



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON TWELVE: OBEYING

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LESSON TWELVE: OBEYING

OBJECTIVE: To help families see that following Jesus means obeying everything God has commanded us.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus commanded us to make disciples and teach them to obey everything he commanded; therefore, following Jesus will look like obedience. We are not only to obey God's commands but love them.

(John 14:15 "If you love me, obey my commands.")

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

We will not perfectly obey every command of God, that is why Jesus came! Both children and adults need forgiveness. Our disobedience doesn't surprise God, but he does want to set us free from the dangers of disobedience. Salvation sets us free from the punishment our sins deserve, but also gives us the power to resist sin and obey!

(Romans 6:16 "Don't you know that when you give yourselves to obey someone you become that person's slave? If you are slaves of sin, then you will die. But if you are slaves who obey God, then you will live a godly life.")

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

There is a dog I knew named Shadow, and I will probably never be as obedient as her.

Our family dog, Roxy will sit and stay, and usually come when she's called. She's got a few other tricks and can literally jump through a hoop with ease but, unless a piece of cheese is involved, my commands are met with a skeptical glare. Shadow, on the other hand, seemed thrilled with every word that came from her master's mouth, and obeyed every one. She was a retired seeing-eye dog. Her shiny black eyes lit up when she had something to do; that is when she came alive. Shadow didn't live a cramped life of repressive captivity – she got to do stuff I could never in a thousand years do with Roxy. She went camping with her owners, to off-leash beaches or hiking with them for days. She got to go to festivals and road trips and little kids' birthday parties, where she sat blissfully smiling yet unflinching while tiny hands rubbed her fur. She could sit on her front steps and wait for kids to get home from school and the neighbours would give her pats and treats. She had the run of the house and never had to be crated. Shadow was a good dog. She had a freedom in her obedience that an unruly dog will never know.

Sometimes we get an idea in our mind that obedience to God is losing out on something good. That our wants and desires will not be taken care of unless we take them for ourselves our own way, in our own time. If you don't think you have this idea in your mind, take a look at your actions and decide if you are maybe, sometimes, acting like you believe this anyway. I know I do. I'm a dog much more like my family pet, who obeys when she sees the reward in hand. While Roxy doesn't run out the door or chew up shoes, there is nothing that will stop her from trying to lick visitors in greeting or ignore her name being called to chase a squirrel across the yard. She's a good dog, sometimes. But she clearly doesn't trust me in all things. Just like my actions demonstrate that I don't always fully trust God.

But trust can be learned. Just as we train animals with some sort of external motivation, God trains us in obedience to him through events in our lives. For me, I sometimes catch glimpses of the 'why' behind some of God's commands. In this way he is teaching me to trust him more and more. Sometimes we see a blessing or joy that comes from obedience. Sometimes we avoid disaster, and we learn. God gives us a chance to try again and do better the next day.

When we teach our children obedience, it is not for their salvation (the child with perfect behaviour is not necessarily any closer to God than the wickedly rebellious one). We must remind ourselves that we cannot train our children to be perfect. That is why they need God's grace, that is why they need the gospel! But training in obedience can help them to see the need for a saviour and learn that there are boundary lines around their life. Children who learn obedience will also find building relationships easier, will gain opportunities that other children would not have, and will begin to build habits of self-control that will serve them well when faith comes and they begin to follow Jesus. This obedience training often begins with external motivators – whether it is a sticker chart, or a 'good girl' for listening the first time, or a punishment to help them see the gravity of their



error. But as our children grow we expect them to obey right away without this external motivation – to do it because they trust us and love us, and because they are growing in their love for God.

This love for God is the ultimate motivator for our own obedience and our children's. Keep this in mind as you work towards teaching your children the law, and God's abundant grace. We should all be so in love with God that we delight in His words and they are our joy, rather than fearing his punishment or the removal of blessings if we turn aside to our own desires.

Think of how often the Psalmist David speaks about the reason that he upholds God's law –

“I obey your covenant laws, because I love them greatly.” ([Psalm 119:167](#))

“Blessed are those who obey his covenant laws. They trust in him with all their hearts.” ([Psalm 119:2](#))

There is much less talk of obeying out of the terror of punishment, isn't there? That was not David's motivator. Even when he does speak of the fear of God, it is the kind of fear that is filled with awe and love, and desires intimacy with God rather than merely avoiding punishment.

“The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.”
([Psalm 25:14](#), ESV)

“He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.”
([Psalm 40:3](#), ESV)

When we obey out of fear, we are inconsistent. We obey when we think we might get caught, or when the stakes are high enough. We obey selfishly and for our own benefit. However, obeying out of love naturally leads to following God's rules joyfully, all the way and without delay. Obeying out of love is focused on God and who he is, and trusting in his plans and purposes. It is living in the freedom to serve and enjoy the Master's word. Moving beyond love of what God will give us, to love of God himself, is necessary for life-long obedience but until we learn that, sometimes, God in his grace helps us to see the blessings along the way.

As you train your children to obey you for all the good things that it will bring them and your family, remember to help them to see the beauty and freedom that comes from faithful obedience. Teach them what a good gift rules are, and how light a burden they are. Remember, as you try to follow God's commands to you as a parent in love, there is grace for our failures – both for you and your children. Ultimately the reward is a loving, secure, freedom-filled relationship with God himself.



Consider these Questions:

- Are you naturally obedient or has God had to help you along sometimes with external motivation? What has really motivated you?
- What reasons can you think of for training our children in obedience? How do you do it?
- What freedoms do you provide your children when they have learned to obey?



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- **Text inside this box is a short activity or task**

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete.

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- Paper and drawing materials for each child

THE RIGHT WAY, RIGHT AWAY

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Remind your family that this is something exciting to do together, to look at the Bible and Jesus and learn what it means to be a disciple!

We have lots of fun together as a family, and as a family we have certain expectations of each other, things that make spending time together better.



Depending on your child's age and experience with playing games or sports, they might need additional examples of what it means to not obey. Use the definitions and words that are normal for your family.



What are your favourite sports or games to play?



What does it mean to "cheat"?

Yeah – doing something to win that you're not allowed to do. It can be really unfair, and usually spoils the fun. Today what we're going to talk about has a bit to do with following rules for a game, or for anything in life really! It's called "Obedience", and when we become people who follow Jesus, and families who follow Jesus together, we need to be really clear on what it means to obey God.

Jesus tells us that if we love and follow Him, we will be people who obey. Obey means to listen to the rules and to do what they say.



We know that sometimes obedience – following the rules – is really important.

Ask children to come up with a list of what rules they would make for a kid who was littler than them – a younger brother or sister, a hypothetical little kid.

What rules would you give them to follow as they grow up?

Give kids a few minutes to come up with some rules, with the help of a parent if needed. As kids read their rules or talk about what rules they would make, ask follow up questions such as – why did you put that rule on there? How does it help them or keep them safe or help our family? Etc.

Did you know that even pirates had rules? They lived by a pirate’s code, and each ship developed their own set of rules for dividing treasure and who was in charge. Everywhere you go in life there are rules. We might not always like them, but they are not something we can easily escape.

When you came up with your own rule list, we might have thought about the rules our parents or teachers gave us before. Some rules are really good! Like “don’t touch the stove” or “don’t go outside without asking first”. Those are easy to understand. But a very young child might not understand why, like you do!

But our parents and teachers and other people in charge of us make those rules because they love and care about us. That is important to remember today.

Sometimes we might wonder about God’s rules – what are they? And why did he make them for us? Some stories we have in the Bible are of people who didn’t like God’s rules and thought that they knew better.



Can you think of a rule God has? (Take suggestions and add a few more if you like.)

God’s rules can be found in the Bible. God gave us his rules because he loves us and so we would know how to take care of everything God has given to us. Some people in the Bible times really loved God’s rules! They loved God’s rules because they loved God. King David was one of those people. Here are some of the things David said about God’s rules! He called them ‘law’ – which means they are rules that have a consequence if you break them. David knew all about them because he read the Bible.

**Psalm 40:8****Psalm 119:24, 72, 167**

If you have several children, they may all want to try this activity, or try giving directions for one another. If you can make time for it, it will help them remember what obedience is, and can be a great illustration!



If this activity is not practical for your space or your family, use another object lesson to describe the importance of following directions. Bring out an object that had an instruction book, or talk about using a computer or tablet, and having to follow the right steps to do what you want to do with that machine.

Wow! Can you tell your siblings that you obey every rule your parents have because you LOVE their rules? Probably not. We're not always very good at obeying rules or even loving rules. But if we love God we should trust him when he tells us which way is best, just like David did.

Try this activity to demonstrate trust in rules. Blindfold one child, and ensure they can't see. Have a parent stand some distance away in the same room. Place other siblings, or objects such as pillows/stuffed animals, between the child and parent. Ask the child to walk to the parent without hitting an obstacle. A difficult task! Ask them to repeat the walk, blindfolded, but this time the parent can give directions to the child as to where they should walk – stop, left, right, etc.

We had the best chance of walking across the room when there were instructions given, right? That's a lot like us in life! We don't have blindfolds on but we can't see what's coming in life. We can't see how our actions or what we do will affect us or other people. But God knows, and we can trust God! Just like our parents have a reason for the rules they make, God has a reason too. We don't always know or understand what it is, but we know we can trust him.

Obedience means doing things God's way, every time.

It means going in the direction God wants you to go even if there isn't a specific rule in the Bible about it. And it means choosing God's way every single chance we get.



Is there a law in the Bible not to pinch your little brother?

No, not exactly. But the Bible does tell us to be kind. You won't find a law that tells you to take turns nicely when playing with a toy, but it does tell us to respect others and love them. God's rules teach us how to live in every situation.



Why do you think King David loved God's rules so much?



They were like instructions for life, and showed him how to live. Even when they weren't easy to obey, David trusted God. He didn't obey God because he was afraid God would be mean to him otherwise, or because he was trying to get God to be nicer to him. No, he obeyed God because he loved God, and trusted God's love. When he messed up, he told God he was sorry and he tried again.



Do you know what Jesus taught us about obeying?



John 14:15



Why do you think Jesus said that? What does it mean to obey Jesus?

Jesus knew that each of us like to go our own way. We trust ourselves a lot and think we know how to make ourselves happy and even what's best for others. But if any of you have ever made a mistake, or gotten lost somewhere, you'll know that we aren't actually as smart as we think we are.

There are going to be things that happen in our lives, things we can't predict and we can't see. That's where God's laws keep us safe, and God's laws help us to know which way to go. King David said many things about God's laws – here is one more:



Psalm 119:111



How are God's rules like a gift?

Rules in a game help us play and keep things fair. They also show us how to have the fun we want to have. Instructions for a machine tell us how to get it to do what we want it to do.



Can you think of any other examples of how rules and laws can be good for us and helpful?



Every time we break a rule – even a little one, like taking a cookie from the kitchen when we know we’re not supposed to, or calling our sister a name – that is choosing to do things our way instead of God’s way. That is breaking God’s laws, and disobedient. It not only hurts our relationship with God, but hurts us and everyone around us.

Obedience is choosing not to go the way we want to, but trusting in God and going HIS way instead. It’s what disciples of Jesus learn to do! It doesn’t have to be scary and boring though. We know that rules are good, and good for us. Like David, we can choose to love God’s laws because they are one way God shows us how much He loves us!

Close by praying together. Thank God for his laws and pray that God would help you to obey.



DAILY BIBLE TIME

Take a few minutes each day this week to spend some time together reading from God's Word and discussing it together. Questions and verses are provided for you below. Use the Bible version your children are used to. NIV is a good one for very young children. Spend time praying together too!

1	<p><u>Ephesians 6:1</u> <u>Hebrews 13:17</u> <u>Romans 13:1</u></p>	<p>Talk about leaders and helpers in your community. What rules do they follow? What rules do they give us? (Think police, doctors, librarians, coaches, etc.) God wants us to obey. Who should we obey – just God's laws or other rules too? <i>Read our verses for today.</i> What examples does the Bible give of other people we must obey? Who are all the other leaders in our lives? (Government, teachers, pastors...) Are we obeying God when we obey our leaders? Why is it ever okay NOT to obey a leader? Can you think of an example?</p>
2	<p><u>Colossians 3:9</u> <u>Ephesians 4:32</u> <u>Matthew 5:44</u> <u>Matthew 6:25</u> <u>Ephesians 4:29</u> <u>Matthew 22:37</u></p>	<p>Obedience is choosing to look at a map instead of picking our own direction based on what we feel like. That map is all the laws of God. <i>Read some of these rules, in today's verses.</i> Why do you think God gives us rules like these? Why didn't God give us easier rules to follow like 'be nice to other people just on Tuesdays' or 'Always eat all your dessert'? Loving other people all the time is HARD. But God made us and the whole world and every command is important to obey. His rules make everything work well on earth. If we don't follow God's rules, we get hurt and others get hurt too. When God says "Don't" he is really saying "Don't hurt yourself". Can you think of how breaking God's rules could hurt us? Can you trust that all of God's rules for us are good? Why?</p>
3	<p><u>2 John 1:6</u></p>	<p>What rule in our house do you really like? What rule do you think we should have in our house? What consequences does breaking rules have in your house (or at school, church, etc.)? Consequences sometimes help us to remember rules and to know how important they are. When you do something wrong, do you think about punishments? What do you think are good punishments? Or helpful for remembering the rules? Sometimes we obey God for the wrong reasons. Sometimes we think that God will only love us or help us if we are perfect, or we want God to do something for us. Is that true? How do you know? What is the reason we should obey God?</p>



4	<p><u>1 Thessalonians</u> <u>5:16</u></p>	<p><i>Start off Bible time with letting kids choose a snack off a platter you prepared with a few different choices. Maybe have both yummy and yucky choices for them to make.</i></p> <p>God gives us rules that are for our good, but not all of them feel like it at first. God tells us that we should be joyful and not grumpy.</p> <p><i>(Have kids take turns acting out household chores to guess but flip a coin to see if they have to act them out joyfully or grumpy.)</i></p> <p>Being joyful is a choice – it is looking for the good in something and choosing to focus on that. The verse today says there is NEVER a time God wants us to be grumpy.</p> <p>Why do you think God wants this for us? What would happen if we do this?</p> <p>What is the hardest thing to be joyful doing?</p> <p>Sometimes it is hard to choose to obey – like choosing to be joyful. Obedience isn't always easy, but it is always best.</p>
5	<p><u>1 Samuel 12:24</u> <u>James 1:22</u></p>	<p>In this verse, Samuel, who was a person who obeyed God faithfully, is teaching other people what God has taught him. Samuel wanted people to know that it was very important to respect God as our boss and King, and obey Him every time, joyfully.</p> <p>What did Samuel give as a reason to be faithful?</p> <p>Not everyone in the Bible was faithful. Moses and the people of God promised God they would obey all the commandments he gave them. But they didn't! And they thought God wouldn't know.</p> <p>Does God always know and see what we do?</p> <p>Does it really matter what we do if no one catches us? Why or why not? (Think of examples in your house.)</p> <p>How does remembering all God has done for us help us to be faithful? What are some things that God has done for our family recently? What are some things God has done for you?</p>



DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** Pray that God would help you to obey him and obey those he puts in leadership over us, because we love God and know that he loves us.
- **Memorize:** Psalm 119:167 together as a family.
- **Missions:** Talk about how sometimes God asks us to do something hard and we must obey. That might be that God asks us to help someone we don't like, or go far from home and share the Gospel instead of staying where we are comfortable. Talk about missionaries who said 'yes' to God, and talk about the joy of the work they are doing, and how saying 'yes' brought good to them and others.
- **Daily Life:**
 - Read a few fun books together where there is a rule to follow. Mo Willems wrote "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus" – a very silly book. Kids age 4-7 may enjoy this book in which the bus driver must say 'no' to the pigeon for the very good of the pigeon and everyone else. Ask your kids – is it a good rule? Another book is "No, David!" by David Shannon.
 - Let children help in setting one rule for the home and discuss it together as a family, showing that this rule is for everyone's good.