

WORTHY OF OBEDIENCE

JEREMIAH 35:1-19

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

(Write **Role Models** on the board.)

1. Who has served as a positive role model to you? (Parents; teacher; coach; grandparents; boss; co-worker; etc.)

Sometimes the best lessons in life are learned by watching others who do something the right way through their words and actions.

2. What is something you have learned to do through observing examples?

One of the most effective teaching tools in the classroom is the use of examples. Spiritually, God sometimes uses examples to teach us about obedience. This was the case in Jeremiah's day. God used the Rechabites to show His people what faithful obedience looked like. The Rechabites were descendants of Rechab, another name for Jethro, who was the father-in-law of Moses.

Jeremiah 35 is not in "chronological order;" we looked at God's promise in Jeremiah 29 a couple of weeks ago, about how Judah had been taken into captivity into Babylon and God was telling them they were going to be there for a while; so, put down roots and seek the welfare of that place where He had them. But Jeremiah 35 goes BACK to BEFORE they had been taken into captivity, while the city of Jerusalem was still under siege by Babylon, but they had not been captured yet. The nation of Judah was entering its final months as an independent kingdom.

CONTEXT! Read Jeremiah 35:1-4

Once again, we find Jeremiah speaking the word of the LORD. God had an object lesson for Judah and the king if they would just listen and obey!

TESTED! Read Jeremiah 35:5-11

Notice they gave a very logical reason as to why they were living within the walls of Jerusalem—to escape the invading armies.

They normally lived like "migrant workers." Perhaps they had sheep, goats and cattle that moved with them.

1. Why did the Rechabites refuse to drink the wine set before them, after all drinking wine was common in that day? (Over two centuries before this their ancestor, Jonadab had commanded them not to drink wine.)
2. What would you think if you were Jonadab's descendant and were asked to drink wine? (This is a temptation.)
3. When was the decision made not to drink the wine; at that moment or before confronted with the issue? (They had already decided they would not drink wine no matter what the circumstances were.)
4. How does that apply to us today? (We are faced with many temptations almost daily. If we decide we are going to be obedient to God no matter what, when the situation presents itself, the decision has already been made!)

Basically, they had been given two commands by their ancestor: don't drink wine and live like nomads. At the same time the people of Judah had casually and consistently disobeyed God's commands—or ignored them altogether.

5. All Scripture applies to everyone. But there may be something that God tells me to do or not do that is okay for you. Is that true? (Yes. It may be okay for you to do something that God has told me I cannot do, or the other way around. The issue is obedience.)

6. How can people who are examples of faithfulness to God encourage us in living the Christian life today? (We realize we are not alone in the struggle to live for Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit we can be obedient.)
7. Does the obedience of the Rechabites say more about their faithfulness or their respect for Jonadab? Jeremiah brought the Rechabites to the temple and offered them wine to drink, so the people of God could see their faithfulness.

CONTRASTED! Read Jeremiah 35:12-17

1. What evidence of Judah's disobedience do we see here? (Not listen to God's words; God had spoken time and time again and the people have not obeyed; you would not listen to My servants and prophets; etc.)
2. What do these verses reveal to us about God? (He is patient and longsuffering not willing that any should perish. He granted grace and mercy time and again. He does the same for us.)
3. Who are some examples of faithfulness in your life?
4. What makes their examples so powerful for you?

God used the faithfulness of the Rechabites as a testimony against the unfaithfulness of Judah. For more than two centuries, the Rechabites had been unyielding in their commitment to another human's commands. In contrast, the people of Judah refused to obey the directions handed down to them from the Creator of the universe.

5. What are some situations where we are expected to be obedient to another human? (Soldiers; employees; children their parents; etc.)

In Luke 6:46 Jesus said, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but do not do what I say?"

6. Why is it essential that we recognize that God stands against those who disregard Him? (Emphatically, the Lord declared that He would bring disaster on Judah and Jerusalem because the people refused to obey Him. He had graciously given them numerous opportunities to repent. But they refused to answer His call.)
7. Would you say we are more like the Rechabites or the residents of Judah?
8. What adjustments need to be made to be more obedient to God?

Jeremiah was not suggesting that all the people of Israel live like the Rechabites. He was pointing to their actions as an example of obedience. Let's see how God viewed the Rechabites' faithfulness.

COMMENDED! Read Jeremiah 25:18-19

The Rechabites were faithful to a positive command their ancestor had given them, so God blessed them for it. We talk about negative consequences about our disobedience to God a great deal.

1. Are there positive consequences for obedience? (Make no mistake: Rebellion against God has consequences. But so does a life of faithfulness!)

God noticed the Rechabites' faithfulness to the instruction of their ancestors and affirmed their choices. Because of their faithfulness, God promised them that their family line would always have a place among God's people and in God's service.

2. How does faithfulness in one area give a person an opportunity to serve in greater ways? (Faithfulness is rewarded! As we grow in Christ greater opportunities for service open.)
3. Do you believe the following statements?
 - You must come to love the Christian life, or you will never come to live the Christian life.
 - Prayer must become for you a "sweet hour of prayer", or you are not praying very well.
 - The Word must become, as the Psalmist said, "sweeter than honey" (Ps. 19:10) and "more precious than silver" (Ps. 119:72) or I bet you didn't read your Bible this morning.
 - We can force ourselves to be obedient for a while but if we don't get pure joy out of it, it will not last.

4. How can you and your family demonstrate faithfulness to God in the coming days?
5. What kind of impact could that have on your family, your church, and your community?

SUMMARY AND CHALLENGE!

1. How can we collectively serve as an example to others in our church and community?
2. Ask God to help you examine your life for anything that is dishonoring God. Spend time confessing and repenting of any disobedience in your life.

Obedience is always in our best interest. Always! In missions, in service, in prayer, in everything—it is always in our best interest to live the Christian life.

When “the church” does what people want, people are happy.

When “the church” does what Jesus wants, people are changed! —Josh Hunt