

Getting Life By Giving Obedience

Step Three: We turned our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.

The Lord God says: I am bringing you back again ... It will be as though I had sprinkled clean water on you, for you will be clean ... I will give you new and right desires and put a new spirit within you. I will take our your stony hearts of sin and give you new hearts of love. And I will put my Spirit within you so that you will obey my laws and do whatever I command. (Ezekiel 36)

How can any individual please God? We have experienced how helpless we are against the destructive evils in our life. Amazingly, God's word fills us with hope. As we respond to God's gracious provision of forgiveness and restoration, God promises to give us a new heart and fill us with his spirit so that we can make decisions that follow God's program. This new heart is his gift to those who believe in the work of Jesus on their behalf.

Even though Jesus was God's son, he had to learn from experience what it was like to obey when obeying meant suffering. It was after he had proved himself perfect in this experience that Jesus became the Giver of eternal salvation to all those who obey him. (Hebrews 5)

Turning our life over to God always involves action. If we simply say that we have entrusted our life to God but do not make amends to others or confess our wrongs, then we are only fooling ourselves. Effective living involves following through on our good intentions and professions of faith. We may not understand how everything works, but we do what God tells us is necessary for our recovery. When we step out in faith, God gives us the success we seek.

You must be careful to do the good things that result from being saved, obeying God with deep reverence, shrinking back from all that might displease him. For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants. (Philippians 2)

Some of us may wonder how we are supposed to succeed at doing what God wants us to do. How can we be perfect? We have already admitted that we

are powerless over the pull of our addictions. But God not only asks us to live a godly life, He also provides us with the power to do it. God is working in our life, helping us to obey Him. As we get to know God by reading the Bible and spending time with Him in prayer, God can begin to transform us from the inside out. As we choose to trust God's goodness and make healthy choices, often in spite of our feelings, we will begin to experience satisfying change and a richer life than anything we've previously known.

Jesus said: All who listen to my instructions and follow them are wise, like a man who builds his house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents, and the floods rise and the storm winds beat against his house, it won't collapse, for it is built on rock. But those who hear my instructions and ignore them are foolish, like a man who builds his house on sand. For when the rains and floods come, and storm winds beat against his house, it will fall with a mighty crash. (Matthew 7)

If God's will was obeyed by everyone, our world would be filled with peace and prosperity. Life would be filled with meaning and joy. However, all of us regularly reject God's program and do things our own way. We live for personal gratification and blind ourselves to the needs of others. As we recognize the destruction and pain we have caused by doing things our own way, it might help to reflect on how things could be if we did things God's way.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How have I invited God to build new desires in me?
2. How can I please God?
3. Jesus learned new life through obedience that sometimes felt like suffering. What kind of suffering have I or might I likely experience when I follow God and entrust my life to Him?
4. Turning my life over to God involves ongoing action. What actions do I need to continue to change (both things to avoid and things to do) in order to be turning my life over to God moment by moment?
5. What's going on when I want to do good but seem to fail repeatedly?
6. In what ways am I building on sand or rock in my daily life?