

Vital Worship



In this final study in our series on Vital Worship, we will look at Jesus' teaching on two essential facets of our worship: loving God and obeying God.

ICEBREAKER: Love and obedience are sometimes regarded as opposites, even contradictory. However, vital and authentic worship must incorporate and balance both of these aspects. What happens in our Christian lives if we 'love God' but don't obey His word and commands? What happens in our Christian lives when we 'obey God' without a genuine and authentic love of God?

In Deuteronomy 10-11, we read of Moses calling the people of God to a way of live, characterised by love for and obedience to the LORD. Here is an excerpt. (Feel free to also read it in another translation)

“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the LORD your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. And you must always obey the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good. (Deut 10:12-13) “You must love the LORD your God and always obey his requirements, decrees, regulations, and commands. ... Be careful to obey all these commands I am giving you. Show love to the LORD your God by walking in his ways and holding tightly to him.” (Deut 11:1,22. NLT)

- Highlight or circle the words 'love' and 'obey'. Why are these themes repeated?
- In these verses, what actions demonstrate this love and obedience?
- What do these verses teach us about the attitudes, mindset and motivation for love and obedience?
- What is God's intention in giving us his commands? (Deut 10:13) What does this remind us about the nature of God?
- What do you think about the following comment: ““Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?” ... “Do you love Him with all your heart?” ... The requirement of love is obedience. ... love fails when it disobeys.”¹

READ: John 14

In the gospel and letters written by John, the same themes – of the requirements to love and obey God – are repeated multiple times. Jesus not only taught this to his disciples. He is also the supreme example of what it looks like to love and obey God.

- What do the following verses tell us about the relationship between the Father and the Son? How did that affect how Jesus lived and did ministry?
 - Matt 3:17
 - John 14:31
 - John 14:11
 - John 14:10
 - John 20:21
 - Phil 2:7-8
 - John 14:13
- What do you think Jesus was talking about, when he said: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” (John 14:10-11) Can you draw a picture of this?

¹ <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-1/love-and-obedience>

What are the consequences of Jesus claiming “The words I speak are not my own” (John 14:10) and “These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.” (John 14:24) How does that change how we regard Jesus’ teaching?

Jesus practiced what he preached. John 14:31 tells us that he did exactly what the Father commanded him to do. In turn, he set the same standard – for us – as his disciples.

- In John 14:15, we read: “If you love me, keep my commands.” What are the implications of this statement for us?
- Read the following verses from John’s gospel and letters. What other things does John tell us about this instruction, including how we live it out?
 - John 14:24
 - 1 John 2:5
 - 2 John 1:6
 - 1 John 5:1-3

In the Old Testament, the blessings of the Covenant were linked to the faithfulness and obedience of the people. In Deut 28:1-2, we read:

“If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God.”

In turn, if they rebelled and disobeyed the commandments of God, that would result in them not receiving the promised blessing. However, it also activated Old Testament covenant curses on the people of God.

- Throughout the Old Testament, we see repeated incidences of the people of God turning away from God and sinning against him. They had lots of promises, which should have kept them motivated towards being faithful and obedient. Why do you think they continually failed?
- What are some of the promises that we are given, that we find in John 14?
 - John 14:18
 - John 14:19
 - John 14:21

By contrast to the Old Testament, though, we are enabled and equipped to love and obey God, by being given the Holy Spirit, who is called a “counsellor” and “the Spirit of truth”. (John 14:16-17)

- What do the following verses teach us about the work of the Spirit?
 - John 14:17
 - John 14:26
 - John 14:27

REFLECT & SHARE: Think of a situation where you have been unsure of what to do or were facing some temptation to act or speak inappropriately. How did the Spirit of God provide you with truth and counsel you in that situation? What role did Scripture also play, in that situation?

PRAY: for each other, that God will give you courage to be obedient to God in all things.

“Whatever it takes, Lord, increase my capacity to love until I love you with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love my neighbour as I love myself.”²

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lord-increase-my-capacity-to-love>