

It Matters

“Obedience Matters”

Part 3

Intro: Sometimes in life, a response is required. A couple of months ago I got summoned to jury duty. As I read through the information of what I was required to do, down towards the bottom it read: “Failure to respond may result in being in contempt of court!” I guess doing nothing would not be a good choice. Apparently, my response matters.

Our relationship with God works in the same way. Failure to respond to God results in missing out on so much of the life Jesus came to bring us. It’s simply not enough to listen to messages week after week OR read our bibles daily and not respond to God. God actually expects a response from us. Just like Clackamas County expected a response from me being summoned to jury duty. Jesus has summoned us to follow Him. This requires a response from us. We simply call this response obedience. Our obedience matters greatly. This isn’t about being perfect. This isn’t about feeling guilty. But listening alone is not enough. Let’s understand why.

1. Obedience is how we cooperate with God

Phil. 2:12-13 “...Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” (NLT)

Because of the fact that God is actively working in His people, our response should be to cooperate with this work going on inside us. What does this response look like?

- Embrace the hard work of living out your salvation

The simple truth is this: It is very difficult living out our salvation in this broken world. It’s going to be hard work. Why do I say this? Is forgiveness easy? Is patience easy? Is love always easy? Is extending grace to people easy? Is trusting God with our finances easy? Is not loving this world easy? Is being a witness easy?

➤ I think we have this built in expectation that following Jesus should be easier than it really is. Because of this expectation, we set ourselves up for a lot of disappointment and frustration. Instead, we should embrace this reality. Living out my salvation is going to be hard work.

- Follow the new desires He gives you

Since God is actively at work in you, He is putting new desires in your heart and mind. It is essential that we learn to listen to these new desires and respond to them. WHY? Before we will ever experience the power we have from God. The power of God is attached to these new desires. Choose to respond to them and you will experience God’s power to fulfill them. This is how we learn to follow Jesus.

- Some of you are aware of these new desires and you're avoiding them. (Desire to serve / maybe an idea to meet a need / go on a mission trip / share your faith with a friend / be financially generous)
- It is time to respond to them not resist them. This is how we learn how to follow Jesus. "My sheep hear My voice" – Jesus is calling you to follow!

2. Obedience is how we protect ourselves from deception

James 1:22 "But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." (NLT)

- When we don't respond to the word of God by obeying it, we begin to travel down a path of self-deception. Even though we know the word of God, it has no transformational impact on our lives. Our response is critical to protect ourselves from this. How will we be deceived?
- Obedience protects us from being deceived about our maturity
When all we do is increase our knowledge of God's word without obeying it we become deceived about our level of spiritual maturity. Maturity is not connected to knowing God's word. Maturity is connected to obeying God's word. Obedience is the measure of maturity. This is why many followers of Jesus are very deceived who have been in church their entire life. They can quote the bible, but they live very little of it. Spiritual maturity is not connected to how much time you have logged in a church building. It is connected to how much time you've logged being obedient.
- Obedience protects us from being deceived about our pride
When we increase our knowledge of God's word without applying it, we develop an arrogant, prideful heart. The bible tells us that knowledge alone "puffs up." Humility comes with application of truth. WHY? Because we all see how difficult it really is to obey the word of God in real life. This process alone makes us humble. Our own struggle and failures keep us humble.
 - This is the major pitfall that accompanies Bible College / Seminary - explain
 - The Pharisees of Jesus day – Many had the OT memorized.
 - Also the major pitfall with people who just sit in a blue chair.

Responding to God protects us from thinking we are more mature than we really are.

3. Obedience is how we experience blessing

James 1:25 "But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." (NLT)

One of the themes of this church. Obedience = Blessing.

- Don't confuse knowing with doing

In our culture these two are often synonymous. “If I know it I can do it.” OR, “If I know it I’ve got it.” This is not the Biblical culture. The Bible would say; “If you’re doing it you know it.” “If you’re living it, you’ve got it.”

- This is what often disappoints me when I hear people make comments like; “Pastor, I’m just not being fed. I need more spiritual meat.” The reality with the majority of people like this is they don’t come close to living out what they already know. The last thing they need is more information. They’re already spiritually overweight! They need to spend some time on application. They confuse knowing with blessing instead of doing.

- God’s blessing is always attached to behavior

The blessing of God is NOT connected to knowing. The blessing of God is connected with doing. ALWAYS! In our culture we have reduced our faith to a list of beliefs. If I know the beliefs, I’m in! But Jesus’ description was radically different. Jesus said that if anyone wants to come to Him, they need to deny themselves / take up their cross / and follow Me. (Explain) This is radically different than the American version. This isn’t intellectual...it is behavioral.

- At the bottom of my jury summons there was that warning of failing to respond. We need to hear the warning from Jesus for our lack of response to Him. “Failure to obey will result in a lack of blessing on your life.”
- God doesn’t bless our lives because we went to church / read the bible / took a class / or can quote bible verses. Blessing is attached to behavior.

4. Obedience is how we make our faith useful

James 2:14-17 “What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? ¹⁵ Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, ¹⁶ and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?¹⁷ So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.” (NLT)

- A useful faith meets needs

I love this example. My how the Christian community has been guilty of this over the years. Smile, be pleasant, say nice things, maybe even pray, BUT it does nothing!

Responding to God means that our faith gets dirty! Our faith compels us to enter the pigpen of brokenness and sin and meet people right where they are. This is what Jesus did. (He hung out with drunkards / prostitutes / tax gatherers /

A useful faith deals with addictions / divorce / domestic violence / homelessness / food scarcity / sex trafficking / and every other community need we see. If we truly believe that the power of Jesus can transform, then our faith must be engaged in real life.

- I love that we are a church committed to this principal. (Share)

- A useful faith is a tool in the hand of God

When the people of God decide to respond to God's call and engage their faith in real life issues, they now become a tool in the hand of God. They become a weapon of righteousness.

Rom. 6:13 "Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God." (NLT)

I believe this is what God has called this church to be corporately in our community. God can use this church however He wants. We are at His disposal to be used in this Kingdom conflict for His purposes.

If you want to feel useful for God, you have to respond to Him. You have to engage your faith in real life. You have to get involved meeting needs somewhere. Experiencing God using you is a thrilling thing! You have to get out of that blue chair and into the game.

- There are so many places here at Foothills to begin this journey. Don't let your faith be defined by sitting in that chair. (web site – talk to a ministry leader / go observe a ministry / pursue something God has put in your heart.)

5. Obedience is how we protect from indifference

Rev. 3:15 "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other!" (NLT)

*Rev. 3:19-20 "I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and **turn from your indifference.**"²⁰ "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." (NLT)*

This was written to the church at Laodicea. Indifference is what characterized this church. They were Luke-warm followers. They weren't passionate for Jesus nor were they turned off by Jesus. They were simply indifferent. I truly believe this is the message to the modern day church. The church in America has become indifferent. There is no passion for God and no passion to make a difference. We've become observers rather than transformers. How do we respond in a way that protects us from indifference?

- Respond relationally

Rev. 3:20 was written to believers in Jesus. I know many people use this verse to explain salvation. (explain) BUT, the truth is this was written to believers who had shut Jesus out of their lives. Yes, they were still "saved," but their indifference had cost them intimacy with Jesus. They weren't doing life with Jesus. They were doing life without Him.

Some of you are struggling with spiritual indifference for the same reasons. You know Jesus but you do life without Him. You don't really allow Him to influence all the areas of your life. You've never learned to allow Jesus to be enough for you. Jesus is standing at the door of your heart knocking and asking you to let Him back in. There is no spiritual passion because there is no spiritual connection! Isn't it time to open the door?

- Respond submissively

God can never remove our indifference as long as we are in control of our lives. As long as we are in control we have the results that we can produce. Responding submissively is acknowledging before God that we do not belong to ourselves. We were bought with a price. We reject the Laodicean /American version of Christianity which makes it all about me to a Biblical version which is all about Jesus. We accept the truth that our lives are living sacrifices. The Kingdom reality is this: Until we die to ourselves, we can never truly live like Jesus.

The Laodicean church didn't need Jesus anymore.

Rev. 3:17 "You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." (NLT)

- They were completely unaware of their real spiritual condition. Because of their self-reliance, they had become spiritually bankrupt. Responding to God submissively protects us from this.

Today I believe the Lord Jesus is giving us all a summons to follow Him. Jesus said; "My sheep hear My voice, I know them and they follow Me." Let's not be indifferent to His call. Let's not ignore Him any longer. Our response matters. How do you need to respond to Him today?

Prayer time.