

**“Thrive””: Forging a Vital Faith  
From Duty to Delight  
Text: Deuteronomy 30:11-20; Luke 10:26-28  
3.3.19**



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**Reflection Questions for Personal Use or in a Group Context...** (please consider the teaching notes prior to consideration of the reflection questions)

We have been considering a series of **“From-To”** movements which help ‘locate us’ and describe the movements toward human flourishing. To date, we have reflected upon...

**Self-reliance to God-reliance:** We are losing confidence in ‘self’ and gaining confidence in God.

**Isolation to Belonging:** We are centered in our status as the “beloved” and are confident enough to allow others “in” and to let ourselves “out”.

**Fear to Trust:** We are breaking free of the limitations of fear by entrusting ourselves to God and trusting ourselves with God.

Today, we consider the movement from **Duty to Delight:** Our responses to God (and others) are better characterized as ‘compelling’ rather than ‘obligatory’.

*“Since the Bible seems to be so full of laws and commandments, have you found it easy, at times, to assume that it’s all about compliance?”*

*“I run (swiftness of response) in the path (way; direction; course of life) of your command (instruction; order), for you have set me heart free (enlarge)...”* Psalm 119:32

*“I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word.”* Psalm 119:16

*“What do you think it means to delight in God’s commandments?”*

*“Do you think that even though we should never assume that keeping the law will ever makes us right with God, they have something to teach us about his character?”*

*“What do you think is the significance of the fact that God delivered the people from Egypt before he gave them the Law?”*

Respond to this statement...

*“The love by which we think we are loving God is actually the love by which God first loved us.”*

Meister Eckhart, German mystic/theologian

*“Have you ever considered that your lack of obedience is not necessarily from rebellion, but simply a lack of trust?”*

*“Are there some places in your life, right now, where a renewed commitment to obedience might actually interrupt some unhealthy pattern, and create some history with God?”*

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### Teaching Notes...

Within the first (5) books of the Bible (Torah, Pentateuch), there are over (613) laws, with the “*Top Ten*”, being the most famous.

Given the sheer volume of laws, we could easily assume that what really brings God a great deal of joy is “mandating” new laws. Some people dabble in water colors, or photography--- God laws hammering out rules.

If you spend any time in the Story, you will see a pattern that quickly emerges: **God offers a command. Humanity breaks it.**

You are left to assume that no matter how many laws/rules/commands God metes out, there is no shortage of creative expression for our disobedience (“... *invent new ways to do evil*”, Romans 1:30)

So, God asks Moses to “*put it to music*” (trying to find words that rhyme with “fat and unruly” (Deuteronomy 32:15).

We are left, then, with a couple of options: 1) God is too demanding; the laws themselves are unjust; it’s simply setting us all up for failure, or 2) maybe it’s “us”?

So, prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah who are watching this human project spiral downward, unhesitatingly confirm that the issue is NOT the with the commands themselves (good, beneficial, that it may go well), but with our “hearts”.

Isaiah envisions one to come, the “*righteous servant*” (53), who would actually not only assume upon himself all the implications of humanity’s failure, but would actually embody what it looked like to live as “Adam” was created to live (Romans 5).

Here is both the extent of the human dilemma, as well as the extravagant nature of grace: **God puts his own spirit in us to compel us to obey himself.**

*“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart... so that you will follow my commands...”* Ezekiel 36:26-27

It's the Story of how God is going about restoring his creation, through a human family with whom he has entered into covenant-relationship.

*“command”* (Greek, 'entole'): involves a relationship which always connected the hearer to the giver. They were not simply the random directives of an unfamiliar deity, but the principles of a covenant God.

It's why there are so many OT references to *“knowing God”*. If you don't trust in the goodness and the good intentions of the One establishing the boundaries, you will always be prone to 'push-back'. Every breach of the boundary says to God, in effect, *“I don't trust you!”*

**God knew that the only way to restore and recover a disconnected humanity was to place within them a desire for him that was somehow stronger than their urges toward sin.**

Jesus knew that our good intentions were no match for a 'disorderly heart'. That's why the culturally popular encouragement to, ***“Follow your heart”*** is not always the best course of action. The viability of that counsel is determined by the condition of the heart and the likelihood of it producing beneficial and healthy outcomes.

Jesus offered an understanding of the human condition which highlighted that the issue for us was not our anger, our unforgiveness, our greed, our sexual promiscuity or unfaithfulness, but the un-rulely (unreformed) heart which was compelling such responses. That's why the spiritual, *“Just-say-no”*, campaign has proven to be an unrealistic, long-term formational strategy.

Jesus never ignores our behavior as inconsequential, but he refuses to use it as a starting point in any discussion concerning relationship with him. Jesus knew that there's no point in rehearsing for people a set of moral expectations, prior to the invitation of grace.

Outside of my own inner-experience of forgiveness, I'll ask the question, *“How many times do I have to forgive?”* (Matthew 18:21).

**Before we are ever called to be good, we are called to be holy.**

Jesus knew that if you wanted to change the course of someone's life, you had to alter the formative vision that was prompting their pursuits.

This New Covenant Jesus spoke of establishing (Luke 22:20), 1) establishes a strong sense of worth and identity, 2) creates an unusual sense of security (because the covenant is already stronger than any wrongs committed against it), 3) invites a profound response of committed love.

**Biblical obedience can ever and only be understood as the rightful response to love.**

There is a sense in which “duty” is simply what is required to help ensure the health and intimacy of the relationship. So, when love hears, “*forsaking all others*”, “*in sickness and in health*”, etc., it hears those not as restrictive or suffocating, but as an invitation to the fullest experience of love.

But, none of us wants to function in a relationship where we are simply the object of someone else’s dutiful response.

**God’s primary desire is not to be obeyed but to be desired. Delight is the beautiful link between devotion and desire.**

Pleasing God is a valid desire, but an unhealthy motivation. If my motivation is to “*please God*”, all my efforts at striving to do what makes him happy will simply result in resentment toward a God I assume is can never be satisfied. But if my desire is to “*delight myself in the Lord*” (Psalm 34), I will find that my responses are pleasurable to him.

*“I delight to do your will, O God. Your law is in my heart.”* Psalm 40:8

*“But, those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him.*

*That’s how we know we are really alive...”* 1 John 2:5

**Ask God for a new heart.**

Salvation is not to be understood as something that happened to us, but something that is happening in and through us. It is the wholeness that one experiences as a result of placing their trust in Jesus as “the way” and a willful determination to follow in “the ways of Jesus” in order to experience the life for which we were created.

**Refuse to settle for superficial measures of spiritual progress. Instead, ask God for a deep-heart truth that goes to the ‘inner parts’ (Psalm 51).**

Don’t be content with filling in most of the boxes next to your, ‘*Through the Bible in a Year*’, program. Don’t be satisfied with the frequency of your God-activities and percentage of charitable contributions. It becomes the perfect cover for hypocrisy.

Instead, reflect on, “*Am I more loving? Do sinners consider me their friend? Am I treating my spouse with respect? Is the way that I am with others making God more accessible and attractive? Have I made forgiveness optional?*”

**Make a clear commitment to uncomplicated- obedience to Jesus and his way of life until such responses become more natural.**

*“Why do you call me LORD, LORD, and not do what I say?” Luke 6:46*

This is not to be understood as sarcastic chastisement but a challenge to honest, self-reflection.

*“Why do we refer to him as teacher and refuse to embrace his teachings? Why do we identify him as “the way”, yet remain committed to our own self-governed approach to life?”*

**Realize that we will never really experience the benefits of obedience until we “obey”.**

**obedience** (Latin)- to listen attentively; to heed (respond).

We can't simply “feel” our way into significant life-change. We can't relegate the really important issues of our lives to our emotions. It's too subjective.

Once you actually experience the benefits of obedience, you will no longer view it as limiting or constraining but as the course of life.

**Choose to give intentional and sustained attention to Jesus and his ways/words until it becomes your delight. “Glory in the Lord” until becomes ‘glorious’ to you!**

*“Wouldn't you like to be the kind of person who was free from anger and jealousy and could live without demanding that others affirm you? Wouldn't it be great to be the kind of human who wasn't debilitated by another's condemnation? Wouldn't you like to be the kind of man who could look at a woman without objectifying her? Wouldn't you like to be the kind of woman who could bless another who was criticizing your kids?”*

The truth about obedience to Jesus is that it really is a “full life”.