

## “Shift:Accelerating on the Discipleship Highway - A Life of Obeying”

Scripture: John 14:12-24

Graphics: car, highway, shifter

Big Truth: Discipleship is not a passive event or anything we complete in our lifetime. Following Jesus is a process that takes intentional engagement and sacrifice to live fully into the call of Jesus to, “follow me.” There are milestones along the way to help orient us and show us what areas we can engage: Worship, Community, Openness, Obeying, Serving, and Sharing.

Focus phrase: A life of obeying starts with loving Jesus and grows by yielding all things to God.

### 1. Introduction

- A. PRAY!
- B. We’re in week 4 of our intentional discipleship series called SHIFT: Accelerating on the Discipleship Highway.
- C. And this series is not just a once and done series where we try to infuse the church with some teaching in order to increase our bible knowledge. This series has the long game in view - to change the culture of the Panama UMC to increase our collective passion for following Jesus. Not only are we shifting our own lives with Jesus, but we are shifting the ministry teams of our church, our discipleship groups, and every aspect of the church. We’re incorporating these milestones into the DNA of the church with the Growth and Vision Team’s help.
- D. So far, we’ve taken a long look at Worship, Community, and Openness.
- E. If you’ve missed any of those messages, I’d like to strongly encourage you to go to the [panamaum.org](http://panamaum.org) website and watch those messages, grab the handouts from the website, and be praying and reflecting on those first three milestones.
- F. Today, we dive into the fourth Milestone... **A Life of Obeying.**
- G. I think we’re all pretty aware of our concept of obeying, since we do that a thousand times a day with lots of different people, authorities, and systems. We obey traffic laws, bosses, our stomachs, and all kinds of things.
- H. But what does it look like to grow in a Life of Obeying **God**? And are we willing to show the world that obeying God is not a negative oppressive ordeal in our lives, but something that brings joy and hope?
- I. Let’s grow together today. Turn with me to John chapter 14, starting in verse 12. Let’s sit at Jesus’ feet with the disciples for a few...

### 2. Scripture

#### A. READ verses 12-14

- i. The ministry that the first disciples were to undertake the day AFTER Jesus left was exactly Jesus’ ministry while he was there. Jesus’ life and ministry

and commands were all accomplished SO THAT the disciples, and WE, would know what to DO - what to obey - as Jesus' followers.

- ii. But why did Jesus say that the disciples' ministry would be greater than his own? Are you kidding? Well, here's the deal: they weren't greater in intensity or in flash or bang. They would be greater because whenever they obeyed Jesus and did what Jesus did, after Jesus was gone, they did it with the full story of Jesus being revealed. When Jesus was in ministry on earth, those around him didn't know the full scope of the message - he wasn't yet dead, buried, or risen again! He hadn't yet ascended to heaven!
- iii. But AFTER, they knew the whole story - Jesus was incarnated as God with us, he taught and did amazing things, and he was crucified, and died, and was buried, and ROSE AGAIN, and ascended back to heaven! AND, He left the Holy Spirit to help all who would come AFTER with His ministry through them.
- iv. The ministry AFTER Jesus is Jesus' ministry on steroids because it's filled with the FULL story of Jesus.
- v. Jesus' ministry glorified the Father because He was living out the plan that God had for the world. The ministry of the church AFTER Jesus glorifies the Father, AND the Son, AND the Holy Spirit.
- vi. And that ministry, Jesus says, MUST come from a life of obeying His words and commandments. That brings glory to the Father and reveals Jesus to the world through us.
- vii. Failing to do the works that Jesus did is living a life of dis-obedience and fails to give glory to God or reveal Jesus to the world.
- viii. AND getting to KNOW what Jesus did and wants us to do, in order to DO it, Jesus says in verses 13-14, only comes through prayer...prayer with a heart focused on the things Jesus was focused on, and with the presence of the Holy Spirit of Jesus himself.
- ix. But, in order to activate those tasks and increase our obedience to Jesus' commands, the church not only needs the Holy Spirit, but the church needs to fall in love with Jesus every day, all over again.
- x. Look at verse 15...

## **B. READ verses 15-17**

- i. IF you love me, you will keep my (*obey my*) commandments. Now, this isn't a contingent thing. This 'IF' means more like BECAUSE. 'BECAUSE' you love me, or 'AS' you love me, that will result in you obeying my commandments.

- ii. AND, you don't have to do that on your own, but AS you love me, I will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to help you love me more, and keep my commandments and keeping doing my works of ministry.
- iii. This is the first appearance of a specific mention of the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete) in John's gospel. It's important to note that the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples in the context of the future obedience AFTER Jesus.
- iv. In fact, the Holy Spirit wasn't needed if Jesus didn't GO, right? If Jesus didn't go, then the disciples would be VERY tempted to just keep letting Jesus do the work, do the ministry, do the forgiving and healing and loving.
- v. But that's WASN'T the plan, church. That couldn't BE the plan. The PLAN was for the church to obey Jesus in every word, act, and thought... that the gospel would radiate out from every believer based solely on the fact that we love Jesus...and reach the entire world! And it's WORKING!
- vi. I asked myself as I was writing this, "Do I love Jesus? Why do I love Jesus?" The answer in my heart was YES, simply because he DIED on that cross for me and us, and he rose again. AND, because he sent the Holy Spirit. No one else did, would, or will do that for me.
- vii. But we can't love Jesus like the first disciples who knew Jesus, loved Jesus, can we? We can't hang out with Jesus and talk with him in person or give him physical gifts. Yet, with the presence of the Holy Spirit, we LOVE Jesus by doing what the Spirit asks of us...namely, to love other people.
- viii. Obeying is today's expression of love for Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ix. So, before there's a life of obeying, there MUST be a life of loving Jesus by loving others simply and purely because he's the Savior and King.
- x. One more section...and this one gives us hope and confidence and joy in our life of obeying...verse 18...

### **C. READ verses 18-24**

- i. In the days that led up to my Dad's death, I sat by his bedside and held his hand. He wasn't able to communicate, but I knew that he could hear me. This was before I became a pastor, but after I had made the decision to answer that call.
- ii. My dad was one of the few people that knew that I wasn't leaving my engineering career to follow this crazy call to be a church pastor. He was proud of me and told me so when I told him a couple months prior.
- iii. But in THAT moment, at his bedside, I remember telling him that I would be the best pastor I could be. I said that because the work that the Holy Spirit was doing in me was a direct result of the work that my parents had done in

me to introduce me to Jesus, to encourage my faith, and drag me to church even when I didn't want to go. Their obedience led directly to my obedience.

- iv. But even though my earthly father was leaving, I knew that the heavenly Father would and could never leave. The presence of the Holy Spirit of Jesus in my life is ever-present, and because of that, I had confidence that being obedient to the call was possible - not because of my Dad, but because of his obedience and the Holy Spirit.
- v. Jesus' obedience to the Father led to Jesus' death. In our scripture from last week, from Gethsemane, Jesus opened the doors of his life to the Father, but then knelt in complete obedience to the plan that would lead to his death on the cross. It's been said that obedience isn't obedience until you disagree with God. Jesus disagreed, yet, Jesus' openness led directly to obeying.
- vi. And, thankfully for us, Jesus' death led to the presence of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit leads us into a life of obeying God. Obeying God leads us to do what Jesus would've continued to do had it not been for the fact that our sin problem needed the solution only Jesus could provide. So, our work as disciples of Jesus is to do the work that Jesus showed us how to do.
- vii. We prove that we are disciples of Jesus by our willingness to grow in a life of obeying the commands of Jesus, the words of Jesus, and the ways that Jesus ministered to those around him while he was alive on earth.

### **3. Application**

- A. What does that mean for you and me?
  - i. The disciple of Jesus learns to love Jesus more deeply...
  - ii. which leads to a deeper life of obeying the indwelled presence of Jesus' Spirit...
  - iii. which leads to more glory to God, a bigger church, and a deeper impact in the world.
- B. What I just described is a process of you and I SHIFTING in the intentional discipleship milestone of a life of obeying.
- C. Before we get to the 4 gears of a life of obeying, the question in MY mind is: "How do I know WHAT to obey?" You and I might have a sense of what Jesus is asking us to obey but is there a list?
  - i. Well, the answer is YES. Jesus gave the disciples somewhere around 50 commands to obey. Are you ready? Ready? This going to happen fast...
  - ii. Repent, Follow Me, Rejoice, Let Your Light Shine, Honor God's Law, Be Reconciled, Do Not Lust, Keep Your Word, Go the Second Mile, Love Your

Enemies, Be Perfect, Practice Secret Disciplines, Lay Up Treasures in heaven, Seek God's Kingdom, Judge Not, Do Not Cast Pearls, Ask, Seek, Knock, Do Unto Others, Choose the Narrow Way, Beware of False Prophets, Pray for Laborers, Be Wise as Serpents, Fear Not, Hear God's Voice, Take My Yoke, Honor Your Parents, Beware of Leaven, Deny Yourself, Despise Not the Little Ones, Go to Offenders, Beware of Covetousness, Forgive Offenders, Honor Marriage, Be a Servant, Be a House of Prayer, Ask in Faith, Bring In the Poor, Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's, Love the Lord, Love Your Neighbor, Await My Return, Take, Eat, and Drink, Be Born Again, Keep My Commandments, Watch and Pray, Feed My Sheep, Baptize My Disciples, Receive God's Power, and last but not least, Make Disciples.

- iii. Do that! Amen! End of sermon. Let's pray... Just kidding...
  - iv. That list gives you a sense of what Jesus is talking about when he asks for you to obey. Add to that the WAYS that Jesus did the THINGS he did, and you have a full-time job of being a follower of Jesus, just like he intended.
  - v. Jesus never intended your faith to be something that you do once in a while, on Sundays, or whenever you have time. I sometimes forget the commands of Jesus, and so they don't influence my ministry.
  - vi. Increasing in a life of obeying means intentionally knowing this list and being ready to DO them, out of your love for Jesus. Aren't you glad there aren't 500 of them! In fact, that's what got the Jewish religious people in trouble. They got so caught up in keeping every rule that they made it about the rules.
  - vii. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 22, summing up the most important aspect of the Law, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."...and, "Love your neighbor as yourself."
  - viii. Every single one of those commands of Jesus I read is a direct expression of living a life of obeying Matthew 22 to love God and love others.
- D. Obeying Jesus is about loving Jesus, trusting Jesus, believing in Jesus, submitting to Jesus' authority, and placing yourself under Jesus' teaching - willingly and intentionally. And we do that BECAUSE of our love for Jesus and all that He's done for us - to save us from the eternal punishment for our sin and our brokenness.
- E. What that means in very practical terms is that obeying Jesus requires relinquishing control of YOUR thing and allowing Jesus to take over to work THROUGH you. You could also say that obeying is partnering with Jesus to help others grow in faith and discipleship...not about you at all.

- F. Let's do some self-reflection as to where you and I are in our Life of Obeying. On your HANDOUT you'll see four different gears for a life of obeying. The goal is to move, or SHIFT, from one to the next, growing to be centered in Christ in your life of obeying.
- G. First gear is the EXPLORING stage.
- i. In this stage, you're learning more about those 49 commands and how Jesus lived out His ministry. In order to know what YOU are to do (to obey), you need to know what JESUS did.
  - ii. You're beginning to understand more about Jesus' teaching through sermons, Bible study classes, and your own reading of scripture.
  - iii. This is God's prevenient grace at work - the grace that is drawing you into His will and way. You may or may not identify as a Christian at this point, but He's got your interest, for sure.
  - iv. In this gear, just keep reading and asking questions. Come talk to me if you have questions you can't answer. Talk to some of our Sunday School teachers. Learn!
  - v. A couple questions to ask yourself:
    - a. Am I beginning to want to read the bible to find out what it asks of me?
    - b. When I learn about Jesus' commands, am I convicted that I need to be doing those things?
  - vi. If you're a teacher or leader, make sure you engage with anyone at this stage so they can be drawn into deeper conversation.
- H. Pretty soon, you'll be ready to CLUTCH-SHIFT-ACCELERATE to the FOLLOWING stage.
- i. This stage is all about building some confidence in obeying.
  - ii. You've accepted the call to be a disciple of Jesus and are committed to being part of the church, becoming like Jesus, and serving others.
  - iii. Questions might help identify if this is where you currently are in your life of obeying:
    - a. Am I getting involved in serving in the church, knowing that Jesus has something in mind for me and us?
    - b. Am I willing to change some things about my life in order to respond to the call of Jesus?
  - iv. This can sometimes be an exciting time and a little uncomfortable. In this stage, you're looking forward to making some changes, but other changes seem really hard to accomplish. Lean into the Holy Spirit for help.

- I. The third gear is the BECOMING phase.
  - i. When you shift into this gear, it's becoming more and more personal. You become more aware of not only the commands of Jesus, but you're seeing how they connect directly to your life. This leads to a willingness to bring one thing after another under the authority of Jesus in your life.
  - ii. Maybe it means you change the things you watch, the ways you spend your money, your willingness to join others in tithing to the church, or change other things close to your heart.
  - iii. You're daily seeking to apply the teachings of Scripture to your own life.
  - iv. QUESTIONS:
    - a. Am I more and more convicted that there are things in my life that need to change to obey Jesus?
    - b. Do I spend time praying and thinking about what Jesus wants me to do and then try to do it?
  - v. Many of us struggle with being at this stage because it's not a once and done thing. It's daily yielding to God's will. A simple prayer that I like to pray each morning is, "Father, I yield MY will to yours today in all things. Give me the courage to do that."
- J. Shifting from there into the CENTERED gear takes the internal and makes it outwardly-focused.
  - i. You begin partnering with God to help others grow in openness and obedience to Christ and his commands and teachings. You love deeply and help others with grace and patience.
  - ii. This might mean you teach or mentor others. It may be a call to preaching or teaching. It very well could be that you love those around you and then share the truth about Jesus to those who are seeking or growing.
  - iii. Being CENTERED in Christ in your life of obeying means that you're willing to yield anything you have or do to serve Jesus. Anything - careers, money, time, even your own life...for the love of God and love of others.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. A life of obeying starts with learning how to and practicing love like Jesus loved...here and now.
- B. Jesus' love is the most perfect love you will ever experience because He willingly allowed the Father to send Him to the cross. While Jesus was on that cross, the Father had to turn his back on Jesus for a time so that the full weight of our sin could be put to death with Jesus.

- C. This morning, Jesus is inviting us to taste and see that His sacrifice was worth it all, and, in fact, was fully sufficient to do what God intended - to save you, to love you, and to call you.
- D. In the celebration of communion, we remember and receive. We remember the obedience of Jesus, and we receive a command to go and do the same.
- E. As you come, ask yourself the simple questions, “Do I love you, Jesus?” and “How can I love you more?”
- F. The answer to the second question is to keep engaging in intentional discipleship, worshipping, building community with others, opening yourself to God’s will, and obeying, even when it means obeying when you don’t want to.
- G. In that sacrifice of obeying, there is joy knowing that you are right in the middle of Jesus’ command for your life.
- H. This table is the place where all those things converge...and we are thankful!
- I. Let’s pray...