



## OBEDIENCE & RESPONSIBILITY

## CONVERSATION #6: THE HARD TRUTH CHALLENGE

### READ: FAITH THAT COSTS

For a long time, faith can survive on borrowed answers - what a pastor says, what a leader believes, or what feels right in the moment. That's a normal part of early spiritual growth. But obedience and responsibility deepen when belief becomes owned rather than outsourced.

At some point, faith must move beyond passive agreement and into active engagement. This challenge is designed to help you make that shift by inviting you to wrestle with, research, and respond to Scripture for yourself. It isn't about winning an argument or forcing certainty; it's about learning how to stay in relationship with God when belief begins to cost effort and requires responsibility.

When we are still spiritually young, the core issue is often self-focus. Spiritual children naturally ask, "How does this affect me?" They tend to rely on others to explain difficult passages and disengage when Scripture feels confusing, uncomfortable, or confrontational. Growth begins when responsibility replaces avoidance. Feeding yourself means doing the hard work of understanding before deciding how you feel, rather than letting emotion or convenience shape your beliefs. Scripture gives clear direction for this kind of growth:

### READ 2 TIMOTHY 2:15

Handling Scripture responsibly is not just an intellectual exercise - it is an act of obedience. This challenge will invite you to take that responsibility seriously, stepping toward a faith that is practiced, examined, and owned.

### THE CHALLENGE:

Spiritual growth doesn't happen just by agreeing with Scripture - it happens by engaging it. As long as others do the hard work of studying, interpreting, and explaining difficult parts of the Bible for you, your faith will remain dependent. When Scripture feels confusing, uncomfortable, or confrontational, it's tempting to disengage or default to someone else's conclusions. But maturity begins when you take responsibility for understanding what God has said, even when it costs time, effort, and emotional energy. In this challenge, you will move from reacting to Scripture to wrestling with it - learning how to stay present, thoughtful, and faithful when belief requires work.

### Challenge #4: THE HARD TRUTH CHALLENGE

For this challenge, you will research and write a **biblical position paper** on a topic in Scripture that feels controversial, confusing, or personally difficult to accept. This task is intentionally **larger and slower** than previous challenges. The size matters - it forces sustained engagement instead of emotional reactions.

## CHALLENGE DETAILS:

- **Total Paper Length:** 2,500–3,000 words (Approximately 5–6 double-spaced pages)
- **Formatting Requirements:** Typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, Section headings required
- **Sources:** Scripture and extra-biblical references cited clearly

**A LIST TO HELP YOU BEGIN THIS CHALLENGE:** Begin this with your Discipleship Partner(s)

CHOOSE A TOPIC	RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS
<p>You must choose <b>one</b> topic that meets at least one of these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A biblical command you struggle to accept or obey.</li><li>• A doctrine you doubt or don't fully understand.</li><li>• A passage you've avoided or dismissed.</li><li>• A teaching you agree with emotionally but haven't studied biblically.</li></ul> <p><b>Examples (not required to be from this list):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christian sexual ethics</li><li>• Forgiveness and enemies</li><li>• Gender roles</li><li>• Judgment and hell</li><li>• Obedience vs. grace</li><li>• Money and generosity</li><li>• Authority and submission</li><li>• Suffering and God's goodness</li></ul> <p><b>Guiding Principle:</b></p> <p>You should not choose a topic simply because it's easy or familiar.</p>	<p>Engage <b>all four</b> sources below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Scripture (Primary Source)</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Minimum 5 biblical passages</li><li>○ At least 2 passages that feel challenging or uncomfortable</li><li>○ Context must be considered (who, when, why)</li></ul></li><li><b>Jesus-Centered Lens</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ How does Jesus speak to, model, or embody this issue?</li><li>○ If indirect, how does His life shape interpretation?</li></ul></li><li><b>Wise Voices</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ At least three trusted Christian sources<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Commentaries</li><li>▪ Theologians</li><li>▪ Pastors or scholars</li></ul></li><li>○ No social media clips as primary sources</li></ul></li><li><b>Personal Reflection</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Where do you feel resistance?</li><li>○ What assumptions did you bring in?</li><li>○ What changed as you studied?</li></ul></li></ol>

## CONSIDER:

It's worth acknowledging that a challenge like this may feel unfamiliar - or even intimidating. For some, it's been years since you've written anything resembling a research paper, and that can create hesitation before you ever begin. Don't let that obstacle stop you. The goal isn't academic polish; it's the hard, honest work of digging into Scripture for yourself and learning how to engage multiple perspectives on the same passages with humility and care. This process is part of growing up spiritually - learning to stay present when understanding takes effort.

## RESEARCH TOOL: SUGGESTED PAPER STRUCTURE

If this feels overwhelming, the outline below is simply a tool, not a requirement. You do not have to follow it exactly. It's provided as a helpful starting point for those who want a clear blueprint for how to approach this paper. Use what serves you, adapt what you need, and remember that the responsibility isn't to write perfectly - it's to engage faithfully.

### SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION & PERSONAL TENSION (400–500 words | ~1 page)

**Purpose:** To clearly name the issue and your personal resistance to it.

**Elements:**

- Introduce the topic clearly and specifically
- Explain *why* this topic is difficult for you
- Identify assumptions, fears, or experiences shaping your reaction
- State your intent to seek understanding, not confirmation

**Guiding Prompts:**

- What makes this topic uncomfortable or confusing?
- Where do you feel defensive or resistant?
- How has your background shaped your view?

### SECTION 2 - BIBLICAL SURVEY & CONTEXT (700–800 words | ~1.5 pages)

**Purpose:** To let Scripture speak before conclusions are formed.

**Elements:**

- Engage 8-10 biblical passages
- Include:
  - Old Testament and New Testament
  - At least 3 passages that challenge your initial perspective
- Explain:
  - Author
  - Audience
  - Historical or literary context
- Avoid isolated proof-texts

**Guiding Prompts:**

- What patterns emerge across Scripture?
- How do context and audience shape meaning?
- Where does Scripture complicate simplistic answers?

### SECTION 3 - JESUS-CENTERED ENGAGEMENT (400–500 words | ~1 page)

**Purpose:** To interpret the topic through the life, teaching, and character of Jesus.

#### Elements:

- Examine:
  - Direct teachings of Jesus *or*
  - How Jesus embodied the principle
- Address how Jesus interacts with:
  - Authority
  - Obedience
  - Grace
  - Truth
- Avoid using Jesus to dismiss Scripture - let Him interpret it

#### Guiding Prompts:

- How does Jesus raise the standard, not lower it?
- Where does His example challenge my instincts?
- How does He hold truth and compassion together?

### SECTION 4 - HISTORICAL & WISE VOICES (400–500 words | ~1 page)

**Purpose:** To recognize that you are not the first to wrestle with this issue.

#### Elements:

- Engage at least 3 trusted Christian sources
  - Commentary
  - Theologian
  - Scholar or pastor
- Summarize differing perspectives fairly
- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement
- Restrictions:
  - No social media clips as primary sources
  - No straw-man arguments

#### Guiding Prompts:

- Where do mature believers differ?
- What reasons support each position?
- What cautions do they raise?

## SECTION 5 - TENSION, WRESTLING & UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS (300–400 words | ~¾ page)

**Purpose:** To resist premature certainty.

### Elements:

- Clearly articulate remaining tensions
- Name unanswered questions
- Acknowledge emotional and practical costs

### Guiding Prompts:

- What still doesn't sit easily with me?
- Where does obedience feel costly?
- What fears surface if this is true?

## SECTION 6 - FORMED BIBLICAL CONVICTION (400–500 words | ~1 page)

**Purpose:** To articulate what you currently believe *because of Scripture*.

### Elements:

- Clearly state your position
- Show how Scripture shaped this view
- Distinguish between certainty and trust
- Acknowledge limits of understanding

### Guiding Prompts:

- Based on Scripture, what am I choosing to believe?
- Where am I trusting God beyond full clarity?
- How has my view changed?

## SECTION 7 - OBEDIENCE & LIFE APPLICATION (300–400 words | ~¾ page)

**Purpose:** To move belief into responsibility.

### Elements:

- Identify specific obedience implications
- Name:
  - Attitudes to repent of
  - Behaviors to change
  - Practices to adopt
- Avoid vague applications

### Guiding Prompts:

- If this is true, what must change?
- What obedience have I delayed?
- What cost am I willing to accept?

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS:**

As you work toward completing this challenge, you are practicing what spiritual maturity looks like in real time. You are learning how to engage Scripture with care instead of avoidance, how to remain faithful even when clarity takes time, and how to shift from reacting emotionally to responding responsibly. As you wrestle with the text, you will begin to grow in confidence - not because everything suddenly makes sense, but because you are learning how to feed yourself rather than depend on others to carry your faith for you.

Most importantly, this challenge teaches a truth that many overlook: obedience often comes before understanding. Clarity grows as you show up, stay engaged, and choose faithfulness even when answers feel incomplete. This is how belief becomes owned, how responsibility replaces passivity, and how a faith that once relied on others begins to stand on its own.