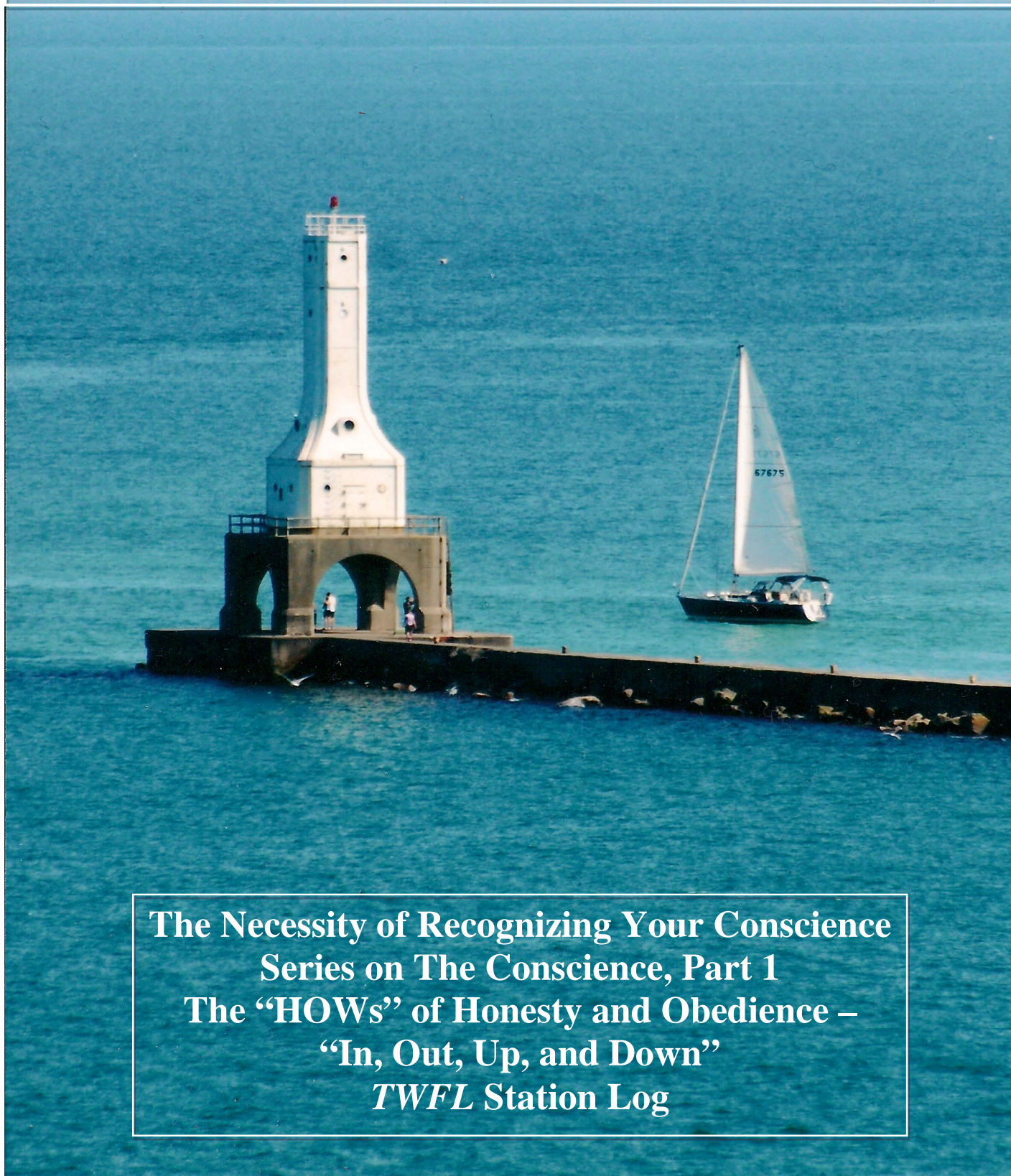


TRUTH TALK

A PUBLICATION OF THE WORD FOR LIFE

Helping you live a God-centered, truth-driven life

July, 2010



The Necessity of Recognizing Your Conscience
Series on The Conscience, Part 1
The “HOWs” of Honesty and Obedience –
“In, Out, Up, and Down”
***TWFL* Station Log**

TRUTH TALK

The Conscience, Part 1 *The Necessity of Recognizing Your Conscience*

Join us in this series on the conscience that Pastor Sam Horn preached at Brookside Baptist Church.

I want to ask you to consider for a moment, as you think about your life, what might be an embarrassing moment where you have found yourself arguing with yourself. Do you realize that human beings are the only ones of God's creatures that have the ability to carry on an internal argument with themselves against themselves. Have you ever thought about that? There are enough people already in our lives that tend to argue with us. Why in the world would we want to have an argument that no one else knows about that is going on in the inner recesses of our soul, and the person arguing against us is somebody that you can't see, you can't even identify,

but that person is in you and he is arguing forcefully against you.

Now here's my question. Who argues with us in our souls? We've had those arguments, haven't we? When we're in a position where there's a lot at stake, or we could be greatly embarrassed by what could be revealed about us, we have arguments like this, and if these arguments were just with ourselves, we would easily set them aside.

So the question is, who is the person arguing with you in your own soul? It's not the Lord, because this person or this function is actually using the Lord's words to give evidence for or against the

thing that he is arguing with you about in your soul. So who is it that is arguing with you? Can I submit to you that what is happening in my heart and what frequently goes on in your heart is this: our conscience begins to argue with us. One of the reasons we tend to live the way that we live is because of the way we relate to our conscience. You are where you are, in some degree, because of how you have handled your conscience. When you think about what you are living like and what you are enjoying in terms of your relationship to God or, on the other side of that equation, what you might be missing in your relationship to God, a lot of that is because of how you have handled and how you have related to your conscience.

I want to give you just a very broad-brush picture of what we're going to be covering in this series, beginning with discussing the necessity of recognizing our conscience. That will be our first message together. The next message will be on how we should respond when our conscience speaks. We want to take some

time to look at what the Bible has to say about that, and we want to talk about how our conscience is regulated. How does our conscience work? What is it that regulates it? When does our conscience speak to us the way that it does? Then we want to spend our last time together talking about reclaiming or restoring our conscience. How do we restore our conscience that we have run over? How do we deal with that aspect of our conscience? So, as we look at our series on the conscience, these are the topics, the ideas that we want to look at. Let's begin by just making some observations about recognizing our conscience.

The first thing I want you to notice in Acts 24 is the fact that this passage of Scripture teaches us about the reality of our conscience. There really is a conscience in every single one of us, and the Apostle Paul introduces us to this idea in Acts 24:15-16. He says, "*This being so, I have hope in God which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust.*" In other words, Paul is saying that he is confident

that there is going to come a day of accounting, and in light of that fact, *“I always strive to have a conscience without offence toward God and men.”*

The first thing we want to know as we recognize our conscience is this: there is a reality, and that reality is that every single one of us has a conscience. Let me give you some things about your conscience that you need to recognize as you come to the reality of this. If you were to ask anyone about conscience, they would come up with the little saying, “Always let your conscience be your guide.” Now let me ask you a question. Should you always let your conscience be your guide? That’s a question I want you to hold on to, because I’m going to ask you that question again at the end of the series, and you should have a biblical grid with which to answer that question.

Now your conscience is a part of the image of God that remains with you after the fall. You are the only one of God’s creatures that was created in His image. And when He created you in His

image, He gave you a constitutional component that was like Him. After the fall, the image of God was marred... it was broken, but it was not removed. It was not eliminated. That’s why you are different than a dog or cat or any kind of animal you can think of. That’s what gives you an inherent worth above the animals on the earth. There are people out there who will literally spend their entire lives trying to save a species....save the whales, save the cows. I like to eat cows, so I’m particularly bothered by that one. Save the birds, save this cricket that showed up, save this snail that crawled....whatever. We need to come to the Bible and understand that the Bible teaches us that there is an inherent worth to you in God’s sight that isn’t true of the animal kingdom, and the reason is not because you are constitutionally better than the animals, but because of something that God designed in you called His image. You are created in the image of God, and even though the fall marred that image and distorted that image, there is still the image of God in you. That part of you is your conscience. Your

conscience is part of the image of God, and it speaks to you. Now, you may not always hear it, you may not always respond to it, but it speaks. And it speaks independently of you. You can't stop it from speaking to you. You can decide that you're going to argue against it, or you can decide that you're going to silence it. The Bible talks about the fact that you can actually see it, but you cannot stop it from speaking. It always speaks independently of you, and it is informed by an external standard. There is something outside of you that regulates and governs your conscience.

Now, we're going to talk more about this in a later message, but really your conscience ultimately is informed even if you don't have a Bible and you don't have access to a Bible. Your conscience is informed by the moral law of God that is inscribed in your heart by your Creator, because it is part of His moral nature. That's why you can go anywhere in the world and you will find people who instinctively know that it is wrong to murder. It's unacceptable. These people will instinctively know

that it's wrong to lie, even though they may engage in lying regularly as a part of life and may defend it as a necessary part of how they are to live. They instinctively know that it is wrong, and the way you can tell that they know it is wrong is by their reaction when they are lied to. People instinctively know that it is wrong to take someone else's wife or someone else's property. These are just things that God has hardwired into the soul of every one of His creatures that was made in His image. When you violate those standards, your conscience is going to speak for God and say that you have crossed the line. So the first thing that you need to see tonight is the reality of your conscience.

But, secondly, what is its role? What does conscience do in your life? Your conscience really is there to speak to you for God before some external authority or standard that has been set before it that it believes is legitimate. The word "conscience" comes from two words that mean "to know with or against." By the way, the word "conscience" shows up over

thirty-two times in your New Testament. Your New Testament has a lot to say about conscience. Conscience knows things that go on in our thinking, it knows things that go on in our living, it knows things that go on in the secret chambers of our heart. Our conscience has access to every part of us...to every thought, to every word, to every action. Our conscience knows everything about us, and it is designed to speak about what it knows.

So the role of your conscience is to speak about what it knows about you. Either it is going to speak for you, or it's going to speak against you. Your conscience is designed to speak. Now when it speaks, it is designed to do some things. It is designed, for example, to warn us before we sin. Remember when Ananias and Sapphira stood before Peter just before he pronounced that horrible sentence on them and they dropped dead before him. He said to them "*Have you been lying to the Holy Spirit,*" and the implication was that the Holy Spirit had been speaking to them through their consciences. Re-

member the apostle Paul, as he is on the road to Damascus and as he interacts with the Lord, the Lord says to him, "*Has it been hard for you to kick against the goads,*" which really is another reference to Paul's conscience.

Your conscience is designed to speak to you about what it knows concerning you, and often it is warning you about what you are thinking of doing. Isn't that the case very often when we're really thinking about doing something, and all of a sudden out of the blue comes our conscience saying, "You'd better not do that!" Your conscience speaks, and it warns you in advance when you are stepping over a line.

Let me tell you another way your conscience speaks. Your conscience speaks to you after you sin. What happens to you after you sin? You silenced your conscience, you ignored your conscience and you went ahead and did the thing your conscience was telling you not to do. Now your conscience continues to speak, but this time it has a completely different message. "Oh, you're in

trouble now! You better go make this right. You better go take care of this.” Our conscience speaks to us before we sin warning us not to step over the line, but after we step over the line, our conscience continues to speak, but it has a completely different message.

There’s a third way that your conscience speaks. It also speaks to justify you. Sometimes you will find yourself falsely accused, and nothing that you say or do will eliminate the doubt in the other person’s mind against you. And all of a sudden, there’s something in your soul that God put there to say, “It’s okay.” God knows. God knows, and God will take care of it. You don’t have to go out and overly exert defending yourself, because God knows that you’re innocent. There is something that God put in you that is part of His image that, when you have met the standard of righteousness, and somebody comes along and accuses you of not meeting that standard, your conscience comes to your defense. It says that you are clear of this. It excuses you, because you are clear of the charge. Let’s end this

session by looking briefly at our response to conscience.

How should we respond to our conscience when it speaks? Look back at Acts 24:16. Paul said that in light of coming accountability in front of a Judge who is omniscient, here is what I do. “*I always strive to have a conscience without offence.*” The King James says “*void of offence.*” It literally means empty of any offences.

When we look at our consciences, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we have a responsibility to work hard. This is the idea of being diligent. This isn’t going to happen by accident. This isn’t just going to happen because you just come to church and you read your Bible a lot. This is going to have to be something that you give intentional attention to. This is something that you’re going to have to work hard at, that you’re going to have to maintain, that you’re going to have to be vigilant about. The implication of Acts 24:16 is that it is very easy to let this go. That’s why Paul says, “*I always strive about this matter. I labor intensely, I wrestle with this.*” That’s the wording, and it’s an

athletic metaphor that has the idea of wrestling intently with something. *“I wrestle intently, I wrestle hard at keeping my conscience empty of any legitimate offences it might have against me.”* Notice the arena of those offences. Paul says that he wants to have an empty conscience that isn’t accusing him of any offences that he has against God. He wants to have a conscience that is empty of any offences that he has against other men. Now the reason that this is important is that every sin that we commit...every sin, whether it’s relational or otherwise, every sin that we commit begins as an act of unbelief against God. Every sin that you will ever commit in your life began when you chose to not believe something that God said. Go to Genesis 1, and there is the pattern of sin. Satan came in and he asked questions that began to cause doubt in Eve’s mind about what God said. So when you sin, it always begins with this root. It always begins with a choice that you make to forget, disregard, or to set aside something that God told you. Your conscience is there to remind you that God did

say it, it is right, and you should have known it. Your conscience will not accept ignorance as an excuse if it was something that you were supposed to know. God comes along in this passage and He tells us that we are to live our lives in such a way that we are constantly striving to keep our conscience void of offence toward Him. The way we do that is by believing what He said about life and about how we’re to respond in life. God’s Word gives you instructions, and it gives you God’s decisions about how life ought to be lived, and when you just decide you’re not going to do that, you did something devastating to your conscience. You just trampled over your conscience, and that’s why in your soul there’s always a discomfort when it comes to praying to God. You know when you get down on your knees and you start talking to God, your conscience is saying, “Wait a minute...there’s something you’ve got to talk about before we talk about this thing you want.” You know what happens then? It’s easier after a while not to talk to God, not to pray. I would submit to many of us that the reason that

prayer is so sparse in our lives is because our conscience has offences against God that it isn't going to let us forget, that we are refusing to come to grips with, and that we must come to grips with. And by the way, I believe that's why so many of our lives are powerless. I believe that's why we're so susceptible to more and more of satanic lie. Why? Because our conscience is designed by God to be a protector, and we have chosen to fill it up with offences and not deal with those offences against God.

But Paul went on to say that it's not just offences against God, it's also offences against men. Let's talk about offence. Offence is not the idea that, "I'm offended at that. I can't believe you said that! I'm offended." That's not the idea of a biblical offence. A biblical offence is a sin that you committed, not something that somebody said about you that hurt your feelings. There are people who offend you that way, and there are places in the Bible that tell you how to handle that, but when your conscience deals with an offence, it's always an offence

that you committed. Now it may have been provoked by somebody else's offence, but it's always an offence that you have committed either against God or against men. So when it talks about having a conscience that's void of offence, it's not the idea of being upset and really frustrated and offended at something someone said. It's the idea of sinning in that process, one of the sins that your conscience knows that you've committed at any level against God and against others. Paul says that he always strives hard to keep his conscience void of these kinds of offences. The reason is there is a coming accountability before which we're going to stand that is going to evaluate us and our hearts, and our consciences have been preparing us for that day.

Now, let's just ask this question as we close. Do you have a conscience? According to the Scriptures, do you have a conscience? And the answer is yes. Now if you have a conscience, it is either a conscience that has offences against you or it is empty of offences. So if you have a conscience, what kind of a conscience

do you have? What is your conscience saying to you when it comes to your relationship to God? And what is your conscience saying to you when it comes to your relationship to other believers? You will never have a healthy Christian life if you are consistently and intentionally not dealing with the things your conscience says you need to deal with.

And so as we begin our series on the conscience, we must begin where God begins. We need to recognize He put our conscience in us as part of His image, and He put it there to speak to us so that we would maintain a right relationship with Him and a right relationship with one another.

What do you need to do to be rightly related to God? What do you need to do to be rightly related to one another? You know what you need to do to be rightly related. God does not hide our sins from us. We may overlook them, we may argue against them, but you know what those offences are. God is not hiding them from you. The Spirit of God brings

those offenses to your mind. You know what offences you have against Him, and you know what offences you have against others. You know who you have offended by your sins. You know what God says? Deal with it. Empty out your conscience by dealing with the offences biblically. Go to God and deal with the offences that you have against Him. Go to whoever you have offended and deal with those offences against them. Empty out your conscience. You say, "That's really, really hard!" Exactly. And it needs to be hard. That's what will keep your conscience empty from then on. Part of the reason we never deal with our conscience is because it is so hard to go to somebody else and say, "I have sinned against you, will you forgive me?" That's humbling, and it puts us in a place of vulnerability. But it is the very humbling part of that process that God uses to exalt us and build us up so that we don't go down that path again. The reason that so many of us live in the same sins over and over is because we have never been willing to go through the difficult process of cleansing our con-

science from offence. But know that when you do, God changes you. God rebuilds part of the wall that has been breached. It's part

of how God restores spiritual health to your life. So let's be people who recognize our conscience.



Dr. Sam Horn is the featured teacher and Host of The Word For Life, Senior Pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and Vice President of Ministerial Training at Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin.



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THE “HOWS” OF HONESTY AND OBEDIENCE -- “IN, OUT, UP, AND DOWN”

Life is a Vapor – Part 15

Join Pastor Sam Horn (SH) and Dr. Les Ollila (LO) for a discussion that originally aired on THE WORD FOR LIFE.

SH: With me is my co-host, Dr. Les Ollila, Chancellor of Northland International University. Today we’re going to have our final discussion on the question that we are seeking to answer -- the question, “What is your life?” James asks this question in Chapter 4 of his New Testament letter.

We have been comparing our lives to a vapor that appears for a moment and then suddenly vanishes away, and we’ve been discussing for the last number of broadcasts how to make that vapor count.

Last time we were together, Doc, you shared with us the importance of honesty...becoming honest

before God as the first step of making our life count before the Lord.

We ended that broadcast by commenting that honesty leads to a second thing...obedience. You defined obedience for us as doing what we’re supposed to do, when we’re supposed to do it, with a right heart spirit. Did I get that right?

LO: Yes. Doing what we ought to do, when we ought to do it, with a right heart attitude.

SH: And that last part is quite hard, isn’t it?

LO: Right. Because if Dad says, “Son, take out the garbage,” and the boy waits for an hour, he hasn’t obeyed. If Dad says, “Take out the garbage,” and the son takes out the garbage and he’s slamming doors and throwing things, he’s done it, but not with the right heart attitude. Obedience is doing what we ought to do, when we ought to do it, with the right heart attitude.

SH: So I can actually have all the external parts of obedience right, doing what I’m supposed to do, when I’m supposed to do it, but if I don’t have that last part - with the right heart, I’m in trouble.

LO: Yes.

SH: I really haven’t obeyed, is what you’re saying, even though I’ve done the external action. In other words, I haven’t obeyed the way God wants me to obey.

LO: I haven’t obeyed completely. It’s partial obedience.

We see a picture of Saul in the Old Testament, where he partially obeyed. God tells him to destroy

King Agag and the Amalekites, in the first Samuel, 15, but he kept the best of the flocks and he spared the king. He partially obeyed, but he did not completely obey.

SH: In his mind he had good reasons to do that.

LO: He justified what he did. Everyone who disobeys has already justified the case in his mind, or he wouldn’t disobey. That’s human nature. You might say, “I have no reasons, but I think I’ll just disobey today.” You have already built a case in your mind. Your defense team is already lined up before you make that decision of disobedience.

SH: Right.

LO: And no matter what the prosecution has to say. In I Samuel 15:22, after Saul was confronted and Samuel said, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams.” Saul said, “I dis-

obeyed. I didn't do what you said, but what I did was that I kept the very best in order that I might sacrifice unto the Lord."

SH: What are the things from this passage, Doc, that we substitute for complete obedience?

LO: It would be partial obedience. We say, "I'm going to go as far as is convenient for me, but when it gets hard on me, then I'm going to justify not going beyond that point." Perhaps we realize we need to make something right with a family member or a mate, and instead we decide to just make it right with God.

SH: And so, I'm going to make it right with God and leave it there....

LO: Right. I'll go forward in church, or I'll get alone with God and pray. I've made it right with God, and I feel that's all I need to do. But then the Spirit of God very clearly has prompted me to

go and make things right with a certain person.

SH: Against Thee only have I sinned.

LO: What Saul did was partial obedience. He spared the best, but he had a pious reason. That's partial obedience.

That would make a tremendous difference in our churches...if people would immediately respond to the Word.

Then there's delayed obedience. That is, I'm going to do it, but not now. That's why we always emphasize that we should obey God when He speaks.

SH: That would make a tremendous difference in our churches, wouldn't it...if people would immediately respond to the Word. We're not advocating getting up and disrupting services, but the point is, that if we don't give immediate obedience, the chances are we're not going to obey at all.

LO: We could do like Saul, also...to think that our giving and our doing is going to be a substitute for obedience.

Saul said, “Yes, I disobeyed, I agree, but this is why I disobeyed. I love God so much that I had to disobey Him, because I kept the best to sacrifice in order that we might prove our sincerity to the Lord. I kept the best and I kept the king alive,” but it wasn’t obedience. It was partial obedience.

Isaiah 1:19, says “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” Maybe you’re willing, but have you obeyed? How many of you are willing to obey God? How many of you will obey God?

SH: Now you’re meddling.

LO: If there’s something that I have to get done, if there’s something that I have to communicate, then I want to take care of it immediately.

John 7:17, says “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” There is an obedience

factor there. He’ll know the doctrine. He will know the truth, whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself.

SH: What is interesting is that in modern circles today, that doesn’t seem to be a note that’s sounded very much. In other words, if we know the doctrine, we don’t have to obey because if you preach that obedience brings blessing in modern churches today, you could get your head knocked off as being some kind of a legalist.

LO: Right. In other words, if you say obedience brings blessing, some folks would say that the blessing was given at Calvary, and that is true. Our sin, that sin matter, is

settled. But that doesn’t mean that now, because I’m God’s child, that I can just go on and do anything that I want to do and still be blessed.

In Psalm 1 it says, “Blessed is the man” and then three negatives are given there. Then comes the positive. He not only separates from

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these things, he is studious in God's truth before he becomes steadfast and successful in Psalm 1. And so anything that hints of "doing" is automatically called legalism today, and we miss a lot of what we need to be doing in the Christian life.

And by the way, it is far more comfortable just to settle in academic truth than in obeying academic truth. People love Bible Conferences. They hate Bible application. You can pack out a place with a Bible teacher at a Bible Conference, but the minute that Bible teacher starts calling people to obedience, the crowd thins out, saying, "We didn't come here to be challenged. We came here to be entertained, to enjoy our academic experience."

SH: Somebody might argue that was just Jesus' pre-cross teaching. But we were talking earlier about II Peter 1, where Peter says that you're to add to your faith, and he lists seven things that you're to add to your faith. Then at the end of that little segment he says that if you'll do these things, they will cause you to not be barren in the

knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The way to get to know God more, the way to get to know the Lord Jesus Christ more, is by adding these seven things to your faith.

LO: That is a step of obedience, not a legalistic exercise. We know we're saved by grace, we know there is nothing that we can do that will keep us from heaven. But when we eliminate the concept of obedience, if there's a broken relationship between brothers in Christ, for example, and that is not dealt with, it is going to affect the freedom of the Spirit in that person's heart. It will not affect his eternal destiny.

SH: We've all heard the statement that the Holy Spirit could be absent from most of our churches and it wouldn't affect what we do on Sunday mornings. Most of us would just go on with business as usual. That's how callused we've become in this whole area of sensitivity to this issue of obedience that we've been talking about.

LO: This is something that certainly has to be emphasized.

SH: Making our lives count necessitates honesty and obedience, but it also necessitates wisdom. Someone defined wisdom as the skill or ability that is gained from God's Word that is necessary every day for living a life that pleases God.

This is what we're talking about here...knowing the doctrine comes from obedience. And yet, obedience is premised on wisdom that comes from above.

LO: If you look in Proverbs 2, there is a conditional clause that begins in verse one, "My son, if thou wilt receive and hide..." That's step number one. That's getting God's truth in.

A while ago, I preached a message on Proverbs 24, on building a house. "Through wisdom is a house built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge shall all the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." A man came up afterwards and said, "I appreciate

Making our lives count necessitates honesty and obedience, but it also necessitates wisdom.

the message. You told us we need wisdom, fear, knowledge, and understanding, but you didn't say how to get it." I said, "I just memorized a passage that answers that." My mind was scanning while this man was talking, and I went back to Proverbs 2. I told him that there is a conditional clause, "If thou wilt receive my word" (that's getting God's truth in), "and hide" (that's the memorization part), and then the reception to the memorization, "if thou wilt apply thy heart to understanding," in other words, "I hear it, now I lean in that direction, and I apply it."

SH: You actually do it.

LO: You get the truth in, then you get the truth out, and then you lift up and cry. Lifting up and crying does not come until there has been obedience. If the Holy Spirit convicts you to go and witness to your unsaved neighbor, you'll find yourself praying.

Then verse 4 of that passage says, "If you seek as silver and search

as for hid treasure” – now we get to the “down” level. I get it in, I work it out, I lift up, then I’m driven down. Then verses 5 and 6 give the fulfillment of that, “Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God...out of His mouth cometh wisdom and understanding.”

So if I do these things, wisdom, fear, knowledge, and understanding grow every time that cycle is repeated. Wisdom grows, knowledge grows, fear grows, understanding grows. And I told that man that is how you get it.

SH: So...IN, OUT, UP, and DOWN. That’s simple to remember.

LO: I get it in, I work it out in obedience, while obedience causes me to be driven up in prayer...

SH: Because I’m struggling.

LO: Then there’s a fullness, hungering and thirsting for more righteousness, then there’s a seeking, a searching as for silver and hid treasure, that’s the diligence level. It goes from an academic function to a diligent hunger, and then these four elements are added to our lives in Proverbs 4.

SH: That’s a nugget that every one of our listeners can apply to-day right out of Proverbs 2.



Dr. Sam Horn, Host of The Word For Life, and the Senior Pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin.



Dr. Les Ollila, Co-host of The Word For Life, and the Chancellor of Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

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Dr. O. and Pastor Sam...thank you so very much for your radio broadcast, *The Word for Life*. I have gained so much wisdom and knowledge from listening, and I can't imagine being without this wonderful program.

I appreciate the time and effort that you put into the broadcast.
Again, thank you. – Ellen, Wisconsin



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