

HOW TO HAVE A GREAT SPIRITUAL YEAR

John 14:15-31

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Last week we talked about how to have a great financial year. Let's face it, it is hard to have a great year if you have a bad financial year.
2. This week I want to continue on the theme of having a great year, but I want to talk about something even more important than finances. Your spiritual life. Your relationship with God. It may be hard to have a great year if you have a bad financial year, but it is possible. 2021 was not a good financial year for me. I was a poor college student still living with my parents. But it was a great year for me because I was in love. That's the year that Lydia and I fell in love and got engaged. You can still have a great year even if you have a bad financial year. But you cannot have a great year, or even a good year, if you have a bad spiritual year.
3. Your relationship with God is the most important thing in your life. Even if it is not your priority, it is the most important thing in your life.
4. It is similar to health. Your health is extremely important, even if you don't treat it as such. Because if you lose your health, then it negatively impacts every other aspect of your life.
5. Your relationship with God is the most important thing in your life. The quality of your life is entirely dependent upon the quality of your relationship with God.
6. Who knows what 2022 will bring you? You may have health problems. Relationship problems. Financial problems. Professional problems. Educational problems. But if you have a right relationship with God, then He will sustain you through it all, and He will work it all out for your good.
7. If you have a great spiritual year, then you will have a great year. It doesn't matter what challenges you face. Your spiritual life is so important that it trumps all else. If you have a great spiritual year, then you will have a great year.
8. So, let's talk about how to have a great spiritual year.

II. TEXT: John 15:15-31

- i. Remember, this is part of the Upper Room Discourse. John 13-16 records Jesus' last instructions and conversations with His disciples as they met in an upstairs room for the Last Supper.
1. 15 *"If you love me, you will keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever. 17 He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.*

- a. Jesus is promising to send the disciples the Holy Spirit, whom He calls the Counselor. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, shortly after Christ ascended to heaven.
 - b. Jesus said, "The world doesn't know Him, but you do know Him because He remains with you and will be in you."
 - i. "He" is used to describe the Holy Spirit. This implies personhood. The Holy Spirit is not an "it." He is not the impersonal power of God, or a force. He is a person; He is God.
 - ii. "He remains with you." Jesus was referring to Himself. The disciples know the Holy Spirit because He was with them currently with them in Christ. Christ was full of the Holy Spirit. He and the Spirit are part of the one Godhead.
 - iii. "He will be in you." When Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit began His ministry of living inside every believer from the moment of salvation onward.
2. *19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.*
- a. Jesus is talking about the fact that they will see Him again in heaven.
 - b. Because of His resurrection, they will experience life after death too.
 - c. On the day that they die, they will rise to be with Christ, and they will experience fullness of knowledge and intimacy with God.
3. *21 The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him."*
4. *22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it you're going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"*
5. *23 Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 The one who doesn't love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.*
6. *25 "I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.*
7. *27 "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful. 28 You have heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.*
- a. The Father is greater than Christ because on earth Christ was limited. These were self-limitations. On earth He was poor; He was homeless; He experienced fatigue, and pain, and temptation, and sickness. On earth He

could only be in one place at a time. He could only talk to one person at a time. But the Father in heaven is not limited in any of these ways, and when Christ returned to the Father, He would no longer have these limitations either.

- b. Let me put it another way. When Jesus returned to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit, and Christ was able to be of more help to His disciples through the indwelling Holy Spirit than He could by being physically present with them. His spiritual presence is more beneficial than His physical presence. His indwelling is more beneficial than His incarnation.
 - c. We often wish that we could be in the disciples' shoes, being physically present with Jesus. But Jesus would say that we have it better, because we have His Spirit inside of us.
8. *29 I have told you now before it happens so that when it does happen you may believe.*
- a. He is talking about sending the Holy Spirit.
9. *30 I will not talk with you much longer, because the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me., 31 On the contrary, so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do as the Father commanded me.*
10. *"Get up; let's leave this place.*
- a. The ruler of this world is Satan.
 - b. "The ruler of the world is coming." The devil had possessed Judas and was making plans with the Sanhedrin to arrest Jesus later that night.
 - c. "He has no power over me." Christ's death was not the devil's victory. It was not the devil overpowering Him. The devil was involved, but God was in control the entire time. Christ voluntarily gave His life in obedience to the Father and out of love for us.
 - d. There are two main themes in this passage. One – "If you love Christ you will obey Him." Two – "Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit after He left." I want to focus on the first – obedience.
 - e. If you want to have a great year, then you need to have a great spiritual year. And if you want to have a great spiritual year, then you need to be obedient to God.
 - f. What is obedience?
 - i. **Mark Batterson** "Obedience equals God-honoring decisions in the face of temptation."
 - ii. Obedience is carrying out God's commands immediately, completely, and cheerfully.
 - 1. Do it right away. Delayed obedience is disobedience.
 - 2. Do all of it. Partial obedience is disobedience.
 - 3. Do it a good attitude.
 - g. In this passage we can find three important observations about obedience.

III. THREE OBSERVATIONS ABOUT OBEDIENCE

1. Obedience is God's love language.

- i. **John 14:15** "If you love me, you will keep my commands
- ii. **John 14:21** The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.
- iii. **John 14:23** Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.
- iv. **John 14:24** The one who doesn't love me will not keep my words.
- v. **John 14:31** On the contrary, so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do as the Father commanded me.
- vi. We all have a primary love language. Gifts, acts of service, words of affirmation, physical touch, quality time. God has a primary love language too: Obedience.
- vii. If you want to show God you love Him, then obey Him.
- viii. If you want to know if you love God, then check your obedience.
- ix. If you think you love God but you don't obey Him, then you are deceived.
- x. True spirituality is obedience.
- xi. There are many ways that I can show my wife that I love her, but my faithfulness is the foundation of our love. It the most important way to show love. Without faithfulness, nothing else matters. I can give my wife gifts, verbal and physical affection, be a good provider, help her around the house, spending quality time with her, take her on expensive vacations, bring to fine restaurants, buy her the nicest car and house, but if I'm unfaithful, none of it matters.
- xii. There are many ways to show love to God, but obedience is the foundation of love for God. Without obedience, nothing else matters.
 1. You can sing beautiful praise songs to God, but without obedience they don't please Him.
 2. You can give the biggest offering to God, but without obedience it doesn't please Him.
 3. You can preach the greatest sermons about God, but without obedience it doesn't please Him.
 4. You can sacrifice your life as a martyr, but without obedience it doesn't please God.
 5. You can pray the longest prayers, and read your Bible cover to cover five times every year, but without obedience it doesn't please Him.
 6. You can give all your money to the poor, but without obedience it doesn't please God.
 7. You can go to church every Sunday and never miss a week, but without obedience it doesn't please God.

2. Obedience is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit.

- i. **John 14:16** “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever.”
- ii. Elsewhere the Bible says that we receive the Holy Spirit when we trust in Christ for salvation (Jn 7:38-39; Acts 2:38; Eph 1:13-14). Here Jesus says that receive we must be obedient to receive the Holy Spirit. Which is it?
- iii. Jesus is not trying to confuse us. He is trying to teach us that true faith obeys. To receive the Holy Spirit and be saved you must believe, which means you need to obey Christ.
- iv. Just as true love for God is obedient, true faith in God is obedient. Those who believe, obey. Those who don’t obey don’t truly believe.
- v. We often make the mistake of separating faith and obedience. While they are not the same thing, they always travel together. They are two sides of the same coin.
- vi. This is why Scripture often substitutes obedience in the place of faith.
 - 1. **Matthew 7:21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”
 - 2. **Acts 2:38** Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - 3. **Acts 3:19** “Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out”
 - 4. **Acts 5:31-32** “God exalted this man to his right hand as ruler and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”
- vii. This is why the Bible says that the evidence for salvation is obedience.
 - 1. **1 John 2:3-6** “3 This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands. 4 The one who says, ‘I have come to know him,’ and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him: 6 The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.”
- viii. The reason that the Bible often interchanges faith and obedience is not to confuse us, but to drive home the point that true faith obeys.
- ix. Jesus is saying that if you want salvation, and if you want the blessings of the Holy Spirit, then you must obey Him.
- x. Now, what if you are already saved; you already have the Holy Spirit? Does this verse mean anything to you? Absolutely. If you want the fullness of the Spirit, then you must walk in obedience.

- xi. You receive the Holy Spirit at salvation, and He never leaves you. But you only experience the fullness of the Spirit when you are obedient.
- xii. All Christians experience the presence of the Spirit, but only obedient Christians experience the power of the Spirit. All Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit, but only obedient Christians have the empowering of the Holy Spirit.
- xiii. By our disobedience we grieve (Eph 4:30) and stifle the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19).
- xiv. Instead, we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). To be Spirit-filled is to be Spirit-controlled, or Spirit led. It means to be obedient. As you are obedient, or Spirit-filled, then you will experience the fullness of His blessings in your life.
- xv. We are also commanded to walk by the Spirit and to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25). These are just more ways of saying obedience to the Spirit. As we are obedient to the Spirit, He empowers us.
- xvi. And notice the many blessings of the Spirit when we are obedient:
 - 1. He is the *parakletos*. Can mean three different things:
 - a. Counselor: He guides and directs us. He gives us wisdom. He helps us understand Scripture, and how to apply it. Verse 17 calls Him the Spirit of truth. Verse 21 says He reveals God to us. Verse 26 says that He will teach you and remind you of God's word.
 - b. Advocate: He prays for us when we don't know what to pray for (Rm 8:26-27). He empowers us for service (Acts 1:8).
 - c. Comforter. He gives us peace and joy (Jn 14:27).

3. Obedience is required to experience God's love.

- i. **John 14:21-23** "21 The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it you're going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."
- ii. All are loved by God, but the obedient person will experience the fullness of God's love. The obedient person will experience the blessings of God's love.
- iii. If my son is disobedient, I will still love him, but he will not experience the fullness of my love. He will experience distance and discipline.
- iv. Another way to explain it is like this. I love everyone, but I have a special love for my children. God loves everyone, but He has a special love for His obedient children.
- v. Here's another way to say it. I love my children, but sometimes I love on them. If you are disobedient, God will still love you; but when you are obedient, God will love on you non-stop.

- vi. I have a membership at Cajun Fitness. And membership has many benefits – free weights; weight machines; power towers; treadmills; exercise bikes; aerobics classes; personal trainers; etc. I can go to any of their five locations: Youngsville, Broussard, Rayne, Opelousas, and Eunice. They won't cancel my membership if I don't show up, but I will not experience the full benefits of Cajun Fitness unless I actually attend and use their services.
- vii. There are many benefits to being a Christian: Peace, and joy, and strength, and wisdom, and answered prayer, and spiritual growth, and fruitfulness, and intimacy with God, and protection, and blessings, and provision. And God won't take away my salvation when I am disobedient, but I will only experience the benefits of the Christian life if I am obedient. This is what it means that God will love you.
- viii. **Joshua 1:7** "Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go."

IV. THREE CHALLENGES TO OBEDIENCE

1. Pastor Larry Osborne discusses three challenges to obedience.

i. Inconvenience.

- 1. For example, you're planning to get married, but you're already sleeping together. That's a sin. Get married if you are going to sleep together. Why don't you get married right now? Inconvenience.
- 2. Many of us have selective obedience. We treat God's word like advice. When we like His advice, we say, "You're smart." When we don't like His advice we say, "You don't understand my situation."
- 3. If you only obey God when it is convenient, then God is your consultant and not your God.
- 4. True obedience means obeying God even when it is inconvenient.

ii. Confusion.

- 1. Not confusion about God's commands, but about the reasoning for His commands. Not the What, but the Why.
- 2. For example, God says to stop looking at pornography, but you don't understand why. It doesn't seem like you're hurting anybody, or like you're hurting yourself. What's the big deal?
- 3. Children often think they are smarter than their parents, and sometimes we do too. If we don't understand why God commands us to do something, or what's in it for me, then we don't obey.
- 4. But true obedience means obeying God even when it doesn't make sense.
- 5. Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT) "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."

iii. Pain.

1. When obedience brings temporary pain, we often avoid it.
2. For example, God's word commands us to tithe. So why don't you tithe? Because of the temporary pain of living on less money.
3. But true obedience means obeying God no matter the cost.

V. CONCLUSION

1. Earlier I defined obedience as carrying out God's commands immediately, completely, and cheerfully. Let me add one more word to that definition: gratefully.
2. We do not obey in order to earn salvation; we obey out of gratitude for salvation. We do not obey in order to put God in our debt so that He will owe us eternal life. We obey because Christ has paid our debt and freely given us eternal life. We do not obey to get saved, but out of gratitude to God because He has already saved us. We don't put any faith in our works of obedience to get us to heaven. We put all of our trust in Christ's work on the cross for us.
3. 2022 is right around the corner. Now is the time to decide what kind of year it is going to be for you. Make it a great spiritual year by committing yourself to obeying God's word, no matter the cost. Then it will be a great year.
4. Let me close