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Five Levels of Obedience

Adapted from Justin Gravitt's blog post:
<https://www.justingravitt.com/blog/5-levels-obedience>

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DISCIPLE MAKING MINISTRIES



The Five Levels of Obedience Tool

What level of obedience do you show?

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The Five Levels of Obedience Tool

Introduction

Today, I would like to share a tool that disciples can use to more accurately assessing their true level of obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ. The tool is called The Five Levels of Obedience. This tool has been adapted from a blog post by Justin Gravitt.

One key that unlocks rapid movement towards maturity in Christ is the disciple's obedience to the commands of Christ. The more that a disciple obeys, the more quickly he moves into fruitful calling. There are many areas of life that require obedience for success. These include but are not limited to parenting, schooling, working, church growth, etc.

But are we obeying Christ to the same extent that He obeyed the heavenly Father? Is our obedience consistent, conditional, provisional, future contingent or unconditional? Let us dive into some details so that we can accurately determine our level of obedience and to advance to greater levels.

Romans 5:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

1 Peter 4:17 (NLT) ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News?



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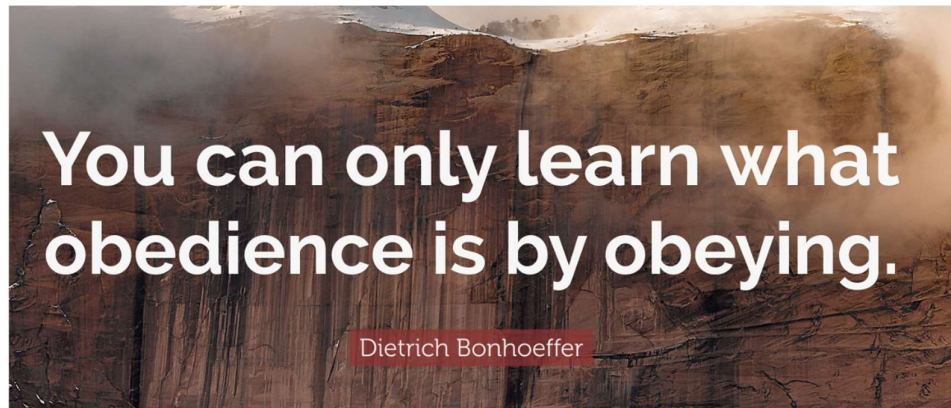
Level 1: Inconsistent Obedience

“I just do what I want.”

Spiritual infants are the second largest category of believers seen in the church. Being a spiritual infant is neither an indicator of physical age nor of how long an individual has been a believer, Rather these categories indicate the level of spiritual maturity towards becoming more like unto Jesus Christ. While spiritual infants may be thankful for salvation by grace through faith and for the gift of eternal life, they are not necessarily mature enough to be aware or to care about the will of God. Any obedience that they show is probably more of a coincidence than a conscious commitment to fulfill the desires of God. Spiritual infants tend to react to situations rather than to reflect upon the nature and will of God.

1 Corinthians 3:1-5 (ESV) ¹ But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human? ⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.

Hebrews 5:13 (NLT) ¹³ For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right.



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Level 2: Conditional Obedience

“If God gives me what I want, then I’ll give Him what He wants.”

Spiritual children are probably the largest category of believers seen in the church. Not only are they thankful for their salvation and eternal life, but they have also developed an awareness of the general will of God. Somewhere deep in their consciousness they understand that God desires that they should be holy as He is holy. They know that their character is supposed to reflect the character of God in community. But they are often self-centered and driven by their flesh as they interact with various situations in life. When life becomes a challenge or when they are challenged to put aside past loyalties or when the timing of required change becomes troublesome then obedience remains based upon selfish conditions. “If God gives me what I want, then I will give Him what He wants.” To the spiritual child, obedience seems hard.

1 Peter 1:14-16 (ESV) ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Luke 9:57-62 (ESV) ⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” ⁵⁹ To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹ Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” ⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”



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Level 3: Provisional Obedience

“I’ll give God what He wants as long as He meets my basic needs.”

Spiritual youth are harder to find in the church. Not only are they thankful for their salvation, have they developed an awareness of the will of God, but they are also willing to sacrifice conveniences, past loyalties and troublesome timings to obey many of the commands of Christ. While spiritual youth may be willing to give up their want, they maintain an expectation for God to meet the needs of those who serve Him. For, who would be willing to serve a God who does not meet the need. In the beginning, Job accepted inconveniences and untimeliness of trials and tribulations. But toward the end of his story he basically confronted God for not meeting the need. Job had to learn the lesson that Creator has the right to mold and shape the clay however He desires. Obedience exists. But not every thought has been taken captive in obedience to Christ.

Philemon 21 (ESV) ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

Titus 3:1 (ESV) ¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work...

1 Kings 19:1-8 (ESV) ¹ Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” ³ Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴ But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” ⁵ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” ⁶ And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” ⁸ And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.



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Level 4: Future Contingent Obedience

"I'll give God what He wants, believing—in faith—that at some point, I'll get what I need and want."

Spiritual adults are even fewer within the body of Christ. They have been faithful to follow Christ by sacrificing conveniences, putting aside previous loyalties, persevering through troublesome timing, taking captive every thought during trials and tribulations in the present but expecting some kind of reward in eternity. There is still some kind of expectation for a delayed hope of heavenly rewards. While this level of obedience is wonderful, there is one more level of obedience that comes even closer to the obedience that Jesus demonstrated on His way to the cross.

Philippians 3:13-15 (ESV) ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Revelation 2:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.



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Level 5: Unconditional Obedience

“I will give what God desires because I love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength.”

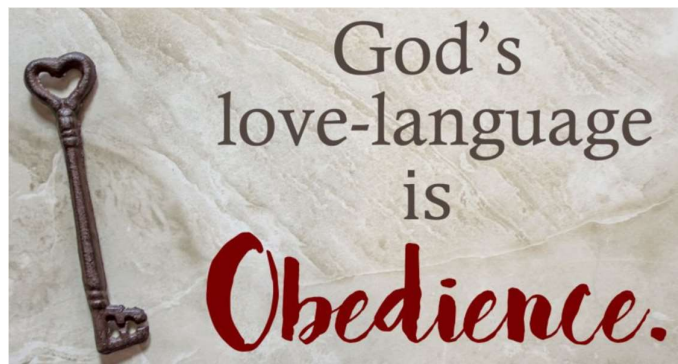
The higher level of obedience demonstrated by spiritual parents and grandparents is shown by obeying without condition or expectation. The underlying motivation of obedience and service is agape self-sacrificing love for the benefit of God and His glory. For, they will know that we are His disciples by our love. The apostle John seems to have grasped something about unconditional obedience through agape love.

1 John 2:5 (NLT) ⁵ But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him.

1 John 3:22 (NLT) ²² And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

1 John 3:24 (NLT) ²⁴ Those who obey God’s commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

1 John 5:2 (NLT) ² We know we love God’s children if we love God and obey his commandments.



The Five Levels of Obedience Tool

Conclusion:

Here are a couple of concluding remarks:

First, this tool is not meant for comparison with other believers. No disciple of Jesus stays completely on one level of obedience. In reality, each of us moves around from one level to another in different realms of our spirit, heart, soul, mind and body. That is normal. What is important is self-evaluation in the Holy Spirit and movement towards higher levels of obedience.

Second, remember that even if the motivation for obedience is not pure agape love, the fact that you obeyed is better than disobedience. Sometimes it takes a longer period of the daily grind of obedience to eventually result in the motivation of agape love. There is a reason that discipline in the moment does not seem pleasant but eventually results in a reward.

So, I would like to exhort you to take some time to review your level of obedience in key areas of your life and relationships. You may rate your level of obedience in these areas: 1. Obedience to God rather than man 2. Obedience to your husband in marriage 3. Obedience to the leadership in church 3. Obedience to the boss at work 4. Obedience to the officials in government who fulfill godly functions 5. Obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:2 (NLT) ² God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more grace and peace.

