

## LeaderLesson 8: Focused Obedience

Bob Lowman, Jr.

February 25, 2013

Smith Magazine is an online community which celebrates the joy of storytelling. But they tell stories in a short and simple way: they invite readers to submit 6 word memoirs that describe their lives. They ask: "Everyone has a story. What's yours?" This is a short and powerful way to remember what's important. A six word proverb from Shakespeare says: "Brevity is the soul of wit," meaning that articulate and intelligent communication should use a few wisely chosen words. Here are a few six word resolutions:

"Go to happy place. Stay there."

"I'll be skinny. In my head."

"Eat less chocolate. Enjoy it more."

"Not quitting when it is hard."

If King Solomon had written a six word memoir early in life, he could have said: "God has given me great wisdom." However, later in life he could have said, "Should have practiced what I preached."

When you think back over your life, or as you consider where you are today, what six words best fit you?

As Christians, all that we are, all that we do, all that we say, all that we hope for, is based in the saving Lordship of Jesus Christ by the power of Holy Spirit. We as the church exist to continue the mission Jesus gave us - to be His witnesses to our neighborhoods and to the nations, making disciples.

We know these biblical truths very well. If I were to ask you what we should be doing as Christians, as leaders, and as churches, you could tell me, and do it nicely. We can even sing songs about it from memory.

The question is: What difference has our knowledge made? What have we done about what we know? Am I living what I know? We say we trust in God, that is good. How are we doing at obeying Him?

Hebrews 11 tells about those through the years who had full faith in Almighty God. These forebears of the faith believed and obeyed the Lord, and they are remembered to this day because of it. They and all the others who have trusted Christ through the ages are a great cloud of witnesses. They are testimonies of God's grace and ability.

So, what will others say of us after we're gone? What must we do to live obediently? Hebrews 12:1-2 give us God's instructions for practicing focused obedience.

*Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the Source and Perfecter of our faith... (Hebrews 12:1-2 HCSB)*

We are to obey God with four specific actions. These are presented in six word statements – short, easy to remember.

### **1. LAY ASIDE EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS YOU.**

First, we must choose to obey God.

We are to cast off, lay aside every weight that slows us down. Long distance runners work hard to build up endurance and strength, so they get rid of any excess weight or entanglement that keeps them from running and doing their best. They develop a single minded focus on the goal, not distracted by their surroundings or circumstances.

As a leader, ask yourself: What attitudes, what mindset, what thoughts are keeping me as an individual from being all God is able to help me become? What is it God want me to be doing, obeying, as a Christian? As a leader? What is it God wants us to be doing and obeying as a church?

If you don't know, ask Him. That's why prayer is so crucial to us. If you don't know what to do, pray until you do. But, most likely, there are plenty of ways we already know that call for obedience from us. So, get rid of anything hindering that obedience, and be ready to follow the Lord.

### **2. TURN AWAY FROM SIN THAT ENTANGLES.**

Second, we must turn from sin in repentance. Anything that endangers our relationship to God must go.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says that if we want to see God forgive, heal and bless, we must turn from our own wicked ways. This must be done as we pursue obedience to God.

This involves recognizing sin and rejecting sin in Jesus' name. This is not about everyone else's sin, but yours and mine. Miss Bertha Smith, missionary and witness to the revival in China said we must identify our sins and list them so that God can deal with them. As the old song says, "It's me, it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer." Personal holiness is our aim: living a pure life to God's glory.

We must be ready to live it out, not just talk about it. Obedience is the key, once again. Another six word bit of encouragement: Don't give advice I should take.

This is an integrity issue. Ethics is believing the right thing. Morality is doing the right thing. Integrity is when your ethics and your morality match, when your morality is integrated with your ethics, when you do what you say you believe.

### **3. RUN YOUR RACE WITH DAILY ENDURANCE.**

We must do it day by day. The trouble with life, as one friend said, is "it's so daily!"

Endurance is courage stretched out. The main character in the movie, *We Bought A Zoo*, said that to do anything scary or daring in life, one needs twenty seconds of insane courage. That advice can help, but it's not endurance. Endurance takes longer than twenty seconds.

It's easy to run a sprint, to make a quick commitment. But running the marathon is what we've been called to do, as Christians and as leaders. This is a life-long process we're talking about. So, endure - be someone who finds the pace to finish the race.

The other lesson about endurance: this life and the leadership we give is more about the journey than the end. It's more about the race than the finish line. We can get into trouble if we start to think that we can do whatever we want to do so long as we achieve our end goal. No, God calls us to follow Jesus, and to lead others day by day, on the journey of life, one step at a time, with integrity.

### **4. ALWAYS FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS.**

Focus on Jesus as you obey Him and His Word. Keep your eyes always on Him.

This life is not about us, it's not about getting ahead or making money. For the church leader, it's not about being successful or famous or recognized. This life is about Jesus. Jesus is our goal and our focus whether we're in a church of 50, 500, or 5,000.

If He really is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we need to act like it. We need to live like it. We need to talk like it. We need to lead like it. We need to walk like it. We need to believe like it. We need to obey like life is all for Jesus. If Jesus Christ really is God, we must do as He says, and follow wherever He leads.

Don't look to people for your approval - fix your eyes on Jesus. One verse that God has reminded me of very often from my time pastoring a church until now is Galatians 1:10: "For am I now trying to win the favor of people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ." I am a slave, a servant of Christ. He is my Lord. So, my eyes are fixed on Him. I trust and obey Him, no matter what, all to His glory.

In conclusion, here are two six word testimonies to consider – will you make them your own?

Each day I will obey God.

My life is focused on Jesus.

---

LeaderLessons are a ministry of encouragement and equipping from Bob Lowman and Metrolina Baptist Association. You can find them at [www.metrolina.org](http://www.metrolina.org) or on the MBA Facebook page. We also email them to our pastors and leaders. If you would like to get a printed copy of these articles, please contact us by emailing [leaderlessons@metrolina.org](mailto:leaderlessons@metrolina.org) or calling 704.375.1197.

#### **Metrolina Baptist Association**

328 West Carson Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28203

[www.metrolina.org](http://www.metrolina.org) / 704.375.1197

Dr. Bob Lowman, Jr., Executive Director

