



Idea: If you love Jesus, you will be obedient to His commands.

Intro: Today, we begin a brand new year, and with a new year comes a chance to start over and to do things differently. If you did not like some of the things in your life in 2016, the New Year is an opportunity to tweak and make improvements. Many people in America will resolve to make changes and switch the course of their lives.

According to statisticbrain.com, 45% of Americans will make a New Year's resolution. That is approximately 145 million people will resolve to change something in their life in 2017. The top 10 New Years resolutions of 2015 according to statisticbrain.com were:

- 1) Lose weight
- 2) Getting organized
- 3) Spend less, save more
- 4) Enjoy life to the fullest
- 5) Staying fit and healthy
- 6) Learn something exciting
- 7) Quit smoking

- 8) Help others in their dreams
- 9) Fall in love
- 10) Spend more time with family

Do any of those areas resonate with you? For the believer I would add a couple areas to the list such as deepen my walk with the Lord and deepen my connection with the church.

New Year's resolutions are great. It is always a good thing when a person desires and charts a course for self-improvement. Perhaps this year you need to quit smoking, lose weight, get control of your finances, or deepen your walk with the Lord. What have you committed to change up in 2017? This morning, I want to challenge all of us to embrace the resolution of obedience. In my opinion there is not another New Year's resolution that will so radically change your life like unbridled obedience to God and His Word.

Unfortunately, only about 8% of those who make a New Year's resolution will achieve the resolution. The issue is motivation. This week nearly every gym in America will be full of people who've resolved to get fit in 2017, but by February nearly every gym will be back to normal. People will lose their motivation. What is the motivation for obedience to God for the Christ-follower? Jesus informs us in John 14:15.

Read John 14:15.

Inquiry: Up till now Jesus has spoken of His love for His disciples and of their obligation to love one another; now for the first time in this Gospel, He speaks of their love for Him. The vital link between the disciples love for Him and their obedience to Him is a recurring theme in Johannine writings. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3).

What has God commanded us to do? There are many commandments for us to follow. In Exodus 20 we find a list of

10 commandments that sum up much of what God expects of His followers.

- 1) You shall have no other gods. (vs. 3)
- 2) You shall not make or worship an idol. (vs. 4-6)
- 3) You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. (vs. 7)
- 4) You shall keep the Sabbath day. (vs. 8-11)
- 5) Honor your father and mother. (vs. 12)
- 6) You shall not murder. (vs. 13)
- 7) You shall not commit adultery. (vs. 14)
- 8) You shall not steal. (vs. 15)
- 9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (vs. 16)
- 10) You shall not covet. (vs. 17)

Then there are other commandments given such as:

- Be holy (Lev 20:7; 1 Pet 1:15-16)
- Love one another (John 13:34; Romans 12:10)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)
- Submit to one another (Eph 5:21)
- Make disciples (Matt 28:19)
- Bear witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)

This list of commandments is not exhaustive, but we can sum up all of God's commandments as Jesus did with two simple commands.

Read Matthew 22:35-40.

Jesus said that all of the commandments could be reduced down to loving God and loving people. If you study the commandments, this is exactly what you see. They either direct our attention toward God or toward others. The first 4 commandments in Exodus 20 deal with how we are to relate to God. The other six commandments deal with how we are to relate toward others. They command us to:

1. Make & keep God preeminent.
2. Make & keep others prominent.

Obviously, God charges us to keep His commandments, but He doesn't just demand us to coldly follow Him. There's a motivator because without a motivation there will be no success. Jesus presents to us the only motivating factor that will enable us to be obedient. He calls us to love Him.

God always calls us to love Him, and He wants our obedience to be connected to our love and adoration for Him. Jesus is not looking for obedience through compliance. He is looking for obedience that is grounded and driven by faithful love. Robots are compliant to the orders given them, and they follow them without question because they have no say in the matter. When God created human beings, He did not create robots. Instead, God gave humanity a free will to choose right from wrong. We have been given the freedom to choose to set our affection upon God or upon ourselves. When we choose to love God and others more than we love ourselves God is glorified. When we choose to turn to God and away from sin, God is glorified. The motivation to do so is our love for God. It is our affection for Him. Our motivation is the fact that we are in awe of God's splendor and beauty. Loving God means that we are more captivated by His love and grace than the temporary pleasures this world has to offer.

Obedience is something every person struggles with on some level. "I'll have it my way!" is at the core of the rebellious heart. Yet God calls us to follow Him and His ways...to love Him and believe Him. On this first day of 2017, is your life marked with faithful, loving obedience to Jesus? Or is your life better marked by rebellious, idolatrous, and occasional compliance?

This year we are going to study the books of Judges and Nehemiah. The main problem with Israel during the Judges was that they forgot God and what He had done for them. They wanted things they're way. Israel forgot that they

were God's special people who were set apart from all other peoples. They forgot God's Law. They forgot that God loved them, and they forgot to love God in return. Therefore, the endless cycles of sin/crying out to God/deliverance by a judge were God's way to cause the people to remember and thus obey. As we study the mishaps of the Jewish people during the time of the Judges, we will learn how to obediently follow God.

In Nehemiah, we find the Jews returning from Exile. Their ancestors had again forgotten and rebelled against God, but now the people of God are returning to their first love. They are returning to God's Word and desiring to be obedient to God's commands. They have had enough of doing things they're way. They now desire to do things God's way.

Conclusion: My prayer for you and our church in 2017 is that we would be obedient. If you want to know the secret to success, joy, and fulfillment, it is as simple as obedience. It is as simple as loving Jesus more than you love the temporary pleasures of sin.

What does obedience look like in 2017? For some of you it might be becoming obedient in your:

- Salvation
- Devotional Life
- Morality
- Family
- Finances
- Service
- Discipleship
- Missions

Make obedience your #1 New Year's resolution. Fall in love with Jesus and chase after Him. If you love Jesus, you will be obedient to His commands.