God is measuring our lives, not by the measures and standards of our culture or our age. He is measuring them by our character and by our walk with Him.

God and His Word are intensely practical. All of the great general principles in the kingdom of God are illustrated and judged on the basis of the most specific details. Nothing is left in the abstract. Everything is brought down to the concrete situations in which believers live. God leaves no room anywhere for mere nominal Christianity.

Jesus’ most scathing words were not for the broken and degraded sinner who was condemned by society, but for the self-righteous and self-deceived religious people whose lives did not prove their claims to holiness, love and relationship to God.

Jesus called such people fools, hypocrites, blind guides, snakes, and whitewashed tombs. Seven times He referred to them as blind. Three times He called them vipers (Matt. 3:7;12:34;23:33). No condemnation seemed too strong for those who failed to practice their professed spirituality. This is in full harmony with His many other statements, indeed, with the whole trend of Bible thoughts.

Perhaps the best illustration of this is the Bible emphasis upon obedience, an importance highlighted in both Old and New Testaments. The message of God is plain--measure your life by how much you obey--not by how much you know, by how much you do, by how much you read or hear, by how much you walk in the light, by how much you claim to have fellowship with God. Measure your life by what you actually do for God--not by what you intend to do. Measure your life by proofs in your daily living--not by your pious wishes.

Obedience to God--glad, full and humble obedience--is God's ordained key to much that is vital in Christian life. Only the obedient Christian enjoys the constant and undimmed blessing and favor of God.

Obedience Is The Key

1. Obedience is the key to cleansing and holiness. There is no other way to maintain a holy life except to walk constantly in God's light. One step away from the light is a step away from the cleansing blood (1 John 1:7). Keep clean by obeying God.

2. Obedience is the key to communion and fellowship with God. It is as we walk in the light that we have fellowship with God and with God's children (1 John 1:7). Disobeying God quickly destroys fellowship.

Many people experience a "feeling of worship" as they sing choruses or hymns. Yet they continue in known disobedience of God. All such "feeling" and "experience" is deception rather than worship. Their sense of God's presence is emotion, not holy fellowship with God. God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). To claim to have fellowship while deliberately disobeying God is to walk in darkness. To claim fellowship with God while walking in darkness is to lie (1 John 1:6).

3. Obedience is the key to spiritual understanding. We must choose to do God's will if we would know God's truth (John 7:17). We understand the deep things of God only as we spiritually discern them (1 Cor. 2:14). That requires the help of the Holy Spirit whom God gives to the obedient (Acts 5:32). God has so much He longs to tell us, but the Spirit can teach us only as we are totally under His control, pleasing Him in total yielded obedience. Obedience is the key.

4. Obedience is the key to confidence in prayer. "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him" (1 John 3:21). Oh, how failing to walk in the light cripples our prayers! Oh, the unanswered prayers because the praying person is not living in full obedience to all of God's light! Obedience is the key.

5. Obedience is the key to blessing. Do you want to be blessed in your soul and blessed in all you do? Live in daily glad obedience to God. Seek and walk in God's light. James speaks of the one who lives in God's Word and walks in its light. "He will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

God pours out His blessings on those who are eager and active in obedience, those who welcome new light, new guidance, new opportunities to bring glory to God. Many a Christian is dry in his soul and all too fruitless
in ministry because he is so disobedient in practical matters like tithing, or in disciplining his life to find time for prayer. "'Test me in this' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it'” (Mal. 3:10).

Obedience is the secret of all miracle. The opening of the Red Sea, the feeding of the five thousand, the raising of Lazarus, the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost—all were conditional on obedience. No promise is automatically fulfilled. Obey and you will receive.

6. Obedience is the key to kingdom advance. In one sense, God's kingdom advances on the feet, the words, the prayers, and all the obedience of God's children. A Christian poet has written:

God has no hands but our hands
To do His work today.
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way.

He has no tongue but our tongue
To tell men how He died.
He has no help but our help
To lead them to His side.

God's kingdom advances through the Holy Spirit and the obedience of God's children. Both are indispensable. The Holy Spirit guides, anoints, empowers, protects, and uses us. But your obedience and mine are a cooperating all-essential part of God's kingdom strategy. He has ordained for the Spirit to work through us. Measure your value to Christ's kingdom by your obedience.

Obedience--The Measure Of Spirituality

Obedience is the measure of all spirituality.

1. Measure your love for Christ by your total obedience to Him. You are His friends if you do whatever He commands you (John 15:14). That is, anything less than one-hundred percent obedience is a proof of inadequate love. Do you desire a relation, a special closeness to Jesus? Listen to what He says: "Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:50).

Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15) and "If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching” (John 14:23). Any failure to walk in all the light, any lack of instant total obedience to the known will of God testifies to inadequate love or perhaps even spurious love. Measure how much you love God by how instantly and completely you obey Him in the smallest of details.

2. Measure your faith by your obedience. Faith without deeds is useless (James 2:20). To hesitate to give full and instant obedience proves a need for more faith.

3. Measure your consecration by your obedience. To obey is better than formal worship or to give sacrificially (1 Sam. 15:22). All religious ceremonies are valueless apart from obedience. To give all one's goods to the poor and one's own body as a martyr means nothing to God unless we have the love that acts in accordance with 1 Corinthians 13.

4. Measure Christ's lordship in your life by your obedience. Obedience is a measure of the extent of Christ's lordship over you. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not what I say?” (Luke 6:46). What a searching question from Jesus. If Jesus were to speak to you in person today, would He have a comment about the measure of your obedience?

Two Forms Of Obedience

You are responsible for two forms of obedience: Obedience to God's general commands, and obedience to God's personalized commands. God's requirements, as taught in His Word, are for every person. You are responsible to obey them. You need no further guidance if it is in God's Word. That settles it. Forgiveness of others, restitution as far as possible of things wrongly taken, speaking no evil of others, children's obedience of their parents, tithing, moral purity--these are matters of obedience, according to God's Word, for every believer.
Some of God’s requirements, on the other hand, are very personal. God may give you personal convictions about things. It is the obedience He requires of you, not of everyone. He may call you to missionary service, to special sacrificial giving to His kingdom, to a specific amount of time in prayer. He may not require these of others. They are God’s personal guidance to you.

Abraham’s obedience was tested in an intensely personal manner by the demand that he offer Isaac to God on an altar (Gen. 22). When God sent Philip on the road to Gaza to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, that was a personal obedience God required (Acts 8:26-40). So was the obedience of Ananias when God sent him to Saul of Tarsus while he was praying (Acts 9:10-19). Some of the prophets were given highly personal commands. Clear personal guidance becomes God’s personal command to you, and God will reward you for your obedience.

How To Measure Your Obedience

1. Measure your obedience by how quickly you obey. It is always pleasing to God that you prayerfully double-check whatever you understand to be God’s will. However, once we know God’s will, our obedience should be glad and instant. God may guide us to a new act of obedience at a particular point in the future.

2. Measure your obedience by how gladly you obey. God values our willing obedience more than our grudging obedience. God rewards your joyful obedience more than your resentful obedience. Just as God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7), so He loves your cheerful obedience.

3. Measure your obedience by how faithfully you obey. When God assigns you a person to pray for or a form of service or blessing to others, be faithful day after day until God answers, blesses, or changes your assignment. Measure your obedience by your faithfulness in perseverance, by your unwillingness to give up even when discouragement comes.

Mrs. Dorothy Clapp was an older Christian lady in one of the eastern American states. God led her to take as her prayer assignment a public high school down the street. Day after day, month after month, year after year she faithfully obeyed her prayer task. She prayed for God to save young people in that school. Then she began to pray that God would not only save them but send them to the ends of the earth. After twelve years of faithful praying she began to pray for a mischievous young male student. She sent him a Gospel of John. For three more years she prayed, and at last God saved George Verwer.

Before long George had led two hundred other students to Jesus Christ. Some of them went to college and began to meet daily for prayer and went out together in evangelism. In 1957, three of them went to Mexico to evangelize during their summer vacation. By 1960, they were taking Christian youth also to Spain. By 1962, they had their first multination European campaign. By 1964, I had the joy of greeting George and the first Operation Mobilization group to India.

Now each year several thousand Christian young people from many nations join forces to evangelize, sell and distribute literature, and reach the nations for Christ. Operation Mobilization is reaching costal ports by two gospel ships, training hundreds of youth each summer, and enlisting others in one-to two-year short-term service. Its “graduates” are strengthening the ranks of many Christian churches and organizations around the world.

It can all be traced back to one Christian lady who prayed for fifteen years for students at a high school. Only God has the total results recorded of her faithful obedience in prayer. In heaven, she is already rejoicing. But the full record will be tallied and her full reward will be given only at the judgment throne of Christ. There, before His assembled millions of saints, Jesus will call her forward, praise her for her faithfulness, and announce her great reward.

4. Measure your obedience by how humbly you obey. It is a privilege to obey God. It is an honor to obey Him, to be given the privilege of being used by God. Be careful, however, that you do not become self-confident or proud when God honors your obedience. Keep giving God all the glory. Keep low at Jesus’ feet. Keep hidden behind His cross so that not you but Christ may be seen.

5. Measure your obedience by your motive. Beware of mixed motives. Do you obey because God demands it? Or do you obey because you want to please God (1 John 3:22)? Do you obey so as to be seen by people and receive recognition from them (Matt. 6:1)? Then you lose your reward. Do not seek to obey God so as to earn His favor, to give Him a kind of spiritual bribe in order that He may do what you want Him to do for you. Obey
Him out of love, out of eager desire to please Him and give Him joy. Measure your obedience by your motive.

6. Measure your obedience by how total it is. We are not truly obedient to God when we walk in only part of God’s light, when we choose what we will obey and what we will ignore because we want our own way. Measure your yieldedness, your consecration, your commitment to God by how totally you obey and how faithfully you continue your obedience until God’s goal is achieved.

If you have never made that total surrender of your all, your life, your ambitions, your plans, your present and your future, then this very moment hurry to the place of prayer and make a total surrender to Jesus of everything for all time and eternity. If you once made a total surrender but have since by self-will allowed reservations to enter into your consecration, if you are less yielded than you once were, run to the Cross and renew your total commitment. Calvary deserves your total commitment, your total obedience.

When Ruth Stam was a missionary child of seventeen in her parents’ home in Africa, God began in her heart His call to the Tibetan people. She obeyed by reading everything she could about them. When she returned to the States for her education, she obeyed by equipping herself as best she could for missionary service. When she came out to India as a missionary, the door to Christian service in Tibet was closed, and her board assigned her to teach elsewhere. Later they put her in charge of teacher education. All this time she was obeying by equipping herself in every way she could. God’s call to Tibetans remained constant, and even though the door remained closed, for ten long years she studied the Tibetan language as well as she could.

When the Dalai Lama, the living Buddha-god of the Tibetan people, fled to India, her mission transferred her assignment to Mussoorie, the very city assigned to the Dalai Lama by the government of India as his initial place of refuge. Prepared by years of obedience to God’s call, Ruth Stam was God’s person at the right place in the world at the right time for Him to use.

Her years of obedience in education and language study prepared her to become the education consultant for the Dalai Lama. She began to teach basic English classes to his people. Then she was asked to set up a teacher-training program for his people so that Tibetans could teach Tibetans. Ruth helped him place many Tibetan children in Christian schools, and a number of these found Christ as Savior.

For forty-four years, from before the Dalai Lama fled from Tibet to India, I have been praying daily for his salvation. He is still revered by almost all Tibetans as their living Buddha-god. God has brought him out of Tibet and given him a succession of contacts with Christian people. The long saga of God’s grace reaching out to the Dalai Lama and to the Tibetan people is interwoven with the life of Ruth Stam and the obedience and prayers of many others that has now continued for more than fifty years. Your obedience now in praying for him and them can add to the completion of this story of God’s grace and can lead to his conversion.

Do You Really Want Your Measurement?

Do you want to measure the place God has in your life, the extent to which you are surrendered to Him, the extent to which your experience of God is real and not pious emotion? The extent to which it is not grounded on false hope? Measure it all by your obedience.

Many a person will come to the Judgment expecting great reward and learn that for them, too, the first are last and the last are first (Matt. 19:29-30). Many will claim to have prayed long prayers but will find that this only made their disobedience more abhorrent in the sight of God. Many will be able to point to visible results of their ministry and efforts, even to what seemed like miracles, only to be told that disobedience has robbed them of all claim of reward (Matt. 7:21-23).

Fellow Christians, this is a searching word of God. We are no better than our obedience. Measure your spiritual experience and your ministry by the immediacy, the joyfulness, and the totality of your obedience to the whole will of God in every detail of your daily life. Measure your life by your obedience.