

How to Obey God?

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Presence Litany adapted from 1 Chronicles 29

Pastor: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel

All: our father, forever and ever.

Pastor: Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty,

All: for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.

Pastor: Yours is the kingdom, O Lord,

All: and you are exalted as head above all.

Pastor: We worship You Lord in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

1 Kings 19:19-21

¹⁹ So [Elijah] departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. ²⁰ And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, “Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” ²¹ And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

Galatians 5:16-25 ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like

these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Luke 9:51-62 ⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. ⁵³ But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ And they went on to another village.

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." ⁵⁹ To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹ Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶² Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

⁵⁹ To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-60)

“...go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

The Bible talks a lot about the rules of life. Moses, the Levitical priests, the Kings and the prophets through out the Bible seem to describe the life of faith as a set of rules to accomplish. A state of being where you will be pure and Holy and worthy of God’s love and attention.

But rarely do you find Jesus echoing this sentiment. If anything Jesus is criticized or questioned for not following the purity laws. Why do you eat with sinners? Why don’t your disciples wash their hands in the prescribed way? How dare you heal on the Sabbath day!

When Jesus talks about obedience and what it looks like to follow him, he takes an almost completely different tact than most of the Bible. Or at least what our western ethic and self-help culture thinks are the key statements in the Bible.

Jesus says to you and I this morning the same thing he said to His disciples long ago. ... *as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.* And make no mistake this Kingdom is not about your ability to be successful, or restrain your impulses... This Kingdom is about what sets you free to fly.

When Myka was 5 or 6 years old. We had been living in Plainfield for about a year. For the first time we did a little picnic with our best friends the Batham’s and their 3 kids at the Ottawa street park, across from the pool in Plainfield.

There is a sledding hill in the park which the kids had been on that winter. This Spring day we were on the hill with two plastic cars. Kind of like a big wheel. They had the holes in

the bottom where the smaller child could kind of push or walk themselves along.

On this day there was none of that. The kids were taking turns riding down the sledding hill in these two cars. A little timid at first and then braver and braver until they had reached the limits of how fast these cars could go. Which was pretty fast because the ground was kind of hard, the grass had not begun to grow fully yet.

It wasn't long before Micheal and I were giving them a running push so they could go faster down the hill. But this too proved to be just a little too slow for the kids.

Do you remember when you first learned to run, I mean really run with abandon. The two older girls and the oldest boy were at this age. And they discovered that if they ran down the hill they could go even faster. Do you remember this sense of freedom? All you have to do is move your legs as fast as you can and without much effort and without getting tired you can run faster than you have ever run before. Almost as if you are flying.

Well, I was up at the top of the hill with them as they were discovering this freedom. Myka was pretty bold at first. And I ran down directly behind her - which was good because she got going so fast that her little legs couldn't keep up. And just as she was about to fall face first - I swooped in behind her and caught her and she almost slipped between my legs before I lifted her up in the air - and together we raced down to the end unable to stop our momentum.

She, of course, thought this was amazing. 'Dad that was so much fun.' Now there were several things I could have said to here at that moment. (Pause)

What do you think you would have said??

With a little bit of pride for the way I had just saved my child and more importantly to encourage her to keep taking this leap of faith to run as fast as she could... I said, 'I will always catch you.'

Run as fast as you want, I will always be there to catch you!

That is the Kingdom of God.

That is what Jesus chooses to say to us rather than try to perfect us with laws. Jesus is not worried about whether we are holy enough to deserve his Kingdom, he says what we need to hear to set us free.

This is what Jesus means when he says we will 'proclaim the Kingdom of God.' We are going to be saying things to our family and friends and even the stranger we did not plan on having a

conversation with...

We are going to find ourselves saying things that set

people free, help people take the next leap of faith,

expression of love, vulnerable sharing of the heart,

expression of their truth... That is what this Kingdom is all about!



And as Jesus says to these disciples you will know when you are being used this way, because you won't look back at what could have been... You won't find yourself worried about where you land ... You will be following Jesus with all of your heart, and soul and mind completely trusting what ever life brings next.

Have you been there, have you experienced this... You are on fire for the Lord and His presence in your life... You say something bold and your loved ones affirm it. You reveal a truth about yourself and where you thought your would find judgment you find mercy and grace... you just put yourself out there ready and willing to say whatever the Spirit has to say next. It is intoxicating, it is freedom, for a while ... days, weeks maybe months you can live like this never looking back.

And even when that injection of freedom begins to wear off I do believe there is a little something that changes in us. We aren't necessarily better people, more holy or sanctified... but we are just a little more exited for that next leap of faith. And sometimes the opposite happens.

We take that huge leap of faith, and then we just keep on leaping from one adventure, one conversation to another, and than we land somewhere we did not imagine we could. The world does not respond as it had before ... But here is what I believe. I believe the appeal, that taste of freedom is still there... Just waiting for the next leap of faith.

So there were a lot of things I could have said to my child in that moment we were celebrating her leap of faith and experience of salvation.

I could have said, ‘so long as I am right behind you I will catch you.’ Or I could have said, ‘I will always try to catch you.’ But instead I said, ‘I will always catch you.’

And having also just experienced this moment of salvation ... I said it with all of my heart and all of my hope that it might actually be true. Not just when she ran to fast... but in every aspect of my responsibility as her Dad. I want it to be true, that I will always catch her, I will never let her fall.’

But as you all know full well it did not last. And I watched my promise fall apart right before my very eyes.

Everyone was packing up, getting ready to go. The plastic cars were completely destroyed, one’s tire had fallen off and the others axel was sagging.

And I saw it out of the corner of my eye. Myka wanted one last run down that hill. I was half way down the hill already and I tried to meet her in the middle, I tried to match her speed. But I couldn’t do it. Buoyed in the confidence of my presence right behind her she ran with complete abandon. And I watched as she embraced the feeling of beginning to fall and she spread her arms out ready to fly... and then landed face first in the dust. I somersaulted over here and caught her as she skidded into my arms. And she looked up into my eyes, dirt and grass in her teeth... and with tears of pain and broken trust she said what I think we all find ourselves saying to God at some time in our lives.

‘You said ... you would never let me fall.’

She actually thought I was capable of catching her every time. Her trust and faith in me was complete, even if just for one afternoon.

She would not, she could not look back and wonder if I was not there.

And the truth is this is also what Jesus says will happen to use as we follow him. Jesus had set his eyes on Jerusalem and he knew that in following him his disciples would not only heal people, say things that set people free, experience the power of God even mightier than fire from heaven... BUT they would also (and they did) follow him into his crucifixion... all but 1 of them dying painful deaths at an early age because of their faith in Christ. Because they chose to leap and run and fly when it would have been much safer and easier to hide.

Jesus is here saying to you the same thing he said to his disciples and he has said in your past... the words that will set you free to take your next leap of faith.

You will, Christ's promise (Luke 9:60), proclaim the Kingdom of God!!

Because of Jesus you have, and you will say the things others need to hear to be set free... to run with abandon... to fly!! And yes, in this world bear the very real cross that comes in following Him. And you wouldn't have it any other way.