

## AUTHENTIC DISCIPLESHIP – IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE

**Speaker:** Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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Last week we looked at what it means to be a disciple or an authentic disciple or a radical disciple of Jesus. I shared with you that there were two areas that God had placed upon my heart that prompted me to share with you this over the next few Sundays. One was on Discipleship, and we'll be looking at various facets on discipleship and what that means for each one of us.

And then look at prayer on Wednesdays. This is as important as what we are doing here on Sundays. It must be. For each one of that – that we can just take our one hour in the middle of the week, check out, press pause and attend the bible study. Something that God lays upon our hearts to think about is something that is unique, something that is holy, something that we ought not to take lightly. So I just want to encourage you all to make sure you get on that Zoom link and attend the Bible study as well as prayer on Wednesdays.

I ended last week, as we talked about discipleship, that the prerequisite as we accept Jesus as our Savior, the first step is that we move from Savior to Him being Lord of our lives. That is the trajectory of discipleship – we start by knowing Him as Savior. He saves us. But then we live the rest of our lives putting Him as Lord of our lives. that's the whole process of discipleship.

The first thing is to be able to completely submit to Him. Submission is the starting point and we submit to His will. "Take my will and let it be, consecrated Lord, to Thee." That's how we start the Lordship process. I shared some quotes from C.S. Lewis. But my real favorite is when he writes about what he has garnered from all that Jesus said in the gospels, about what Jesus would say to us in this whole area of discipleship.

"Jesus warned us to count the cost, that it was not going to be easy. "Count the cost," He said, "before becoming My disciple. Make no mistake; if you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less or other than that. You have the free will and if you choose, you can push Me away." This is what we do so often; we push Him away.

But He says, "Understand that I'm going to see this job through. Whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life, whatever inconceivable purification it may cost you, whatever it costs Me, I will never rest, nor let you rest until you are literally perfect, until My Father can say without reservation that He is well pleased with you." That is what we want to hear – Just as He was well pleased with Jesus. That would be Jesus' end game for us, to make sure that all of us hear the words that He heard from His Father that He is well pleased with us. And beloved, for us to get there, submission is the key. We submit to His will so that He can do everything that He needs to do through us to be able to bring us to that point.

### **OBEDIENCE**

This week I want to submit to you that the first point after submission is obedience. We will look at 3 or 4 other points over the course of the next few weeks. We submit to Him, but after submission, when He speaks to us, we are obedient. We don't filter the thoughts that He sends our way and say, "Lord, I'll take this, I'll accept this, but not that." We take it in total, in completeness from Him.

Jesus said to the people who believed in Him: "*You are truly My disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.*" In other words, what His teachings are, we follow, "*and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.*"

James 1:22 *"We must be obedient children and doers of the Word."* He says, *"Don't just listen to God's Word. You must do what it says, otherwise, you're only fooling yourself."* Don't just be listeners or hearers of the Word. And sometimes, it's so easy for us to get to the point where we come in and we hear God's Word and then we turn around and walk away without taking it and saying, "Lord, how does that inform me? How does that change my life? What should I give or offer to You for You to clean up? Which spaces should I give You that You don't have control? Let the Word rest in us and do its job.

Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God. God wants to know that the people that He can trust will be obedient to Him. Remember the story in 1 Samuel 28, where Saul is crying before the Lord. Samuel has died and there's no prophet to help him. He's crying out to the Lord, but the heavens are silent. God is silent. Then Saul goes and gets a medium and tries to contact Samuel. But the whole idea why God was silent was because he refused to carry out God's word about the Amalekites. He was disobedient to God.

Jesus said, *"Whoever has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me."* Jesus was just about the perfect example of obedience. Philippians tells us that He was obedient to the point of death.

1 Samuel 15:22 *"What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to His voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams."*

We need to be obedient – that is what God finds most appealing from His children, that we are obedient to His will, and therefore His plans and His purposes begin to be fulfilled in our lives. I looked at obedience and opened it out to see in which areas we need to be obedient. This is not an exhaustive list, but just a few areas. I was led by this particular song that I love:

I'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord,  
I'll do what You want me to do,  
I'll be what You want me to be, dear Lord,  
I'll say what You want me to say.

Go, do, be, and say – obedience in all of these areas.

## 1. GO.

Some of our Old Testament friends knew what 'go' from God meant. You just packed up and went. Abraham. Genesis 12: *The Lord said to Abraham: Leave your native country, your relatives, your father's family and go to the land I will show you.*

Lord, I need the destination for my GPS. No, Abraham, you're not getting any destination; I just want you to go. Just go. I'll keep telling you, but take that step of faith.

Very often, in our own lives, God says: I want you to go, and we say, wait Lord, this is really half-cooked for me. I need to have a plan in place, a full plan. And so, we stop and we don't move saying, "Lord, that's the way I'll obey." And God says, "No. Obedience for me is when I say go, you go. And I'll continue to lead you," as He did with Abraham. Maybe today, God is inviting you to go into an unknown territory, an unknown space, a place that you've not been in. I wonder whether that's the issue for you today. That's why you're here today, that God is saying: Go. And you still haven't taken the first steps in going into the unknown.

Jonah too, was told to go. He of course, went in another direction. Again, he had his own plans and God says "Go". I'll go but I won't go where He wants me to go. And that has disobedience written all over it. And sometimes, that's our problem as well. Then when God says "Go", we don't agree with God. We begin to doubt God and we say, "God, you're saying go. But this is what I'm going to do." And then you can change your mind, which is what Jonah's problem was. He said, "Lord, I'll go into the streets of Nineveh shouting, 'Repent, repent. The day of destruction has come.' and then they will repent and You'll feel sorry for them, and I'll be the fool." Which is exactly what happened. But that's what God wanted Jonah to do – to go and ask the people to repent. Sometimes the things that God asks us to do don't cover us with a great amount of good. Sometimes we look bad doing what God wants us to do. But God's obedience involves that as well.

I've said this many times – partial obedience to God is actual complete disobedience. You can be 99% obedient to Him, but you're still being 100% disobedient. I wonder whether God is saying something to you today, something that you're not comfortable with.

Like Elijah. God said in 1 Kings 18:1, "Elijah, go and show yourself to Ahab." That was not an easy thing for Elijah to hear because he was the most wanted man in Israel. Ahab has been searching for him because from his word, there has been no rain for three years. And God says, "Go into this difficult, dangerous place." And God was with Elijah, wasn't He? Raised him up to such a height in that 'whole battle of the gods', as it were. God sends us into dangerous, difficult places. But His promise is: I will never leave you; I will be with you. I wonder whether some of you sitting here have dug your heels in because it's unknown or it's difficult or it's dangerous. And you've forgotten that along with God's call to go somewhere, comes His protection, that He will lead, He will guide.

And so, the first area of obedience is go – to go into the places that God is inviting us to go.

## 2. DO.

Do the things that God is inviting us to do.

Luke 5:4-6 *"When Jesus had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.'" Remember, Jesus is a Bible teacher, and Peter is a fisherman. And Jesus is telling Peter how to fish. I don't know how long it took between Peter hearing it and replying, but his reply was wonderful. He says, "Master, we worked hard all night and didn't catch anything. But if You say so, I'll let down the nets again." And of course, this time their nets were full.*

John 21 echoes the same thing. Jesus shouts across the waters, "Children, you haven't caught any fish, have you?" "No, we haven't." "Then throw your nets on the right-hand side of the boat." And they do, and they catch fish.

Sometimes to do the things that God wants us to do goes against our own expertise. The things that we know, the things that we do, that we know backwards and that we are doing day in and day out. And God says, "I want you to do that differently." And everything in us wants to stand up and say: Excuse me, Lord, but I am the expert here. But how often we find out to our detriment, that we are not an expert in front of God. I wonder today whether that's a reason for not being obedient – that it's just rubbing against the grain of what you know.

Take Moses and the parting of the Red Sea. God tells Moses: "Lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." Imagine that! I wouldn't want to be Moses at that point. I'm standing there. I can hear the hooves of Pharaoh's army horses coming, and then I see the waters in front of me. And God says, "Stretch out your rod." Really! Is that your plan, God? Stretch out a rod? Sometimes that is what we

do. We second-guess God. Moses didn't. Immediately, he did what God asked him to do, and the waters parted. That's the beauty of being obedient to God when everything within us says "it's impossible, it cannot happen. It defies every law of nature." God says, "I supersede nature. I put nature into place." Can you imagine those Israelites walking through, looking at the water on either side, seeing it stand up? And they say, "Hey, it's dry ground too. Our sandals are not getting yucky." Imagine the stories they had to tell their children and grandchildren. Imagine the stories that you and I can tell our families when we do and trust God to do the impossible in our lives.

Then Joshua walking around the walls of Jericho. God told him to walk around for seven days, and I can imagine them walking around the walls of Jericho, and every window in Jericho is open and the guys are shouting out: Hey! Going for a stroll again? Here go the Israelites walking once more around us. Imagine the ridicule until the day the walls fell down.

And sometimes the things that God invites us to do may cause people to laugh, to scorn and ridicule us. And yet when we stick to it, the laughter and the scorn come to an end very quickly, because we stand vindicated. Maybe that's true for some of you today as you've thought about obedience and His walk of discipleship, that sometimes the things that you want God to tell you must fit into your grid, your understanding. You've reduced God to a finite being, to your understanding, to your mind and said: Lord, as long as it makes sense for me, I will do it. And the Lord's words would be, "Your thoughts are not My thoughts. There's no way you can even fathom the things that I know or what I'm thinking about right now. But I'm asking you to be obedient, to trust Me in spite of what the rest of the people are saying to you."

Can you imagine Noah making the ark? The people hadn't seen rain. Noah hadn't seen rain. Here he was building an ark. So what is it beloved, that God is speaking to you and saying: I want you to do something today.

### 3. SAY.

To say the things that God wants us to say/speak.

Isaiah 35:4 says, "*Say to those with fearful hearts...*" I want to stop there and ask you: To how many people who have fearful thoughts have you said that this is what the prophet Isaiah says?

*Say to those with fearful hearts 'be strong, do not fear, your God will come, He will come with vengeance; with divine retribution He will come to save you.'*

To how many people have we taken this scripture and said that this scripture is for you. I see anxiety on your face. Here is scripture for you. "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come." Or an encouraging word.

1 Thessalonians reminds us, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up." I remember in seminary; I had a chapel speaker who went to seminary in the late 60s. That was a time when segregation had been taken out and so black students were allowed into white colleges. He said: "In my class, we were all white except for one black student; one African-American, who would come every day and sit by the window. We'd all come into class, hear the lecture and then we would all leave. Then he'd walk out by himself. This went on for a couple of months; nobody spoke to him. Then one day when I got up in the morning, the Lord told me, 'When class is over, invite him to come and have lunch with you.' The thought was so strong over me that, as soon as the class was over, I went up to him and said, 'Hey, would you like to join me for lunch?' His face beamed, wreathed in smiles, and he said, 'I'd love to.' We went out together, and that became the start of a friendship."

“We finished seminary and six years later, I got a call from him. I recognized the booming voice that he had, and he said, ‘Hey, we’re opening a new facility at the church where I am the pastor. I’d love for you to come and speak at the inauguration.’ I said ‘I’d be happy to.’” So he went to his church, a huge sprawling property, a couple of thousand people meeting in the sanctuary, and he’s the senior pastor. And he got up to introduce him, saying, ‘Friends, I want to tell you something. I went to seminary and I was the only black person in the room. Nobody spoke to me; this went on for months. Then one morning, I got up and said, ‘Lord, I’m done. I’ve had it. If nobody speaks to me today, I’m packing my bags, leaving, getting out of this ministry, and I’m going to get a secular job and carry on with my life.’ Then he said, ‘This dude came and asked me out for lunch, and it changed my life. I’m your pastor today because of him.’”

That’s what and how encouraging words work. When God invites us to say things to people, He banks on us to do that because His will and His purpose are in play here. And obedience is not being able to say: Lord, I’m shy. I’m not the type. I’m an introvert. When God says, “I want you to say something, bring an encouraging word, I want you to go and say this, to be able to do that because it changes lives,” as it did.

#### **4. BE.**

To be. What does God want us to be in terms of obedience? He wants us to be faithful. It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful, all of us, sons and daughters of the Most High God. He has given us things that He expects us to invest so that when we finally share with Him what we have done with it, He will be pleased. God expects us to be faithful. Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.

What has He given you, beloved? What has He given you that He’s asking you to be faithful in using? I was just reading a book this morning, and in it, this pastor said, “I went to the church and I asked them: How many of you here use your spiritual gifts? From the numbers we got, we found that 53% of the church were using their spiritual gifts. That was low for a church because we expect at least 90-95% of a healthy church to be using their spiritual gifts.

I wonder how many of us here are using our spiritual gifts. How many of you would even know what your spiritual gifts are? Have you made an attempt to find out? Paul would say in 1 Corinthians regarding spiritual gifts: Brethren, I don’t want you to be ignorant. In other words, this is important. There are many things that we look at the Bible and say “No! that’s a little ambiguous.” Regarding spiritual gifts – the health of a church is in the use of spiritual gifts. I’ve said from the beginning – if you’re not using your spiritual gifts in the church, the church is limping. It’s not using its full potential.

So, are we being faithful, beloved? Faithful to the things that God has given to us? Coming to service is not a one-way street. We don’t come here just to receive. We come to give as well. That’s what church is. We use our gifts. What does God want us to be faithful with the things that He has given to us? God forbid that we should reach heaven and God asks us what we did with that one gift? And we give it to Him with the gift wrapper still on. What a terrible thing that would be. I didn’t even open it, Lord.

So beloved, to do, to say, to be, and to go – which part of that in terms of obedience are you struggling with this morning? Is there an area that you’re saying: Lord, I’ve not been obedient, and I don’t know how to go forward. I think the Lord’s table is a beautiful place to come to and say, “Lord, I come in my inadequacy, but I’m willing. What You want me to do, to be, so say, to go; I’m willing. I may not have confidence; I may not be sure of it. But Lord, I trust You. My heart is to say: I’m ready to

do, to say, to go and to be and let God do the rest. Faithful is He who has called you, and He will bring it to pass. The onus is always on Him. He is faithful.

Heavenly Father, we bow in Your presence. We want to once again reiterate that we are Your children and we are so thankful that You are our Father. But Lord, this morning we have been challenged by Your Spirit. We know that we have not been obedient in so many areas. Your Holy Spirit is moving around, touching hearts and convicting us. Lord, would You let faith arise? We want our wills to align with Your Holy Will so that heaven and earth will come together and Your purposes will be fulfilled. As we come to the Table, we come with our inadequacies, but we want to leave in Your strength, leave knowing that You will empower. You will equip and Your grace will be eminently sufficient. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

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