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**#3 Christ: The Key Ingredient in Obedience**  
**(John 15:1-17)**  
**Pastor Peter Yi**  
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**Introduction:**

We've learned so far that obedience begins with God, not with us. God as our creator and redeemer possesses the right to impose on our lives and demand our obedience. And then we learned last week that compromising and rationalizing are huge dangers to being a person committed to obeying and pleasing God. Too many of us may be more like King Saul than like King David.

And so what's next? I think it's answering the question, how do I go about obeying? Do I just set my mind to it and do it? Or is there some other clue or secret to having a life that is more inclined toward obedience? I think there's more to it and today's passage gives us incredible insight from the Master. In fact, Jesus himself becomes the key ingredient in our obedience.

**John 15:1-17** <sup>NIV</sup> **John 15:1** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.

**God is constantly refining us.**

1. Jesus teaches us that he is the true vine, we're the branches and God is the gardener. And through this vine metaphor we learn a ton about obedience.

2. He cuts off every branch that bears no fruit. And he prunes us so we will become even more fruitful.

**Hebrews 12:1** <sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 12:1** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

He wants us to be even more fruitful (2b)

Maybe you've heard the statement. *"God accepts us the way we are but he doesn't leave us the way we are."* He's in the business of making people better. If that weren't the case, he wouldn't have sent his Son to die for our sins.

Our obedience is important to him. And his involvement in our lives is a sign that we are truly his children, that he is concerned about our welfare and that he loves us.

**Hebrews 12:5-8** <sup>5</sup> And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." <sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

*I recently picked up running. I started in May just going about once a week. And the first time I went out, I ran about two blocks, felt like my heart was about to explode, so I stopped and continued walking. So for about a month that was my pattern. Run two blocks, walk two blocks, run two blocks, walk two blocks. It was pretty pathetic. I realized while I was running that not only were my heart and muscles totally out of shape, but that since the last time I really was living a lifestyle of exercise was 20 pounds ago. And so not only am I out of shape, I'm overweight. And it dawned on me that two things need to be done that are interrelated. If I lose weight, exercise will be easier, if I exercise, I'll lose weight. Because all that extra weight was weighing me down like an anchor.*

God is our spiritual fitness training as well as our loving heavenly father. And as our trainer, He holds the plan to make you better. His desire is to get you to be as much like Jesus as you can before you die. His desire is for you to become the person he designed you to be, running on all spiritual cylinders. His desire is to carry out his plans and purposes through each one of us and to do that there's some trimming, some pruning, some fitness that has to happen. And so he'll poke and prod. Cut and shave. Remold and refine to make each of us into a lean mean Jesus loving, God serving, Spirit filled machine.

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## Remaining in Christ is the key to obedience.

1. remain in me and I will remain in you. (4)
2. no person can bear fruit apart from Christ (4, 5b)

. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing

So, what does it mean to remain in Christ?

1. It means at least this. A personal relationship w/ Jesus is absolutely necessary to live a life that pleases God. The invitation is for all who are considering Christianity or have yet to make a decision for Jesus. Make him your Lord and Saviour today.
2. And if you and I are already Christians, in order to live a fruitful life, we need to stay in an intimate love relationship with Jesus (9-10)

<sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

*It's like an electrical appliance. You may be a beautiful, retro-looking, very expensive blender. You work at multiple speeds. You have wonderful craftsmanship. All that you could ask for to make milk shakes, protein drinks, slushies and smoothies, is found in this blender. Yet, the appliance is meaningless if it isn't plugged in. It won't work if there's no electricity running through. What's lacking is a power source. And I think that's what some of our lives our like.*

All of us, because we were made in God's image, bear his "made in China" or "inspected by #38" tag on us. We're naturally talented and gifted. We have a great disposition. But some of us, we're not plugged in. We do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You may be a blender that wants to be a toaster, going against your creator's design. God wants you to be the blender he's made you to be. But you'll have to submit to him. He wants to fulfill his purpose in you. Plug into the Creator, the source of our life and power.

But there are some of us who are plugged in, meaning that we're Christians. But we're rarely used or turned on. We're connected to the source, but we're not being used. It's like the microwave we keep plugged in so we have a clock in the kitchen, but we don't use the microwave for cooking. We don't want to get it dirty, we say. We want to conserve energy, we say. It doesn't cook evenly, we say. And we make excuse after excuse. Folks, just for your information, it's not a clock with a built-in microwave. It's a microwave with a built in clock.

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Before focusing on your obedience or your fruitfulness as a Christian, focus on your relationship with Jesus. That's the key to obedience. Remain in Jesus. Or as some translations say, "Abide in him."

1. some focus on doing things for Jesus and forget about Jesus
2. some get stuck in the do's and don't's and forget about Jesus

Focus on Jesus. Focusing on Jesus, on your love relationship with him is the best motivation, the key ingredient to obedience. Why? Because "You obey the one you love." Never forget this. If you love money, you will obey it. If you love your computer, you'll obey it. If you love your spouse, you'll obey him or her. You obey the one you love. If that principle is true then you and I should pour all of our attention into our relationship with Jesus.

So how do we do that?

- i. worship. Develop a lifestyle of worship.
  - ii. Scripture. Find Jesus in the bible.
  - iii. Prayer.
  - iv. Community
  - v. In Private
1. Brother Lawrence, a monk living in the 1600s, wrote a tiny little book called, "The Practice of the Presence of God" and in that book he speaks of how we can experience God in the everyday and in the ordinary. We experience him in doing dishes and other household chores as much as in a holy worship service or our personal prayer times. This is what his interviewing said about Him,

That the most excellent method he had found of going to GOD, was that of doing our common business without any view of pleasing men, [[Gal. i. 10](#); [Eph. vi. 5, 6.](#)] and (as far as we are capable) purely for the love of GOD.

That it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times. that we are as strictly obliged to adhere to GOD by action in the time of action, as by prayer in its season.

2. Rick Warren says similar things in his *Purpose Driven Life*. In chapter 11, he says that we can practice the presence of God by memorizing a few phrases here or there and then

repeat them throughout the day. “You are with me.” “I receive your grace.” “I’m depending on you.” “I want to know you.” “I belong to you.” “Help me trust you.” And he suggests we can memorize short phrases from Scripture. “You will never leave me.” “For me to live is Christ.” “You are my God.”

3. That was the key for the Apostle Paul. In Philippians 3 we have one of the most passionate and intense longings for Christ in all of literature. Allow me to read this familiar passage.

**Philippians 3:10-14** <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

- a. Here are two incredibly popular books written 400 years apart, but rooted in Scriptures that were written 2000-4000 years ago, that are basically saying the same thing. What does this mean? The means by which we know God do not change. Cultures change, technology change, but people are the same and God, we know never changes. Don’t go hunting for something new and innovative. It’s not out there. The means by which we come to know God more deeply are already prescribed in the timeless treasure of the Bible.

Isn’t it amazing that we have all these avenues to knowing Jesus? So let’s focus on developing our relationship with him. Tha

### **Results of remaining:**

1. remaining in Christ will result in the bearing of much fruit (5a)
2. our prayers will be answered (7)
3. we will give God glory (8)

*Raising children is really hard. And part of what’s hard is getting them to obey. And so we try all sorts of crazy things to get them to obey.*

- *We try yelling – experts and the supernanny says that really doesn’t work.*
- *We try bargaining or perhaps a more accurate description is bribery. If you do this. If you get good grades, daddy will get you a Nintendo.*

- *We try reverse psychology – we try to outwit them into obeying us.*
- *We even give up. Parents, when I was a youth pastor and even now, some of your parents, come up to me and say, “Pastor, speak to my child. He doesn’t listen to me anymore.”*
- *But what I’ve realized really works the best to get kids to obey is praise. We all remember report card day. We dreaded it, didn’t we? Bringing home that A- and getting heck from our parents? Remember? I would go to incredible measures to help my parents forget that day. I would try forging their signature or have my friend do it for me. Or I would intercept the report card, erase the grade and rewrite the grade. Or skillfully change the minus into a plus. I hated that day.*

*Well soon enough, our kids started bringing home their grades, it was like a dejavu moment, like I’d been here before. And there were a couple of B’s and B- here or there. And as I looked over the report card and read the comments, I felt a frustration and a dissatisfaction rise up in me. And I was about to unleash the fury on them and I caught myself just in time. I was about to say, why are there so many B’s? Why didn’t you try harder? Why aren’t you at a grade 12 reading level. And it all came flooding back, all the angst I went through as a child on report card day. And I said, kids, I am so proud of you. You’re right on track. Look there was improvement from last semester. Let’s go out for ice cream. And I realized that what children want is the affirmation of their parents. And when they get that, they want to honor their parents even more.*

And I share that story because that’s what we’re like with God. At the end of the day, we want to know that God is pleased with us. That we’re on the right track, that there’s been improvement and that he’s proud of us. And then we strive to honor God and bring him glory.

4. we prove we are disciples of Christ (8)

### **Conclusion:**

Friends, our obedience to God looks much less appealing when our relationship with him begins to wane. Let’s focus on Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.