

A Heart Submitted to the Word: Obedience

By Matthew McKellar

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Psalm 86:11 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What two requests of David are recorded in this verse?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to John 14:15–24 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: In this passage, how many times does Jesus refer to the “keeping” of His commandments and words?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Romans 12:1 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What are disciples commanded to do with their bodies?

Scripture to Memorize

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. John 14:15

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand some basic characteristics of a life lived under the authority of Scripture and the scriptural priority of obedience.

Matthew McKellar is associate professor of Preaching at Southwestern Seminary. Before joining the seminary faculty in 2009, he served as a pastor for twenty-eight years in Texas.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Everyone in the group was excited when Mike made a profession of faith and was baptized. They were impressed by his public declaration of love for Jesus. In the weeks following his profession, Mike seldom attended Bible study, repeatedly got in fights with those in his family and was caught stealing at the local grocery store. What do Mike's actions indicate about his love for Jesus? How does one truly demonstrate love for Jesus?

A Heart that Fears the Lord

Read Psalm 86:11; Proverbs 4:20–23; 9:10 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Psalm 86:11. This verse is found in a psalm of David that focuses on God's faithful love. After acknowledging that God is great and does great things, David made two specific requests. **Teach.** This Hebrew word means "to instruct or to guide." David desired to be taught the way of the faithful and promise-keeping God. **walk . . . truth.** David made this request with a clear purpose in mind. He wanted to be taught so that he might have a lifestyle rooted in God's Word. **heart.** Rather than referencing the organ that pumps blood through the body, this term is used to signify a person's internal nature. Think of the heart as your internal control center from which flow your thoughts, feelings and intentions. David wanted the Lord to unite his heart. He asked for a heart that was singularly focused. **fear.** The concept of the fear of the Lord occurs at least 150 times in the Bible. This is not a cringing fear that discourages us from approaching the Lord with our needs. Instead, this is a reverential awe of who He is and what He has done. Such fear includes the responses of respect, admiration, and amazement. **name.** The name of the Lord is a representation of His character and reflects His presence, power and perfection.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What two requests of David are recorded in Psalm 86:11?

Studying the Passage

This section of Proverbs 4 stresses the need to give careful attention to God's Word. Notice the repetition of verse 20: **attentive . . . words; Incline . . . sayings.** Also note the specific commands and the way God's words are described in verse 21.

Verse 21. keep. This word signifies the act of guarding diligently. Guarding the heart is essential because what we do externally flows out of who we are internally.

Proverbs 9:10. fear. Again, the idea of such fear involves respect, admiration, and amazement. **wisdom.** This word refers to more than the accumulation of information. The Hebrew term points to the application of knowledge in a way that is consistent with God's commands. **knowledge . . . understanding.** Here God's Word places emphasis on the value of knowing who God is. Knowledge of Him brings insight, or true wisdom. We gain the knowledge of God, which leads to wisdom as we digest and receive His Word.

A Heart that Loves the Lord

Read John 14:15–24 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 15. love. At least three different Greek words are used for *love* in the New Testament. Here love may be described as cherishing, esteeming, valuing or honoring someone. **keep.** This word means “to observe or obey.” **commandments.** A number of words like this one are used in Scripture to refer to God’s orders. They include *law, statute, precept, and instruction.* Notice how Jesus connects loving Him with obedience to Him in this verse.

Discussion Questions

How is God described in verse 16? Why was the promise of the Spirit so significant at this stage in the earthly ministry of Jesus (hint: see John 14:25–30)?

Verse 17. Spirit of truth. This phrase is a reference to the Holy Spirit, which Jesus promised to His disciples. Awareness of the Spirit’s role and power is crucial for every disciple. He enables and empowers us to delight in and do the commands of Jesus.

Verses 21–24. These verses reinforce the connection between love for Jesus and obedience to His commands. In verse 24, note what Jesus announces about the person who does not love Him.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: In John 14:15–24, how many times does Jesus refer to the “keeping” of his commandments and words?

On Your Own

In the space below, identify two or three specific commands in Scripture that you plan, with the Spirit’s help, to obey now and in the days to come. When everyone is finished, the group can share their responses.

A Heart that Honors the Lord

Read Romans 12:1–2 out loud.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What are disciples commanded to do with their bodies in Romans 12:1?

Studying the Passage

Verse 1. Appeal to you therefore . . . mercies. The use of *therefore* signals the reader to look back at what Paul had written previously in Romans 9–11 and, specifically, 11:33–36. God is the Source of truth, Author of our deliverance from sin through Christ, and the One to whom all honor belongs. *Appeal* means “to urge or strongly encourage.” *Mercies* points to God’s multiple expressions of mercy to sinners. While grace stresses the giving of an undeserved gift,

mercy stresses the idea of having pity on and withholding from a person the judgment he deserves. **present . . . bodies . . . living sacrifice, holy . . . worship.** In view of God's mercies, we are to present, or offer, ourselves to God. In the Old Testament, God's people regularly offered animal sacrifices on the altar. These sacrifices were specific acts of obedience.

Notice, however, that in contrast to the "dead" sacrifice of the Old Testament, verse 1 indicates that our sacrifice is to be a "living" one. Our sacrifice involves our bodies. *Bodies* means "all that we are." Presenting all that we are is our logical service of worship. *Worship* really means "worth-ship." When we offer ourselves completely to the Lord and obey His commands, we honor Him with the worship He alone deserves.

Verse 2. conformed . . . transformed. This verse tells us what being a living sacrifice means. A disciple must not be conformed to this world. *World* refers to humanity in rebellion against God. The disciple must resist the external pressure exerted on him by the world.

Positively, the disciple must be transformed. *Transformed* stresses a change that begins on the inside. It is a metamorphosis, a change from the inside to the outside. This transformation occurs as a disciple's mind is renewed continually. Such renewal happens only as the disciple submits to God's Word and discerns God's will.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

Texts from four biblical books highlight the essence of a heart submitted to God's Word and the necessity of obedience (Psalm 86:11; Proverbs 4:20–23; 9:10; John 14:15–24; Romans 12:1–2). A disciple gains knowledge of God's will and His commands as he prioritizes biblical intake. A disciple also understands that obedience to God's commands honors Him and demonstrates one's love for Him.

Considering some of the specific qualities you looked at with your group, you saw the importance of having a heart that fears the Lord. This means you view His perspective on any subject as the ultimate and final authority. You also observed the significance of having a heart that loves the Lord. In John 14:15–24, the vital connection between love for Him and obedience to Him is emphasized four times. A disciple should be a hearer and a doer of the Word (James 1:19–25).

Additionally, through the study of Romans 12:1–2, you have grasped the need to have a heart that honors Christ in worship. A disciple, in view of His mercies, presents all that he is as a living sacrifice to Jesus. This is an ongoing process of active obedience which avoids conformity to the world and aims for inward transformation through a continually renewed mind. The process demands submitting to the Word, digesting the Word and obeying the Word.

As you think about your own heart and submission to the Word, consider the following issues:

- Fear: Is your heart characterized by respect, admiration and amazement in relation to God?
- Love: Is your heart committed to loving Jesus through daily obedience to His commands?
- Honor: Is your heart passionate about honoring Christ with worship that includes every part of who you are?

Follow up Question

What are some of the key qualities of a heart that is submitted to the Word of God, and how does a disciple demonstrate authentic love for the Lord?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.