

Obedient Heart Devotional: Training Character from a Biblical Perspective

Read the italic section or paraphrase with your children to fit their age level. Visual links in light blue can be printed ahead of time to show during the lesson, or click the link if using your mobile device.

1. Introduction: *Do you know who has the most beautiful heart of anyone in the whole world? Jesus does! When we read true stories of Jesus in the Bible, we see how He is so kind and loving, and He spent His life helping people and teaching them how much God loves them! And did you know that God wants us to have a heart like Jesus, too? If we have a heart like Jesus, we will be able to show people what Jesus is like, and then they will want to know Jesus better! Having a heart like Jesus means we have character traits like Jesus. The ways we act or behave are called character traits. Jesus has lots of good character traits. He is loving, kind, helpful, responsible, and attentive. Can you think of some other character traits He has? (Wait for answers or help them think of examples of others.) Do you want to learn to have these character traits, too? Let's learn a new one this week!*

2. Define Obedient: *This month we are going to learn the character trait, "obedient." Obedient means to do what we are told. When someone in charge of us tells us to do something, should we do it? Yes, we should! That is being obedient!*

There are three ways to have an obedient heart.

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*First of all, we need to obey **quickly**. If our mom tells us to make our bed, should we say, "Okay, Mom, I will do it later," or should we do it right away? We should do it right away if we can, that's right!*

[Show or print visual](#)

The second way is **cheerfully**. Should we complain or argue when we are told to do something that we don't want to do? No, we should say 'yes, mom' or 'yes ma'am' and do it with a happy heart.

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The third way is **completely**. If our mom asks us to make our bed, should we just throw the pillow and blankets on the bed but not really finish making it? No, that would not be doing it the right way! We need to completely finish the work we are told to do.

So having an obedient heart means we obey in three ways. Do you remember what they are? (allow answers) That's right, quickly, cheerfully, and completely.

Here is a [video](#) to watch to help preschoolers through early elementary understand what it looks like to obey in these ways.

3. Give Examples: Now that we know HOW to obey, let's find out from God's Word whom we should obey. Can you think of anyone? (Allow them to answer at first.)

Let's read some Bible verses to find out together.

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Leviticus 18:4: "You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God." NIV

The first one is God. God wants us to obey Him. He gave us the Ten Commandments or rules to obey. He doesn't give us rules to be mean, but He gives them to us to keep us safe. He knows what is best for us, and if we follow His ways, we will be safe and life will go better for us.

Let's read another verse to find out the second one.

[Show or print visual](#)

Read Ephesians 6:1-3 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is

right. Honor your father and mother-which is the first commandment with a promise— so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” NIV

The second one is our parents. *God gave us our parents for a reason- to teach us how to live. They have lived longer than us, and they are wiser than us. When we listen to them and follow their rules, we will grow wise too, and we will know how to make good choices. The Bible even says we will live a long life when we obey God! Because we obey our parents, God will keep us safe from many dangers in the world, and we will have blessings in our life.*

Let’s read another verse to find out the third one.

[Show or print visual](#)

Read Hebrews 13:7 *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.” NIV*

The third one is those in charge of us or who have authority over us. *Who can you think of that is sometimes in charge when your parents are not there? (Allow them to answer first.) Babysitters, older brothers and sisters, our friends’ parents, teachers, police, and our pastors are some good examples. Should we obey these people even though they are not our parents? Yes, we should- as long as they are following God’s ways and our parents trust them, we should obey them, too!*

Now we know how to be obedient and to whom to be obedient. Let’s pray and ask God to help us be obedient. Dear God, thank you that you love us and want us to be obedient to keep us safe. Help us to be obedient to You, our parents, grandparents, teachers, and others in charge of us. Amen

Day 2

Last time we learned what it means to be obedient. Can you remember the three ways we can be obedient? (allow them to answer) (quickly, cheerfully, and completely)

We also learned whom we should be obey. Do you remember whom we should obey? (Allow them to answer) (God, parents, teachers and others in authority over us)

Learn from Jesus:

Now we will take a look at some scripture and see if Jesus was obedient, because we want to have a heart like His.

[Show or print visual](#)

Read John 8:54-44

“Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word.” NIV

Read John 12:49

“For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.” NIV

Whom did Jesus obey in these two Bible readings? (Allow them to answer.)

Jesus was obedient to God. *The Bible teaches us that Jesus obeyed God. Jesus told others that He obeys God’s Word, and we see examples of Jesus obeying God throughout the Bible. Can you think of any? The Bible also says that Jesus only spoke what His Father, God, told Him to say.*

[Show or print visual](#)

Read Luke 2:41-52

“Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, ac-

According to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Whom did Jesus obey in this story? (Allow them to answer.)

Jesus obeyed His parents.

In the story where twelve-year-old Jesus was lost in the temple, we learn that when His parents find Him, Jesus listens to their concerns and goes back home and obeys them.

[Show or print visual](#)

Read Matthew 17:24-27

"After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?" "From others," Peter answered. "Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him. "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Whom did Jesus obey in this story? (Allow them to answer.)

Jesus was obedient to those in authority- in this story the leaders who wanted him to pay taxes. *Jesus is wiser than all those in authority, but when He walked on earth, He obeyed those in charge as long as that meant He was obeying God.*

Application Questions:

What are some ways you can obey God?

What are some ways you can obey your parents and teachers?

What are some ways you can obey those in charge of you, like your teachers?

Prayer: *Jesus, thank you for showing us through the Bible how you are obedient to God and want us to obey God as well. Thank you for reminding us that when I obey my parents and teachers, I am obeying You, too. Help me to obey quickly, cheerfully, and completely. We love you Jesus and want to be more and more like you. Amen*

Variations of the biblical principles taught in this devotional are found in several Christian parenting books. These principles (the three ways to have an obedient heart) were taken and adapted from Growing Families International's parenting curriculums: Growing Kids God's Way and Parenting from The Tree of Life Series, found at growingfamiliesusa.com and Parenting Made Practical's parenting principles in their Mom's Notes podcasts and book, Why Can't I Get My Kids to Behave found at parentingmadepractical.com.

Activities to Reinforce an Obedient Heart

Children learn best by repetition, so the following activities are suggestions for you to do with your children to reinforce an obedient heart throughout the coming weeks. Pick and choose what works for your family. You can also read my blog, [6 Ways to Teach Your Kids to Pay Attention](#), or the [Attentive Heart Devotional](#) for more ideas on teaching your kids to pay attention, a prerequisite to obedience.

Craft and Extra Visuals: Choose a craft/visual and review how we can be obedient this week.

[Obedience Visual](#)

[Science lesson to teach obedience](#)

[Obedience reinforcer and craft idea](#)

Choose a Verse to Memorize: Memorizing verses is a great way to cement concepts and hide God's Word in your child's heart. Choose a memory verse from the list below that would be appropriate for your children. Explain what it means and how it can help remind them to be obedient. Practice reciting it in fun ways!

Children obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Colossians 3:20 (NIV?) [Video with tune for preschoolers](#)

Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways.

Proverbs 8:32 (NIV)

My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow Me. John 10:27 (NIV)

Answer Scenario Questions: Scenarios are a great way to teach life application of character traits. Choose the scenarios below for your child's age group.

Pre-K/Kindergarten: Read the following scenarios with your children. Have them give a thumbs up if it shows being obedient and a thumbs down if it does not show being obedient.

- Your mom tells you to come to her. Instead of coming you keep playing with your toys.
- Your mom tells you to come to her, so you drop your toys, come right away, and say, "Yes, Mom!"
- Your dad tells you to get your pj's on for bed, but you keep playing with your brother.
- Your dad tells you to get your pj's on for bed, so you say, "Yes, Dad!" and do it right away.
- Your teacher tells you to sit criss cross and listen to the story. You wiggle and talk to your friend.
- Your teacher tells you to sit criss cross and listen to the story, so you cross your legs and stay quiet so you can listen.

1st-5th Grade: Read the scenarios and ask your children what they would do in each scenario to have an obedient heart.

- Your mom tells you to come because it's time to go, but you are in the middle of watching your favorite movie. What should you do?
- Your mom tells you to help get your little sister ready for bed. You really don't feel like it. What should you do?
- Your teacher tells you to work on a homework assignment, but your friend wants to pass notes with you in class. What should you do?

- Your teacher at church asks everyone to be quiet when it's not their turn to speak, so there will be no interrupting. What should you do?

Practice Being Obedient:

1. Obeying God: Read a Bible lesson or a devotional together and ask your children what they learned from the story. Ask them one way they can obey God this week from what they learned. If they are younger, help them apply God's Word to their own life.

2. Obeying Parents: Make a simple green light cutting a small green circle from construction paper and taping it to a popsicle stick. Write "Yes Mom", or whatever you want your children to say when you call them and give them an instruction. Then play Simon Says and have your children hold up their sign, say what is on it, and follow the direction.

3. Obeying Teachers: Next time your children go to school/Sunday school, talk to them beforehand about whom they need to obey. Talk about scenarios that could arise and how your children should handle them. Remind them to say, "Yes, Mrs./Mr. _____" or something similar and do whatever that person tells them to do. Let them know that you will be asking the teacher if they obey when they are in class, if appropriate.

Remind/ Reinforce:

1. Remind your children to practice being obedient each day. Talk about situations that may arise and how to be attentive during those times.

2. Praise your children when you catch them being obedient. For example, "Wow, I love how you said, 'Yes Ma'am' and went and did the dishes right away without complaining! You are really showing an obedient heart!"

3. Reward if needed for training. For younger children, you could consider making a sticker chart. Give a sticker each time you "catch" your child being obedient when you call his or her name, or add it to the chore chart as a "chore" for the month to help you remember!