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Obeying to Demonstrate Love

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Obeying to Demonstrate Love

“Just accept me for who I am.” “Don’t judge.” “I just want to be loved and accepted, not preached at.”

We are often quick to take offense at the perceived arrogance of someone who tries to tell us how to live our lives. We easily presume that authentic love requires others to fully accept how we want to live and who we want to be.

 Transformed by love

Many stories and movies play with the theme of characters who appear to be one person but as the story unfolds they discover they are something different—a prince, a powerful wizard, the heiress to a fortune. These stories resonate with us because we want to believe we are people who have worth and are loved. But like those characters who resist the changes needed to embrace their new identity, we also can resist a love that asks us to change.

Beginning a relationship with God transforms our identity. We are assured that because of who we now are in Christ, we are completely loved and accepted for all of eternity. But even though we are completely loved, our Lord begins right away to shape us into the real “us.” He transforms us into the person we were created to be, rather than leaving us trapped in the earthly mold that had defined us.

But that transformation is not ultimately about our self-actualization. It is a journey in which we learn not to depend on ourselves, but to fully trust and depend on God. We learn to love ourselves and others as we learn to accept the astounding love of God. And as a result, we are shaped to be more like Him. In this shaping-transforming process, we become transformed into the people we were created to be.

Have you ever picked up distinctive phrases from a friend or spouse? Who we spend time with, who we look up to, and, ultimately, who we worship, will cause us to become like them. When we journey with Jesus, we become more like Him. When we worship God, we come to reflect who He is and what He cares about.

But sometimes that process can be painful. God might be asking us to let go of a part of ourselves we've always liked or a way of living we'd rather not give up. These are the times when we want to tell God to back off and just let us do our own thing. But as we respond to God, submitting to Him out of love, even when we don't really understand, we become more like Him and learn a little more about Him. We grow in intimacy.

Within that intimacy is the joy of doing things that please Him. It's like the joy of seeing a family member thrilled with the gift we just gave them. As we grow in intimacy with God, how we act becomes a way of giving back to Him out of love—not to earn His favor or to get a gift in return, but simply because we love Him and His joy is our joy. There are such freedom and pleasure in a life of obedience motivated by our love for God!