

Russell Kelfer

Wrong Counsel and Obedience

(Part 2)

518-B

Series: Obedience



DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

Wrong Counsel and Obedience

(Part 2)

As we continue our study on obedience, we have dealt with the perspective of obedience, the practicality of obedience, the performance of obedience as well as some of the principles of obedience. A principle is a concept revealed or confirmed in Scripture that portrays the mind of God in a given area. There are principles of obedience that cover every area of our lives. By learning these principles, we learn the mind of God in these areas. Knowing the mind of God, we are free in the spirit, without being drawn to legalism, which is having to be told what rules to follow. We are freed from the problem of moral compromise with the excuse that we do not know the mind of Christ. We have been given the principles of the Word in the New Testament. In the Old Testament we are given the portraits of how the principles are revealed in lives and in relationship with God.

Obedience is the process of responding to knowledge by following instruction. A person who perfectly obeys is one who, upon knowing for certain what the mind of God is, does it. The principles of obedience are concepts in Scripture that reveal God's heart and His expectations relating to our response to truth. In other words, it is what God wants us to do. We have been looking at generalized principles we can use as we live our Christian lives, so we can learn how to respond properly in the arena of obedience.

The first principle we discussed was that obedience is predicated on a relationship. We found that in order to be obedient to God you have to know Him. The second principle was that God still rewards obedience in heaven. The third principle was that God has illustrated obedience everywhere, even in the wind, the seas, the storms, and the demons. The fourth principle is that we do not possess the capacity to obey, only the capacity to will to obey. It is the Spirit in us that gives us the power and the authority to obey.

In the last lesson, we dealt with the fifth principle. This

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

principle says that God expects us to reject counsel, instruction and relationships that encourage disobedience. We looked at Deuteronomy 13. We took a step-by-step walk through this passage. The principle was that if there arise among us a prophet or a visionary, someone who comes to us with a word from God and that word from God or that counsel may come true; but, if the course of the counsel draws us away from the will of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Deuteronomy 13 says this is a test from God that is designed to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all of your soul.

Our responsibility was given in a six-fold way. The minute we realized we received wrong counsel, we are to do these six things. We are to begin to walk after God, fear Him, keep His commandments, obey Him, serve Him and wrap our arms about Him and cling to Him. In other words, our response to wrong counsel is to turn our eyes on Jesus, totally and completely. We are to separate ourselves, from the standpoint of counsel, from one who “counsels rebellion” as found in the New American Standard Bible.

The same chapter addresses the situation about what to do if someone who is counseling you toward disobedience is close to your heart. We had a list that included your brother, the son of your mother, your son or daughter, your wife, the one you cherish the most or your best friend, one who is as close as a brother. If any of these should counsel rebellion, we are told five things to do. We are told not to consent, don't listen, don't pity, don't spare and don't conceal. The reason is that the counsel we receive in spiritual matters must be in accordance with His Book. This is our final source of authority.

Lastly, we learned if a stranger comes in our midst who counsels rebellion, we are told three things to do. We are to inquire, search out and ask diligently until we find the person, and the problem is resolved.

The principle is that you and I are responsible to receive counsel and instruction. One area of our responsibility is that we are responsible to know and test the sources of our counsel and instruction. We stopped at this point in the last lesson. When we seek counsel, we are to consider eight things.

1- Consider the character of the counselor. There are four parallel concepts to put together to see if they weigh in the

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

balance. First, consider his life. Secondly, consider his lifestyle. Thirdly, consider his life's message. Fourthly, consider his life's goals. These areas will give you an indicator whether the counsel through this person will be in harmony with what you feel the will of God to be for your life. II Timothy 3:10 is a passage that is very clear in this case. Paul said that they could follow after him because they knew these things about him. They knew his doctrine. They knew his manner of life. They knew his purpose. They knew his character. The people knew who he was. They knew what he did. They knew where he was going.

The character of a person is found in their responses to the tests of life. You can look at a person and see the kind of responses this person has to the tests of life. You can look at the consistency of these responses and know what that person's life is made of. We are not looking for perfect people, but for people whose perfection is found in Christ.

2- Consider their lifestyle. This is their behavior. Is the behavior of that person in harmony with what you see to be their responses? Phillipians 2:15 tells us that we are to "be blameless and harmless as the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation". We are not perfect, but blameless without a conscious, known area of our life that we are not dealing with so that the world cannot point at us and say, "If that is Christ, I want no part of it." This is what II Timothy 3:10 speaks of when Paul said, "consider my manner of life, the way I behave."

3- Consider the life message of the person you seek counsel from. I think that can fall into at least two categories. The first is the experiences they have been through. II Corinthians 1:3-4 teaches us that God intentionally puts us through experiences to equip us. The purpose of that equipping is so that when other people pass through our lives with similar needs, we are equipped to minister to them. Those who have been through health problems or drug problems or marriage problems or self-image problems and have had victory in these areas can be an encouragement to others who are struggling in these areas. Maybe there is strength in your life that has come into your life not as a result of a problem but as a result of the blessing and grace of God. You are now equipped in that area to become a testimony and minister to others. As you seek counsel, it would be wise to seek counsel in an area of your life from someone who

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

has found victory or at least is finding victory in that area.

4- Consider the spiritual gift of the counselor. Some people with certain spiritual gifts tend to give you certain types of counsel. Depending on the needs of your life, not what you want but what you need, it might make a difference. Someone with the gift of mercy will give you sympathy. Someone with the gift of exhortation will give you encouragement. Someone with the gift of prophecy will give you strong truth. Whatever it may be, it will make a difference in the counsel you receive.

5- Consider the life goals of the person you are seeking counsel from. There are at least four life goals that most of us seem to have. The first one has to do with possessions. The second one is activities. The third one regards accomplishments. The fourth one involves people. Almost everybody has one of those four things at the top of their list consciously or unconsciously. The person whose top priority is possessions will tend to counsel temporally. The person whose top priority is activities will tend to counsel involvement. The person whose top priority is accomplishment will tend to counsel achievement. The person whose top priority is people will tend to counsel character and life. This is the most important.

Along with life goals, consider the maturity of the counselor. Maturity is often found in spiritual and/or physical age. I Kings 12:6-11 is a passage we looked at in the last lesson. The king was told that if he was to seek the counsel of the elders that they would give him wise counsel. He went to the elders, and they advised him to ease up, to be gracious to the people and to speak good words to them. If he did this, the people would follow him forever. However, he turned to his rebellious peers and asked them what they would have him to do. They told him to make the yoke on the back of the people heavier than before. He did this. He ignored the advise of those who were older. The end result was disaster.

These are some of the things we can learn from those who are older than we are. We can learn patience from those who have passed through the tests of time, because “the trying of our faith worketh patience”. We see in older people that those who have passed through the test of time have a much greater depth of patience.

We can learn temperance. At a younger age, we often go in

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

different directions. We want to accomplish a certain task. We want to run through the gamut of interests. We do these things only to find out that had we slowed down and been more careful, perhaps we wouldn't have taken the same path. As we get older, we tend to learn temperance in different areas. As a result, we tend to make fewer mistakes in certain areas than we did when we were younger. Those who are younger can learn temperance from those just a bit older.

The third thing you can learn is understanding. People who are older tend to be more considerate of varying views and circumstances.

We can also learn what pitfalls to avoid. We can learn to see where the land mines are in life. Maybe yours are not in the same place, but there are certain patterns in life that are similar. Most of us will not listen to those older who say, "If you do that, invariably this will happen." we respond, "Not to me. I realize that it does to most people, but I am an exception." However, the exception we considered failed.

We can also learn quietness from those older than ourselves. The younger we are, the more we want to say. The older we get, the more we realize how little we have to say.

We can also learn perspective. Those who are older tend to have a larger perspective of life in general. When you are buying your first car and you seek counsel from someone who has bought twelve, you get a little more insight into some of the things to consider. When you have your first child and you talk to someone who has had six, you tend to learn some things to relax about.

In the church and Christian community sometimes we fail to learn from those who are older and more experienced, not drawing upon the wisdom of the elderly. Job 32:7 says,

I said, 'Age [days] should speak, and multitude of years
should teach wisdom.' (NKJV)

Titus 2 teaches us that the older men and women were designed to minister to and instruct those who were younger. We need to consider the maturity both spiritually and physically of those around us. Sheer age has certain advantages.

We also need to consider the spirit of the counselor. The context here is that the Spirit of God moves in the spirit of love. In I Corinthians 13:1-3, we learn that if you take a piece of paper

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

and write one million, this verse tells us that you can have all of the education, all of the discernment, all of the faith and all of the ability to communicate those things that the world has to offer; but without love, you take that one million figure and put your finger over the zeroes and love is that one in the million. If you put your finger over the one, it tells you that what you have left is nothing. You have nothing left. In I Thessalonians 2:5-8, Paul tells us that he was gentle among them even as a mother cherishes her children. We can also look at II Timothy 2:24-26. We also see this in James 3:17. This passage tells us that the wisdom that comes from above is pure, peaceable, gentle and easily entreated. You need to look at the spirit of the one who counsels you and seek one who has a spirit of love.

The life goals of the counselor should reflect the emphasis he places on Scripture in his counsel. There are at least four spheres in which counselors emphasize Scripture.

1) *Some counselors ignore the Scriptures.* They teach man's philosophy as the centrality of their counsel.

2) *Some counselors consider the Scriptures.* They think it is a stepping-stone to reveal man's ideals or concepts.

3) *Some counselors consider the Scripture to be important.* They give it heavy consideration along with other things.

4) *Some counselors seek to make the Scriptures pre-eminent.* These people believe it is the final authority in what they say and do. This seems to be the safest place to seek counsel.

All of Scripture is given by inspiration of God [God-breathed], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

that the man of God may be complete [perfectly mature], thoroughly equipped [to do whatever God calls him to do] for every good work.
(II Timothy 3:16,17 NKJV)

So the Scripture can do it all. Therefore, we need to seek counsel where the Scripture is placed in a pre-eminent position.

Colossians 2:2-10 talks about this problem. It tells us to beware that we not be beguiled by being instructed through vain philosophy and the teachings and traditions of men. In other words, everything we say and do needs to be looked at in light of the Bible, because the Bible is the only thing that is eternal. It is the only thing we have been given in practice that will never

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

change. Everything else in this world changes. Someone can give you man's latest philosophy about how to raise your children. He can give you man's latest philosophy about how to deal with your husband or wife. You can pick up another magazine or book two months later or three years later. You find out that it doesn't work that way anymore, and there is a new way. The principles of the Word of God are the same yesterday, today and forever. They never change. Therefore, the Scripture must be the vital, pre-eminent factor in all of our counsel.

Remember that the Scripture is the mind of God. Philosophy is the mind of man. The two are constantly in enmity, the one with the other. We need to remember that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit. So the natural man then is fed by the mind of man. The spiritual man is fed by the mind of God, so be careful that as you receive counsel that the final basis of all authority is within the Bible.

6- Consider the consistency of your counsel. We learn in Proverbs 11:14 that in a multitude of counselors there is safety. I think that you need to consider first of all that the counsel you have received is consistent with your direct authority. Usually when someone comes for counsel, I think it is appropriate to say, "How have your parents or your boss or your pastor instructed you in this area?" If you receive counsel that is contrary to those who are in a position of leadership or authority over your life, you need to slow down, take a big look and be careful. You might consider from this point that if you receive the same counsel from all sources, proceed. If you receive majority counsel with some objection or caution, proceed slowly. If you receive split counsel, wait and do nothing until you have confirmation from the Word of God what the will of God is for you.

7- Consider the perspective of your counsel. Does it lift up the position of Jesus Christ and the mind of God, or does it exalt your problems and your position and your name? The big difference is always that God's perspective is character, and man's perspective is circumstances. Circumstances can be changed by God in a moment, but they are always allowed by God for character development. Therefore, counsel that teaches us to look at life from God's perspective and what He is trying to teach us is usually the counsel that will minister to us the most.

8- Consider the counselor's view of the body of Christ. We

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

need to consider this because the view of the body of Christ is that each person reflects his image of God. Is it narrow and restricted or is it open and unified? The goal of Christ is peace and unity within the body. The counselor who teaches from this perspective will probably lead to less frustration in your life.

What if a counselor or loved one gives you rebellious counsel like we found in Deuteronomy 13? There are five steps to take if this happens.

1) *Ask God to give you a spirit of humility.* Proverbs 18:14 says,

The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness,
But who can bear a broken spirit? (NKJV)

In other words, if you have a wounded or bitter spirit toward one who has counseled or instructed you wrongfully, you have not aided them or yourself. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Galatians 6:1 tells us if you are counseling another and they have made a mistake, you rebuke them only in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself because you may be next. I Peter 5:5 tells us to humble ourselves in that type of situation. I Peter 2:23 gives us the example of Jesus, who when He was reviled, reviled not against them but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. Don't judge the motive of the one who has given you wrong counsel and above all, don't exalt yourself to a position of instructing them. Humble yourself in their presence.

2) *Ask God to give you a love for that person.* We are told to love even our enemies. We are told to pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. I have seen more schisms in the body of Christ over someone going to a friend or counselor who gave them counsel that they did not think was godly. They then developed a bitter or antagonistic spirit toward that person. They will then go to other people in the body and gossip about the wrong counsel they received. Before long there is disharmony in the body. Ask God to give you a love for that person.

3) *Reject the counsel. Love the counselor, but reject the counsel if it is contrary to the Word of God.* Acts 17:11 tells us about the Berean Church. It says that these were more noble than those in Thessalonica because they received the Word with readiness of mind and searched the Scripture every day to see if the teacher was right. They looked in the Word continually. They did not rely on anyone else's word, but God's. Reject the counsel, but not the counselor.

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

4) *Learn from the experience.* What do we learn? First of all, it was a test from God as we found in Deuteronomy 13:3. God knew that you were going to receive that counsel. He did it to find out if you love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul. God did it to allow you to be tested to find out whether your response would be correct both in terms of receiving the counsel or not. He wanted to know if your response would be correct in loving the person or not and whether your response would be correct in terms of setting the priorities of God at the top place in your life. Some of the things we learn from wrong counsel are: What does God have in mind for me? What is He trying to say to me? Secondly, what weakness did my response indicate? Thirdly, we need to remember the mote and the beam principle. If I reject this counsel, what is there in my life that is causing me to be absolutely certain that the counsel is wrong? I need to examine my own motives in my own life to see if there is a problem in my life that won't allow me to receive that counsel.

5) *Pray for the one who counseled you.* One of the reasons God sometimes gives us experiences like that is that He wants new prayer partners. Pray for those people. Nobody ever needed good counsel more than Job. Nobody ever got worse counsel than Job. Yet, we learned that God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his counselors. He prayed for the very ones who had counseled him wrongfully. When Job was willing to bend his knee and open his heart and pray for them, God turned his captivity.

6) *God expects us to use remembrances to encourage obedience.* This is one of the most important single factors in learning obedience. Most obedience is a reflection of prior instruction and obedience. Like children, we have patterns of impressions that are made through situations in our lives. In Joshua 24:21 we read,

And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD."

And Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses."

"Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." [Set aside the things that interfere with your walk with God and lift up Christ on the throne.]

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice.”

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God.”

(Joshua 24:21-27 NASB)

In other words, Joshua said, “This rock heard everything that God said and everything you said, so we are going to write all of these things in a book. We will put the rock under the tree, and it will be a source of remembrance. The first time you start to do the things you have done before, you pass by this rock and say, ‘Good grief, I made a promise to God.’ When you do that, stop, repent and get right with God again.” This is the principle. As believers, we need to begin to more faithfully exercise this principle because, for the most part, we follow the same pattern. Instruction needs to be followed by experience. Experience needs to be followed by remembrance so that remembrance will be followed by obedience. Otherwise, we repeat the same mistake again and again and again.

There are five things that we alter in perspective when we make remembrances. By remembrances, I mean a notebook where you write down your encounters with God, your promises to God, your mistakes before God and the blessings of God. Do this so that as your life progresses and similar circumstances evolve, you can go back and see how God ministered to you at that point and what the Word of God said the last time. This will help you to not make the same mistakes again. Or, you may make a plaque and hang it up on the wall. You can put a Scripture verse on it so that every time you pass it, it is a remembrance to you of your own unfaithfulness and of the faithfulness of God in that situation.

Deuteronomy 4:9 gives us the first clue,

“Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”

(NASB)

In other words, this passage tells us to remember the miracles of God. You need to make a list of everything God has done in your life that is good. People have come to talk to me about their lives. They say, “I’ve gone into a spiral of depression, and I can’t get out. Everything I do seems to call attention to my problems. I don’t know what to do, and I don’t see any way out.” The only thing I’ve seen that works well is to ask that person to go home and spend one hour writing everything good God has ever done in their life. I want them to write down everything they have to be thankful for. I encourage them to then find Scripture to praise God for that specific thing. I then want them to go outside, preferably out in the country, and spend 3 hours in praise and thanksgiving to God for those things. Think. Read. Write. Pray and praise. When they come back, the problems will still be there, but what usually changes is perspective. Their perspective changes because they remember the miracles and blessings of God.

When David came up against the giant, everyone was telling him there was no way he could win. David said, “Wait a minute. I have a memory book. I ran into a lion. I ran into a bear. I have this God who defeated the lion and defeated the bear. It seems to me that the giant is the same kind of a situation and He can do that, too. Based upon the principle of what God has done in the past, I am going to take off in the energy of God and slay me a giant!” He did. You and I need to remember the lions and the bears that God has taken hold of in our lives. There are some giants out there that we are afraid of that we need to slay.

The second thing is found in Deuteronomy 5:7. When we went over this subject in previous lessons, how many of you promised yourself that you were going to do what the lesson talked about? This passage gives us another insight to what we are to remember. It says,

Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; a from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

(Deuteronomy 9:7 NASB)

Then he lists ten or fifteen things the children of Israel had done to provoke the Lord. This will change your perspective of your own goodness. So many people go around thinking, “God

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

hasn't given me the best deal in town. I know somebody who has a better situation. I've been so faithful. I'm humble." Sit down and make a list, or go back in your memory to all of the times you have provoked the Lord your God in areas where you have consistently rebelled. Can you then lift up your face before God and expect anything more than grace?

Then in Psalm 78:7-10, we see the cause and effect of rebellion. Take note of what disobedience produces in other people's lives, not to condemn them but to learn from them.

That the generation to come might know them,
The children who would be born,
That they may arise and declare them to their children.

That they may set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments;

And may not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not set its heart aright,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

(Psalm 78:6-8 NKJV)

They did not keep the covenant of God;
They refused to walk in His law,

And forgot His works
And His wonders that He had shown them.

Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

He divided the sea and caused them to pass through;
And He made the waters stand up like a heap.

In the daytime also He led them with the cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.

He split the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink in abundance like the depths.

He also brought streams out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.

But they sinned even more against Him
By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.

And they tested God in their heart
By asking for the food of their fancy.

Yes, they spoke against God:
They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people?"

Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious;
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel,

Because they did not believe in God,
And did not trust in His salvation. (Psalm 78:10-22 NKJV)

In spite of this they still sinned,
And did not believe in His wondrous works.

(Psalm 78:32 NKJV)

They did not remember His power:
The day when He redeemed them from the enemy.

(Psalm 78:42 NKJV)

We can learn the cause and effect from the mistakes of those about us.

We can also remember the price that God paid. In Luke 22 Jesus says,

"for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me. (Luke 22:18,19 NKJV)

We need to take the Lord's Supper in remembrance of what He has done for us. In addition to the times you take the Lord's Supper at church, how many times in the solitude of your own home do you go to a room, shut the door and contemplate Calvary? How often do you shut your mind out from everything else and every other activity and take a long look at the cross and who it was on that cross? Do you think about what it cost Him to be there? This love was shed abroad for us who do not deserve it. It was all anyone could ask God to pay for those who deserve nothing. Have you ever wept at the feet of Christ on the cross and thought of how His blood flowed down what it cost Him?

These are some things that we are supposed to remember. You and I are creatures that forget. I would like to encourage you to start a book of remembrance. You could also create an altar of remembrance. It would be something to remind you of the things

Wrong Counsel and Obedience (Part 2)

God has done for you, of the rebellion in your heart towards God, the promises you made toward God and the cause and effect of rebellion in the life of the church.

I have a question for you to think about until our next lesson. It is the seventh and final principle on obedience. Is fear an acceptable motive for obedience?

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(06.18.15)