



Aim of lesson

To look at the concept of obedience; what it is, what it isn't and what we should do about it. Also to show how God revealed what he expected throughout the Bible.

Bible background

This lesson concentrates on the books already looked at this year (Genesis-Deuteronomy) as examples, but there are others from elsewhere in the Bible.

Preparation required

In lessons 5 (The state of man) and 8 (Sin and responsibility) we have already discussed man's sinful state and God's forgiveness. You might like to remind yourself what was said in these lessons especially if another teacher taught them.

Outline of lesson

Briefly remind the class that we are sinners but that God will forgive us. Explain that we should still try to do what God wants. In fact we should want to all the more because of his forbearance.

To obey or not to obey?

Obedience, in these days of 'human rights' is rather an old-fashioned idea. Women often don't think they should obey their husbands or children their teachers or parents; people don't want to obey the government, or policemen, or anyone in authority. Talk about this with the students. What happens when people don't feel the need to obey the rules?

Examples

Ask for examples from scripture of people who obeyed God or disobeyed him. Turn to the grid in the students' books and get them to fill in the incidents they have thought of and then highlight the people who obeyed.

Some good examples are listed here if they need help. (David's sin was considered in lesson 8)

- Eve (Genesis 3:6)
- Noah (Genesis 6:22)
- Abraham (Genesis 22:18)
- The Israelites (Exodus 16:19,20)
- Moses (Numbers 20:8,11,12)
- Jonah (Jonah 1:1-3,17)
- The Israelites (Judges 2:17)
- Jesus (Luke 22:42)
- Peter and John (Acts 4:18-20)
- Saul/Paul (Acts 9:1-19)

Why did they do it?

Try to bring out that those who obeyed did it because they thought it was important to please God, not because they were the sort of people who blindly obeyed rules.

Jesus obeyed God, his Father, to such an extent that he even died because God wanted him to. He is our supreme example.

The Pharisees complained that Jesus and his disciples were breaking the law by plucking grains of corn on the Sabbath¹. Jesus referred to David and his men who really did break the law. David understood that the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. He had learned how to please God and he knew that at this moment his men's hunger was more important than the regulations.

When Jesus was asked which law was the most important, he didn't say that all commandments were equal. He said that the most important commandments were to love God and to love our neighbours - other commandments are part of these.

¹ It is questionable whether they were actually breaking the law, which specifically allowed people to take grain from a field and eat it (Deuteronomy 23:25). It is doubtful whether merely rubbing the husks from a few grains of corn would in the law have counted as work that should not be carried out on the Sabbath.

Ask the class if they would obey everybody who told them to do something? People obey because they believe the person giving the orders is right and has their best interests at heart.

Does this apply to God? Look at a scriptural example of how God cared for his people Israel, in Deuteronomy 8:4. Even when they drifted away from him God looked after his people.

Is it important for us to obey too? Do we believe that God has our best interests at heart? Clearly he does because he wants to give us eternal life, even though we don't deserve it.

Get the students to think about the passage in 1 Samuel 15:22 and related verses to discover that God really wants us to want to please him not to follow rules and rituals blindly.

Relevance to our Lives

We can see that the people mentioned in the Bible obeyed actively, by listening then doing, and this could be a model for us. We should obey enthusiastically, not grudgingly, because we know God loves us.

Extension activities

- There are people in this world whom we should obey—the Bible tells us to obey parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). What about teachers too? Anybody else? Political authorities perhaps? (Romans 16:1). Or you could talk about when we could decide not to obey - voting, joining the army, going against God's wishes in this and other ways.
- You could point out that God loves us like a Father so obeying parents is like obeying him. Parents want the best for us but can sometimes make mistakes. God wants the best for us but never makes a mistake and never provokes us to anger (Ephesians 6:4)
- Perhaps it would be useful to talk about how to avoid disobedience. Use the example of Jesus countering each temptation with words of scripture. If we know our Bibles we'll be able to do that too.