

Obeying Jesus

Tim Miller, Gateway Fellowship, August 13 2017

John 8:31 Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you continue in my teachings. 32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

33 “But we are descendants of Abraham,” they said. “We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, ‘You will be set free?’”

34 Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. 35 A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. 22 On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ 23 But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’”

Matthew 7:24 “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

Matthew 12:50 “Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!”

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.

6 Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.

7 Don’t be impressed with your own wisdom.
Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

8 Then you will have healing for your body
and strength for your bones.

1 Tim 3:16-17 MSG There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

Matthew 15: Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him, 2 “Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.”

3 Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? 4 For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’ 5 But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ 6 In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 8 ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9 Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’”

Luke 6:46 “So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say.

We are a congregation who has tasted of deep loss and grief, who knows that God's love is a healing balm, that hope is not a garnish, but is as essential as oxygen to the body, and has a conviction that community is also right at the center of God's redemptive activity in the world. We are a people who believe that God looks just like Jesus — that Jesus is what God has to say to people.

Jesus is THE genius at the art of living well, and “the christian life,” is learning from Jesus how to live. When we say, “Jesus is Lord,” without an objective standard

for what he taught and did, we end up inventing a faith from our own culture and personality and preferences, and instead of us being conformed to Jesus' image, we re-form God in the image of our own ideals. Leaning not on our own understanding, but instead acknowledging HIM in all our ways and letting Him direct our paths means involves setting the Bible over against our opinions. This is what gives the expression, "Jesus is Lord," bite and meaning.

77% of americans polled by the pew research center say they pray. So if praying means you have a good and right relationship with God, then 3 of 4 americans have that. But does that mean that God would say that 77% of americans are forgiven saints whom he knows, whose hearts are his, and who he can put on like a glove and move anywhere love chooses to manifest and extend his kingdom on earth?

For "Jesus is Lord," to have bite, there are certain realities that have to take shape in our lives. There's only one thing that is blessed — God's will. To be blessed is to walk in what's already blessed. Jesus told a story of two dudes: one man built his house on the rock — did what I say — and another built his house on the sand — listened to the sermon, nodded, and did whatever HE thought was best instead. The first person's life was strong, whole, united, integrated and well. The second person's life was hell on earth, disintegrated, at odds with reality, broken, and tortured. The eternal results of these two paths are even more stark.

"Many will say to me, Lord, Lord on that day..." Lots of people come to church, sing, pray, and get baptized. But the thing that reveals whether the it is real is: do you do God's will — or do you do your own will? Do I obey the Father and is that my daily bread? Or is my daily bread to simply use my wisdom to seek my pleasure? Do I belong to me or do I belong to Him? Am I bought with a price, therefore I live to bring his heart joy... or am i just like everybody else, trying to find a way to feel okay today, whatever it takes?

Whoever does the Father's will — that's who Jesus says he knows. That's also who Jesus says is his family. That's also why it's possible for people to draw near to God with their mouths but their hearts are far from him. It's possible for our teaching to be nothing more than human opinion — a way that makes sense — seems right — to all of us, but that in reality is a clever rationalization of our disavowing the hard thing God requires of us.

Last week, after service, if you weren't there, we had a family meeting in which we followed the last part of Matthew 18 - how Jesus commands us to deal with a believer

in Christ who sins and won't repent - won't turn from doing wrong, from the heart. He says confront personally. Then take a friend. Then take more. Then bring them before the church. After that, if they still won't see truth and turn to the Lord, we no longer treat that person as an insider, as someone who has is at peace with God, as a brother or sister in Christ, but rather as someone who is on the outside who needs to be brought in. We do this, because this is actually the case, but their conscience and satan are lying to them, and we love them too much to join the lie and watch them live a life of empty deception covered over with religion. We have no stones of judgment to throw. We speak and act with gentleness. But we clearly speak the truth and confront the lies, because they are worth it. And we've been in that process for months, creating a safe space around the sinning person for them to repent, to no avail. But finally, last week, we brought it to you, the church. We wept. We prayed. We hugged. We loved on a dear family. We did it, with tears. We did it primarily because it is exactly what Jesus said to do.

We learn more in one year of obedience to Jesus than we would in one hundred years of studying theology.

Last week I saw something happen I didn't anticipate. I saw what we were doing was touching others. Touching pain from childhood, pain from your marriages, pain from your infidelity, pain that goes so deep it has no expiration date. But even pain like that, God wants us to bring to him and to each other so that he can heal our wounds and mend our broken hearts. And I saw that as people's pain was coming up, many were receiving prayer and engaged in conversations. I saw such a holy thing happening. I saw that the Lord was putting people back together and ministering his love and mercy in the deep places. And I saw him connecting us together as a body more closely.

I stood back and said, "Ok, Jesus. You know what you're doing. This process wasn't the process I would have designed. My process would have been more like my culture wants. This feels very intense. Confrontational. It feels way open, and who knows what will be the outcome?

A few weeks back I had a dream. Technically, it may have been a nightmare. I was with my little sister, Lynette, and she had become convinced that life was so miserable the only way to find relief was to escape life itself. And in the dream, there was this warm light, like the kind that happens around dusk. I was there with her, empathizing, sympathizing, just feeling good feelings for her and being with her and supporting her while she took her life. Then I woke up...and the good feelings, the warm sunlight, remained, but I was awake and realized that those feelings are the wrong ones to feel. It

was disturbing. And I immediately knew the dream was one with divine meaning. That dream clarified for me the difference between love and what feels like love, but is actually hate.

If it partners with someone's destruction, no matter how gracious, compassionate, and nice it "feels," it isn't love. There are some hard things we must do to live lives of love, which won't feel like love in the moment: for our children — for our friends who are addicted — for our spouse who is trapped in lies — for us when we've been so deceived that Jesus looks like the enemy of an abundant and full life. That dream clarified to me, no — it mandated to me — that I dare not follow our my culture, my own wisdom, and if I do, I surely won't end up walking out Jesus-Love, but only a demonic substitute. Through obedience to Jesus (often before we fully understand), eventually understand just how much better he understands life and people and everything than we do. And just how incredibly kind and wise his heart is for us in what he says to do. He knows how life works best.

I wonder what all in our lives are not thriving because we have unknowingly replaced the wisdom of God for the ignorance of our culture, our personal preference, and the false wisdom of what we learned from our lives that Jesus never taught us. Let's unlearn it, and learn the ways of God instead.

Let's be disciples of Jesus.