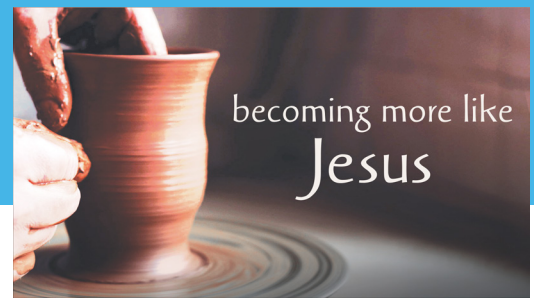


Discussion Questions

November 16, 2025



Becoming More Like Jesus: The Joy of Obedience - John 15:10-17

This week we continued our series by focusing on the second half of Jesus' teaching on abiding in John 15. The sermon challenged the common gap we experience between information (knowing God's word) and formation (actually doing it). We saw that true abiding is an "active rest," and the active part is obedience. This obedience isn't a joyless burden; Jesus says it's the direct pathway to His full joy. The central command is to love one another sacrificially, just as He loved us. This reframes our obedience, moving us from the mindset of a *doulos* (slave) who obeys out of duty to a *philos* (friend) who partners with Jesus in His mission.

1. Read the key passages:

John 15:9-17 (NLT/ESV) *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ... These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

James 1:22 *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

2. Information vs. Formation: James shared the story of the person who said "I've heard that before" and how someone shared even if Jesus were to come today and preach the Sermon on the Mount they would say... "Eh... I've heard it before".

Why are we as Christians often more interested in learning something new than in applying the basic teachings of Jesus?

2. Read Matthew 7:24-27. Both builders heard the exact same words. What was the only difference between them? In what areas of your life are you tempted to build on the "sand" of just hearing?

3. Abiding & Obedience: What has been your understanding of "abiding" in Christ? Did it lean more toward passive rest or active obedience?

How does verse 10 ("If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love") change or clarify your understanding?

4. James used a marriage analogy: "My obedience... doesn't earn her love, but it is the means by which I maintain and experience... that love." How does this help you understand the relationship between obedience and abiding?

5. The Path to Joy: Read verse 11 aloud. According to Jesus, what is the direct result of this kind of obedience?

We often think obedience is the obstacle to joy. Why do you think Jesus says it is the pathway to His full joy?

Can you share an example from your own life where obeying Jesus (even when it was hard) ultimately led to deeper joy?

6. The Command: Doulos vs. Philos Jesus boils all the commands down to one: "Love one another as I have loved you" (v. 12). What does it mean to love "as I have loved you" (v. 13)?

Discuss the difference between a doulos (slave) and a philos (friend). A slave obeys out of duty; a friend obeys out of partnership.

How does seeing yourself as a philos (friend) of Jesus, who knows the "why," change your motivation to obey?

7. The sermon ended with three practical steps to move from "information" to "formation." Spend a few minutes quietly reflecting on these before sharing.

- Name the Gap: Where do you have "information" but lack "formation"? What is one specific thing you know God is calling you to do, but you've just been "hearing" about?
- Re-frame the Motive: How can you re-frame that act of obedience this week, not as the burden of a doulos(slave), but as the invitation of a philos (friend)?
- Do the One Thing: The command is to "lay down your life." What is one practical, specific way you can "lay down" your time, ego, or comfort to love someone this week?

Example: Sacrificing time to truly listen to your spouse.

Example: Sacrificing your ego to be the first to apologize.

Example: Sacrificing your comfort to serve someone in an unseen way.

John 15:9–17 (NLT)

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.

John 15:9 (ESV)

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

John 15:10 (ESV)

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Dallas Willard - Spiritual Formation: What it is, and How it is Done

We have counted on preaching, teaching, and knowledge or information to form faith... and outward behavior of the Christian. But, for whatever reason, this strategy has not turned out well... The result is that we have multitudes of professing Christians who well may be ready to die, but obviously are not ready to live, and can hardly get along with themselves, much less with others.

Matthew 7:24–27 (NIV)

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

James 1:22 (NIV)

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

The foolish builder, is self-deceived. He thinks his information is his foundation. He thinks because he knows the Word, he is secure. But his house is built on the sand of knowing, not the rock of doing.

John 15:10 (ESV)

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

John 15:9-10

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you... just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

John 15:11 (ESV)

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Charles Spurgeon

No one is more miserable than the Christian who for a time hedges in his obedience. He does not love sin enough to enjoy its pleasures, and does not love Christ enough to relish holiness... He is a man most to be pitied

John 15:12 (ESV)

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

John 15:17 (ESV)

These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

John 15:13 (ESV)

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:14–15 (NLT)

You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

Doulos - slave

Philos - Friend

This reframes obedience entirely. It's not the joyless burden of a doulos (slave). It's the joyful privilege of a philos (friend).

John 15:16 (ESV)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Application:

First: Ask the Lord, "Where do I have "information" but not "formation?"

- Where do I need to walk in obedience to things God has laid on my heart to do?

Second: Re-Frame From Doulos to Philos [Slave to Friend]

- When the Holy Spirit points what to do, and you feel that old, familiar sense of burden, actively re-frame it.

- Say "This is not a doulos (slave) obligation. This is a philos (friend) invitation." "Jesus is not forcing me to do this. He is inviting me to partner with Him

Third: "Lay Down Your Life"

- What is one thing that God is laying on your heart for you to do?