sinners to hell for eternity. This brought real fear which would lead to conviction in knowing I was a sinner. When I allowed Jesus into my heart, I still feared God because He is all powerful, but that love that comes into our heart through the Spirit of God helps that fear to form revere and respect for God. I still fear God because of who He is, but now that revere and respect helps to keep that terror and fright fear in check or in a healthy mode. I've read some old books from Christian writers who were scared to death of God. They tried to obey God out of real fear that He would destroy them. This teaching was popular during the 1600 and 1700's. So they tried to obey God out of real fear and that is not showing real love toward God through Jesus. When we fear God with revere and respect mixed in, that is the love of the Holy Spirit that is within us mixing into this fear of God. We then

obey God not just out of total fear and terror, but with reverence and respect because of the love we have for God through His Spirit. At the same time, this reverence and respect for God helps us to want to be obedient to our Lord in every way. We have it a little easier than Israel because of the help of God's Spirit within us. So, we teach the next generation about this love and fear we are to have for our Lord. We have made Jesus into such a cozy friend, that we have left out the healthy fear we should have for Him because Jesus is the Son of God. Paul tells us this in Philippians 2: 12, "<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)" The Greek term for "fear" is "phobos" which has the same definition as the Hebrew term. There is terror and fright for God and also reverence and respect. Again, when we allow Jesus into our heart, that reverence and respect for God controls that terror for God that we have before we know Jesus. This is the love of God that we now have helping us to have a healthy fear for our Lord and we should and need to have a healthy fear for the Lord. If not, then we'll have a harder time in being obedient to God. A healthy fear of the Lord or I should say a healthy fear of the Trinity is needed to be able to be obedient to God out of love for Him. A healthy fear of knowing I serve a Lord who can say "I never knew you" on Judgment Day, but also a Lord who can say "Well done good and faithful servant". Those who don't know Him will be banished to hell for eternity and those who are good and faithful servants that Jesus knows will spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven.

This is why God has the Great Command after verses 2 and 3, "<sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (ESV – Biblegateway)". This is the command Israel was to live by and to teach their children. If we really love Jesus, if we really are filled with His Spirit that helps us to love Jesus, then we can be obedient to this command and all the other commands from our Lord on how we are to live today and tomorrow because our Lord doesn't change like our culture changes. In fact, God states in verse 6 that His commands should be on our hearts if we love our Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. His commands don't change. They are for our good to help us to live in this crazy world that we live in. There is something else we can learn from Deuteronomy.

God then has Moses spend some time showing how important it is to teach and train the next generation. When we water down God's messages to His people to make it easier for them, we have done a great mistake and have done great harm to the next generation. If we teach that love is only what is needed and skip the need for total obedience to God, the next generation will have a harder time in loving our Lord with everything they have. Again, obedience and love go hand in hand. God tells the people to write His commands on their doorframes, on their houses, tie them on their hands and on their foreheads. In other words, being obedient to God is extremely important. We can't put obedience to God to the side. We need obedience to the laws of God because it is part of the love we have for Him.

Finally, God has Moses remind Israel in verse 12 to not forget the Lord who had brought them out of their slavery in Egypt. God was the One who destroyed the Egyptian army and had the sea divided. God was the one to lead them through the wilderness. God saved Israel from their horrible slavery. Obedience would help them to remember the One who saved them from slavery. For us today, we should want to be obedient to God out of love because of Jesus saving us from the slavery of sin. There was nothing Israel could do to save themselves, but to follow God in obedience. We can't save ourselves from our sin. Only Jesus can do that through His blood. Since, Jesus broke the chains of bondage that held us in despair. The chains of sin can only be broken by Jesus. Just like children want to be obedient to their parents out of love for them, we should want to be obedient out of love for Jesus because of what He has done for mankind. One of the ways we show love to our mothers' is to be obedient. Let's ask the Lord that His Spirit will help us to be more and more obedient to His commands out of love. God would love that.

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001