

Love and Obedience
John 14:15, 21, 23-24, 30-31

I. Jesus said, "If you love me you will obey my commandments."

- A. Jesus is saying something very profound.
 - 1. Character change happens in the context of loving relationship.
 - (a) Character change is what God is doing in us (Romans 8:29).
 - (b) We are being conformed to the image of Christ.
 - 2. What we have learned about our brains confirms this.
- B. The Other Half of the Church by J. Wilder and M. Hendricks
 - 1. Michel Hendricks is a pastor.
 - (a) Established a discipleship track.
 - (b) Helped people practice spiritual disciplines (Dallas Willard)
 - (c) But only about 50% of the people grew.
 - (d) Began to ask "what makes people grow?"
 - 2. A friend introduced him to Jim Wilder, a neuropsychologist.
 - (a) Wilder is an expert on the brain and how it works.
 - 3. Some common misunderstandings.
 - (a) One side of the brain does creativity. The other is rational.
 - (b) People are stronger in one half or the other.
- C. A more accurate view.
 - 1. The right side governs relational life and identity (p.22).
 - 2. The left side dominates rational thinking and beliefs.
 - 3. The two work together to cause us to apply beliefs in life.
 - (a) We do not grow the way we've been told.
 - (b) My misinterpretation of Romans 12:2.
 - (c) Don't forget Romans 12:1, "In view of God's mercy"
 - 4. Left brained discipleship leaves out the love.
 - (a) More accurately, it intellectually acknowledges love.
 - (b) But it doesn't emphasize the experience of love.

II. God has designed us to learn in a context of loving attachment.

- A. How it works with parents and their baby.
 - 1. 100,000 face to face encounters in year one.
 - (a) Eye contact and smiles help form baby's identity.
 - (b) The joy of the parents says, "you are loved."
 - 2. Baby forms a loving bond (attachment) with those shining faces.
 - (a) Baby begins to learn from the modeling of the people he/she is attached to.

- (b) Sidenote: This is the power of the "sins of the fathers" principle. So, this works negatively and positively.
- (c) The attachment (right brain) enables the left brain to learn and apply values, which is character change.
- (d) Without relationship, there is little character change.
- (e) Transformation requires relationship!!!

- B. In the Old Testament God emphasizes his face shining upon his people (Numbers 6:22-27).
 - 1. A picture of God smiling with delight over his people.
 - 2. An important Hebrew idiom:
 - (a) Idiom: an expression understood in a culture to mean something other than its usual meaning.
 - (b) Hebrew word for "face": God's relational presence.
 - 3. Moses met God face to face, yet no man could see God?
 - (a) "Face" refers to God's relational presence.
 - 4. Psalm 89:15; "Blessed are those...who walk in the light of your presence (literally "face")."
 - 5. "In your presence ("face") is fullness of joy."
 - (a) When there's joy in God's face there's joy in our face!
 - (b) Loving connection enables left brain to believe, obey.
 - 6. "The joy of the Lord is my strength." A double meaning?
 - (a) God's joy as he graciously delights in us > strength!
 - (b) Our joy in him from his loving presence > strength!
 - 7. Question: How do you think of God? Is he smiling?

III. Loving connection is what leads to obedience.

- A. Jesus' obedience was rooted in relationship (John 14:31).
 - 1. The same is true for us. "If you love me you will obey..."
 - (a) John repeats this in I John (I John 2:3-6)
- B. God is the initiator of love (I John 4:19) "We love because..."
 - 1. His love is made complete in us when we love each other
 - 2. How well we love each other is a measure of maturity.
 - 3. How well we love each other depends on how we have experienced love.
- C. Loving community also forms identity.
 - 1. Love of God's people(attachment) enables me to incorporate God's values.
 - 2. Loosely attached people tend to fall away.
- D. So, what do we do?
 - 1. Relationship is the key!
 - (a) Before they will accept your truth they need your love.
 - (b) That has many levels of application.
 - (c) We need to mentor people in how to experience the loving presence of God.
 - (d) If they love Jesus, they will obey Jesus!