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Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

Six Ways to Disobey

Leave it to the preacher to make a simple concept seem complicated! Disobedience is to disobey God’s commandments, pure and simple, right? That’s true, but there are nuances to disobedience, and we might actually learn something by investigating them.

To Stubbornly Refuse

This is the first thing we think of. When we hear God’s command, and we shake our fist and reply, “No, I won’t!” it is clear-cut and stubborn disobedience. Maybe we think we know what is good for ourselves better than our Heavenly Father does. Maybe we are mad at God and we are in outright rebellion against Him; perhaps on a mission to last out at God and disobey as many of His commandments as possible.

Jonah is a good example. When God said to him, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it,” Jonah boarded a ship and went the opposite direction. Thankfully, God showed His power and taught Jonah a valuable lesson about second-guessing God’s commandments.

We must repent of our stubbornness immediately, for eventually the day will come when God will give “retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel” (2 Thess. 1:8).

To Disobey in Ignorance

Sometimes we don't mean to be rebellious. We simply have never heard or read God's commandments.

While ignorance is somehow less awful than rebellion, it will still cause a person to be lost. Not knowing the speed limit will not get you out of a ticket, and not knowing the tax code will not get you out of a fine. The Laodiceans didn't realize they were lost, but they were (Rev. 3:7). The Israelites were destroyed “for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). And many sinners the world over will be lost not because they rejected the truth, but because they never heard it (Rom. 10:14).

To Partly Obey

This is the excuse of teens everywhere, saying, for example, “I did do the dishes, just like you asked me to!” when there is a half-sinkful of dirty dishes yet remaining.

King Saul tried this same excuse. In 1 Samuel 15, God plainly told him to destroy the Amalekites and all they possessed. Saul mostly carried out the order, but he spared King Agag and the choicest spoils. When the prophet Samuel confronted him, Saul lamely offered, “I have carried out the command of the Lord!” (v. 13). Samuel replied, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears?”

To obey some of or even most of God's commandments may put us ahead of our peers, but it is not obedience. We must obey all!

To Wait to Obey

It is said, “delayed obedience is disobedience.” I suppose there are a few cases, free of malice, when a person asked a few questions of God before complying, and gained a better appreciation of God's purposes. But even with Moses, God got angry with his dragging his feet and told him to quit talking and moving (Exo. 4:14)!

Having good intentions to eventually obey when it is finally convenient is not the same as humble obedience. “I’ll take out the trash when I’m done with this video game,” is disobedience. “I’ll become a Christian after I live a little first,” is disobedience. “I’ll preach the gospel to my neighbors next week,” is disobedience. “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation!” (2 Cor. 6:2).

To Go Beyond

We’re not talking about zeal. It’s always good to say, “I’m going to do twice as much today in the service of the Lord than I did yesterday!”

We’re talking about doing something presumptuously, adding things to the faith and to God’s blueprint for the church—adding instruments to the worship, adding bake sales to the church’s treasury, etc. Really, this is disobeying God’s meaningful silence. Perhaps it’s not as obvious as disobeying a direct command, but when God tells us specifically to do one thing (sing, or take up a freewill offering), He basically declares the other options off limits. When mom gives her son \$10 and sends him to the store to get milk, she doesn’t have to say, “No,” to every other product on the shelves. And she would be right to be annoyed if he returned with milk, eight Snickers bars, and no change.

“You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2, see also Rev. 22:18, 2 John 9).

To Substitute Something Else

In 1 Kings 12, King Jeroboam decided to “improve” the worship God had ordained. He set up a temple in Bethel and another in Dan, made priests from tribes other than Levi, instituted a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, “even the month which he had devised in his own heart” (25–33). God became extremely angry!

Perhaps this type of disobedience is worst, for a man imagines he is smarter than God. What if Noah said, “I like oak better than gopher!” (Gen. 6:14)? What if Paul said, “I have a better idea than the cross!” (Gal. 1:8–9)? Let us humbly trust and obey our God. —*John Guzzetta*