

Episode: James Series No. 02

Narrator: Jude

Primary Scriptures: James 1:22-25; 2:8; 3:17-18; 5:12

Story Summary: Verses with content about obedience

Location: Kingdom of Judea (Israel)

Time: Circa 50 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: James 1:22-23; 2:8; 3:17-18, 5:12

True or not, the generations since World War II are often considered to be much more self-centered than previous generations. The 1950s beatniks and 1960s hippies led the charge of “doing my thing.” Since then, the notion of leading lives of obedience to people in authority seems to be receding further and further in the distance.

From start to finish, the Bible has the consistent theme that people are to be obedient to God and his chosen authoritative figures. People very often have chosen not to do this. In *Genesis*, Adam and Eve had only one prohibition...and they chose to break it. *Revelation* concludes with commands not to add or take away from the prophecy. Based on humans’ tendency to disobey, God adds some horrible warnings for those who disobey those simple commands.

James personally observed three obedient people: Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. The New Testament portrays them as being perfectly obedient. Joseph and Mary obeyed completely and immediately every time they got a message from God, while Jesus’ childhood was described as one where he was obedient to Joseph and Mary. As an adult, Jesus obeyed God so completely that he summarized his life in a prayer to God this way: “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.” (John 17:4)

As the leader of the church in Jerusalem, James was intimately familiar with issues of obedience to God and to his chosen leaders. He recognized that problems often started with people choosing not follow God’s word.¹ Problems could also start when people chose to follow the letter of the law while simultaneously trying to avoid God’s desires. He recommends this solution: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”²

James recognizes that people try to disguise their actions through their words. His solution is to use simple, clear language. Both James and countless mothers through the ages recommend the same thing: let your “yes” be “yes,” and your “no” be “no.”

¹ James 1:22-25

² James 2:8

Discussion Questions:

1. Name some obedient people in the Bible.
2. Name some people in the Bible who had instances of disobedience. Were these people disobedient or did they just make a mistake?
3. In John 14:15, Jesus told his apostles that they will obey his commands if they love him. What commands was he talking about? Does your level of obedience to Jesus reflect how much you love him?
4. According to James 1:22, how can you deceive yourself?
5. Was Jesus obedient?
 1. Jesus, Joseph, Mary, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, Barnabas, James. 2. David, obedient. Saul, disobedient (?). Peter, obedient. Solomon, disobedient (?). 4. By listening to the Scriptures but not following what they say. 5. Yes. John 17:4 shows how obedient Jesus was to his Father.

Application Questions:

1. James 2:8 says to love your neighbor as yourself. Choose one of your next-door neighbors and explain how you could literally do that.
2. James 5:12 says to let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no”, without adding any swear words. What kinds of words do you add to your statements to lend them emphasis or authority? Are words like “darn” and “crud” just mild forms of swear words? Read Matthew 5:33-37. How does this passage influence your answer?
3. How can you teach your children to be obedient? What should you do when they are disobedient? Does it matter if they are disobedient in “little” things or just “big” things? Can you teach your children to be obedient if you don’t have an obedient attitude toward God?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Do you want to be an obedient type of person or would you rather be independent from people telling you what to do? What kinds of obedience do you anticipate you will have to exhibit when you reach adulthood?
2. Do you get in trouble at school or home for being frequently disobedient? If so, what drives that behavior?
3. When you are asked by an adult to do something, what is your typical attitude toward the person who asks you? Should you be more obedient to a parent or to your boss at work?
4. In what ways does social media influence your level of obedience?