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Obeying to Get a Blessing

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Obeying to Get a Blessing

Why did the Israelites repeatedly worship other gods, even after experiencing God's dramatic deliverance from Egypt through plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and food falling from heaven in the desert? Perhaps they wanted more control.

The appeal of an idol is its simplicity. If you follow the rules, you can expect to get certain benefits. It was easy for the Israelites to believe that the most expedient way to get what they wanted was to pay their dues to the idol. Toss in a little sensuality, greed, and fear, and their worship of false gods becomes more understandable.

 Obey for blessing

The results from following God, however, are profoundly out of our control. God promises blessings to those who follow Him—blessings in this life and blessings for all of eternity. The huge difference though is that trusting God to know when and how to bless us takes us out of control. We can no longer think of God as our all-powerful vending machine—we put in two coins of obedience and a few pennies of church attendance and *presto* we get the blessing of our choice.

Trust involves submitting to the eternal wisdom of God—the same God who allowed some to become martyrs and some influential rulers.

Trusting God to provide for us, whether for moment-by-moment needs, life direction, safety, comfort, or joy, requires humility. Some people might obey in order to make a deal with God. When they receive something good in their lives, they assume they are getting what was rightfully due to them. It was earned through their obedience. Others, however, might obey God motivated by love and trust. As a result, they receive God's good gifts like a child finding an especially beautiful flower—with joyful surprise and genuine thankfulness.

As with any aspect of this discussion of obedience, the goal is to stay focused and responsive to the person we are following. Our relationship with Jesus is the priority. Anytime we focus on something other than intimacy, whether it is to get blessings, to avoid trouble, or just to follow the rules, we lose the point of obedience: obedience is one way we follow, trust, and worship Jesus.