

Spiritual Treasure  
*The Secret of Obeying*

We live in a world of changing values and confused men and women. People trying to find some kind of meaning and reality in a world that has little to offer that is lasting.

The Bible presents a very different picture. We're in week 3 of a 3 week series we're calling Spiritual Treasure: Secrets of the Book. What we've discovering are God's secrets of living. We're discovering just how it is possible for us to experience love, joy, peace and to have real meaning and purpose in life.

So far we've seen the secret of really living is bearing fruit for God; the secret of fruitbearing is abiding in the person of Jesus Christ; and the secret of abiding is obeying.

Today we're going back to John 15 to see the secret of obeying is loving and the secret of loving is knowing.

**Open your Bibles to John 15 page 956**

Remember that all the words you read in John chapters 13 through 16 are Jesus, on the last night of His life, preparing His followers for what will soon happen.

As much as He has explained what was soon to come, they just refused to believe it. Within hours of speaking these words He would be arrested on trumped up charges and then crucified.

At the cross everything comes together in a focal point. The wickedness of the human heart is put on display. But so are the purposes and power of God.

God's purpose was to punish His Son for our sins. God's purpose was to do something totally amazing. *And you, being dead in your trespasses... He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.* Colossians 2:13-14

Jesus would die so that His disciples and everyone else who comes to Him by faith would be given the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. That includes me and that

includes you.

For the disciples everything would break loose in a few hours. They would be left to carry the message of Jesus to a lost world. Here's what they needed to hear.

In John 14 Jesus said, *If you love Me, keep My commandments.* John 14:15

### **And then in John 15:9-11**

#### *I. The Secret Of Obeying Jesus Christ Is Loving Him*

No good works that we can do can produce forgiveness of our sins.

That's why Jesus had to die. It was the only way. But once we believe God wants us to be obedient to Him. But when it comes to obedience actually there are three levels that we can operate on.

1. *We can obey God because we have to.* This is the level of fear. Of course, there is a proper fear of God that is holy and good. It is not the fear that a slave shows to a tyrant, but the respect that a son shows to a father.

Hebrews 12:9 *Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*

If we willfully disobey God, He'll chasten us as a good father who's goal is our maturity. We respect Him, we fear Him for that reason. But fear isn't the best motivation for obedience.

### **John 15:15**

Jesus is trying to let His disciples know something here. Their relationship was much deeper than fear. Fear can rob us of the real joys that God wants us to experience because we obey Him. A believer is a child of God and a child needs to be close to a parent but fear builds walls instead of bridges.

2. *The second level of obedience is selfishness.* We obey because we get something out of it. One time the apostle Peter said to Jesus *See, we have left all and followed You.* What he was asking was, "What's in it for us?"

When he did that he was expressing this level of obedience. I'm afraid that more often than we'd like to admit we serve God for this reason.

Little kids obey their parents because they're afraid of spankings. Many times when they get older children learn that obedience can earn favors. Cut the grass, you get the keys to the car. Help your Mom in the kitchen, you get to go shopping for some new clothes.

Christians, sometimes live on this bargain basement level. Their obedience is measured by what God gives them; and when things don't go their way they often say, "Why me God" and turn against Him.

Think about it. How many of us find it easier to serve God when things are going good and tougher when the pressures of life build up?

There's a classic passage in the Bible that illustrates the exact opposite to this common attitude of serving God for what we can receive. It's found in Daniel Chapter 3.

**Turn to Daniel 3 page 782**

Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon had swept in and sacked Jerusalem in 587 BC. In the process he took a bunch of Jews captive. Four of them were groomed in Nebuchadnezzar's court.

In Daniel 3 Nebuchadnezzar was about to throw three of Hebrew young men into a furnace for their refusal to worship his image. They had to make a life or death decision.

Here's how they responded. **Read verses 16-18**

In other words they were saying, "We're going to serve God no matter what the consequences. God is too awesome and too great not to serve."

The highest motivation for obedience is love. "if you love me keep my commandments."

The secret of obeying God is loving. Why? 4 reasons.

*1. For one thing love centers on the giver, not the gift.*

Love establishes a personal relationship with God no matter what He gives or what He withholds. there was a guy in the Old Testament named Job. the Bible says that Satan was so sure that Job would curse God if he lost his possessions or his health.

Fortunately, Job wasn't functioning on the bargain basement level. Instead he said, *Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.* Job 13:15

Jacob was a great Old Testament schemer and bargainer and if you are familiar with Jacob's story you'll remember that he was always trying to pull something over on somebody.

But it's interesting: He fell in love with a girl named Rachel. Her father made Jacob work for him for years as her dowery. But the Bible says, *So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.* Genesis 29:20

Love is the highest motivation for obedience because love makes the person more important than what we might receive from them. That's one key to marriage that a lot of people overlook. Your partner is more important than how much they can give you or do for you.

2. *Another reason why love is the highest motivation is that love doesn't measure sacrifice.*

### **Back to John 15 Read verse 13**

Jesus Christ proved His love for us by going to the cross for us. He didn't calculate His sacrifice and then give the least possible amount. He gave all.

If we really loved God then we wouldn't measure the cost of obeying Him. We would just do it. Like the mother or father that rushes back into a burning building to save a child trapped in a fire. They're not sitting back saying, "Let's see, if I go running in there without the proper fire protection gear I might be seriously hurt." They just go for it.

They're acting out of love. Love doesn't measure sacrifice. If you have to say "Let's see, what do I have to give up to do what God wants me to do? You have a problem.

3. *The third reason why love is the highest motivation for obedience is found in I John 4:8 - God is love.*

Since God is love, the commands that He gives us to obey are given because He loves us; and because we love Him we obey His commandments.

If you really love God then you won't question God's commands or try to change them. Have you ever been afraid of finding out what the will of God might really be for your life?

A lot of Christians are. "Why He might want me to talk about my faith to my next door neighbor, or start giving more at church, or teach the pre-school class, or come to a Sunday night service. Why, He might even want me to study for some ministry or go to the missions field!"

I John 4:18 NIV *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

God is love. Listen, if He wants you to do something its in your best interest as well as His.

Let me tell you something, when you begin to obey God, you begin to step in to the realm of God's blessings.

Jesus said, *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.* John 14:21

4. *And finally love is the highest motivation because love is the fulfillment of God's law.*

If two people love each other, they don't need rules and regulations to govern their relationship. When a husband and wife love each other you can tell because they are always trying to please each other.

There are laws that require mothers and father to care for their children, but no loving parent says "well lets see, I'm required by law to feed and clothe my kids so I guess I'd better do it, whether I want to or not." Parents care for their children because they love them.

God wants us to obey from the heart. When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, God gave them what we call "the Law," the Old Testament commandments found in the book of Exodus. When we get to the book of Deuteronomy we find the law repeated a second time for a new generation of people who are about to enter the land that God had promised them.

Deuteronomy means "2nd law." Deuteronomy is a repetition but there's a difference. Deuteronomy emphasizes the heart. The word "love" is introduced in this book, because love is the motive for obeying the law.

In Exodus the emphasis was on judgment and fear, but in Deuteronomy the emphasis is on blessing and love. That is not to say that Deuteronomy doesn't have its warning passages against sin. It's got some stern ones, but the underlying theme is love.

Turn back with me to **Deuteronomy chapter 4, page 163**

**Read 4:37  
6:45**

7:7, 8

10:12

11:1

30:6

Moses made it clear to Israel, and to us, that the secret of obeying is loving. Did you know that Deuteronomy was Jesus' favorite book when He was here on earth? Jesus quoted more from Deuteronomy than any other book. In fact in all of the New Testament Deuteronomy is quoted or referred to over 80 times. It's a book of loving obedience - and obedient love.

You and I can't command others to love us, yet God commands us to love Him! He has the right to command us. He made us. And He always wills for us the things that are highest and best.

We are to love God and love Him more and more. The more we love Him, the more we will obey Him. The more we obey Him, the more we will abide in Him. And the more we abide in Him, the more we will bear fruit. And the more we bear spiritual fruit, the more we will really live.

*I. The Secret Of Obeying Jesus Christ Is Loving Him*

*II. The Secret Of Loving Jesus Christ Is Knowing Him*

Supposedly absence makes the heart grow fonder. I guess on a human level there's some truth to that. If a couple is in love and they have to be separated for a while they miss each other, and they kind of mope around dwelling on thoughts of one another and in that case absence can make the heart grow fonder.

With Jesus Christ it doesn't work that way. In fact, just the opposite is true. The better you know Him the more you'll love Him.

The more time you spend with Him, in the word of God and prayer, the more you'll really appreciate Him and be attracted to Him.

God says, *We are to ...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* II Peter 3:18

Think about the Apostle Paul. He had been a believer in Jesus at least 25 years when He wrote Philippians but he said my desire is *that I may know Him.*

Here's a guy said that he had been caught up into the 3rd heaven itself. He had been in the very presence of God. Why did he still have such a desire to know Christ? Why is it

so important for us to know Christ better?

1 . *For one thing salvation is a living relationship* and we can't grow as Christians apart from personal, growing relationship with Jesus.

It's not that we trust Christ as our Savior from sin and bla that's it. Where there's life, there's to be growth and where there is no growth it is a sign that something is wrong. The better we get to know Jesus Christ, the more we grow in Christian maturity and experience life.

2. *But something else is true also. The better we know him the more we become like Him.*

When Moses met God upon Mt. Sinai Exodus says his face glowed with the glory of the Lord. But then Moses put a veil over His face because the glory started fading and He didn't want anybody to know He was losing it.

When we trust Jesus Christ as our personal Savior the Bible says we have Jesus living within us. And as we stay close to Him in our life we can radiate His glory to others.

God's purpose for us is that we be conformed to the image of His Son and one day that will happen perfectly. But we need to start becoming like Him today. Right now. Can people see Jesus Christ in your life, or do they just hear the words from your mouth? The better you get to know Him the more you become like Him.

So, getting to know Jesus better leads to spiritual growth, which makes us more like Jesus and helps us to become all that He wants us to become. But there is one more very important result of growing in your knowledge of Christ.

3. *The better you know Him the more you love Him.*

The secret of obeying is loving and the secret of loving is knowing.

Jesus Christ wants us to know Him better. That's why He said to His disciples *I no longer call you servants... Instead, I have called you friends*

You get the picture of a Roman slave owner with his slaves. Slaves were just property to him. Jesus says you're not serving me like slaves to a master - you're friends.

Think about what that means to us. When you want to talk to God He is not going to turn a deaf ear or laugh, or put you down. He is going to listen. Not only that but He is going to have something to say to us too.

The Bible is God's message to us and the Holy Spirit is the teacher.

As you read the Bible, meditate on it, pray over it, and ask God the Holy Spirit to guide you. Then you'll get to know Christ better.

No matter where you turn in the Bible you meet Jesus Christ. I love what it says in Luke 24 where Jesus appeared to two men walking down a road after His resurrection. It says, *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.* Luke 24:27

You can see Jesus all the way through the Old Testament in prophecy. You can see Him ministering on earth in the gospels, and ministering through His church in the book of Acts. The epistles interpret the spiritual truths about the person and work of Christ. The book of Revelation shows Him as the slain Lamb, the Judge, and the King of Kings. The theme of the whole Bible is Jesus Christ.

He wants you to know Him. He wants you to know what He's like. What He's done in the past. What He's doing right now and what His plans are for the future because the better you know Him the more you'll love Him.

If for some reason tomorrow morning you would wake up and all the Bibles in the United States were gone and you couldn't get your hands on one, how well would you do spiritually? Do you know enough about the Bible to see you through?

Suppose the church would have to go underground because of some kind of oppression like it has in so many other parts of the world. What would happen to you? Would you just fold up under the pressure or would you remain faithful to Jesus Christ? A lot of that would all depend on just how much you knew about God's Word. And as much as you know about God's Word, that's how much you know about Jesus Christ.

So, the better you know Christ, the more you will love Him. When you begin to understand the glory of His person (who He is) the wonder of His work (what He's done) you'll worship Him, you'll adore Him. He will become the preeminent one in your life and your goal will be to live every day to the glory of God.

If you'd really like to know Christ better, I'd like to challenge you to do four things every single day and these are based on Romans 12:1 & 2.

1. *Give God your body.*

Commit yourself to be used by God in a fresh way every day. God wants to use your physical body in some way to bear fruit to His glory. He's not here on this earth with

hands and feet and a mouth the way He was in Christ so He wants to use yours. Give God your body as your first step in worship each day.

2. *Give God your mind.*

There's a battle going on for your mind! Satanic forces want you to be so mesmerized by this world that you can't concentrate on spiritual things. Give God your mind. He wants to transform you by the renewing of your mind. How is that going to happen? Through the Word of God. Reach for your Bible, read it and let the Spirit of God teach you.

The important thing is to have a systematic plan for reading.

When you read a spiritual truth ask yourself, "How can I make this a part of my life?" And then put it into practice. As God gradually changes and transforms your mind, you will know Jesus better and love Him more.

3. *Give God your will.*

In The Garden Jesus prayed, *O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.* Matthew 26:39 If the Son of God prayed those words how much more should we have a submissive attitude toward the will of God?

4. *Give God your heart.*

How do you do that? Worship Him. Love Him. Praise Him. Jesus isn't just some extra baggage you carry around through life, He is life. Honor Him like you should.

Is Jesus Christ everything to you? Get to know Him through the Word. Give Him your mind and your will and your heart and He will be.