

RELIGION

PASTOR'S COLUMN

The definition of obedience



ADAM KOEHLER

SPIRIT LIFE FELLOWSHIP OF THE OPEN BIBLE

You guys get a unique opportunity this week to read part of the mental and spiritual wrestling I do on a weekly basis when writing a sermon. I do not promise that wrestling will make for good penmanship, but it will be different than most pastors' columns. Or so I think. I could be quite wrong, and this could be a very ordinary pastor's column entry.

Nonetheless, as I wrestle with a difficult topic that very few of us rebellious, independent Americans enjoy — obedience — I must wrestle with the definition of the word.

What is it? The Oxford Dictionary gives this as a definition: "compliance with an order, request, or law" or "submission to another's authority." This meaning gives no indication as to whether the person obeying agreed with or understood the purpose of the directive they obeyed.

Humor me as I tell you a story about my time at Basic Combat Training a decade ago in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

When you eat at the dining facility, you are required to drink two full cups of fluid. Every soldier had to carry their two cups a certain way. We had to hold our arms in front of our body, arms parallel to the ground, cups in hand, knuckles of each finger touching the corresponding knuckles on the fingers of the other hand. Our elbows were flared out to our sides. If you've ever done upright rows with a barbell or kettlebell, think of the top position of that exercise.

Got a mental image of that? That's how we carried our cups. Sounds stupid? Sounds like we looked like a bunch of crayon-eaters? We all thought it was ridiculous, but we obeyed without a single clue as to what purpose this might serve. We simply knew that

our drill sergeants told us to, and we had a fear and respect for them that superseded our egos. So, we obeyed. Not because we thought it was worth our time. We obeyed because we were told to do so, and we feared and respected (and by the end of the cycle, we loved) our drill sergeants.

Do you have any idea where I'm going with this illustration? If not, just wait, you'll understand soon enough. About two or three weeks before graduation, we went to one of the most dangerous ranges one will go through at basic training: the live grenade range. When someone is carrying a live grenade, you want to know. It is very vital to range safety that anyone with a live grenade is easily identifiable from a distance.

Can you guess how we were forced to carry our grenades so that we were easily identifiable on the range? We had to carry the grenades like idiots — the same way we had carried our cups all cycle. Nobody forgot how to hold their arms at the grenade range because we'd been doing it three times a day for six weeks, 126 times. This is the reason obedience is so important. It makes good habits second nature. But back to my question earlier.

What is obedience? I'd prefer to answer that question with another question. Can you call yourself obedient if you need to know all the details and understand the why behind everything you do before choosing to obey? If you'd rather not obey because you don't know all the details, are you truly being obedient?

God rarely shows us the full picture before asking us to obey. He simply tells us to do something, puts someone over us who we'd rather not obey, gives us a task we don't like, etc. He doesn't explain His reasoning. He just expects us to obey because we respect Him, fear Him and love Him. We must obey God without having all the answers. Would you tell God, "No. I won't obey you unless you tell

me why and explain all the details." I'd hope not.

What is obedience then? When God speaks, we ask Him for the time and place, and we show up. That is obedience. An old Sergeant First Class once told me, "There are only four things you need to do to be successful in the Army. Show up at the right place at the right time in the right uniform with the right attitude."

What church has God called you to? What job has He placed you in? When the church has an event, and you feel called to be a part of it, just show up ready to serve with a joyful and obedient heart. When you go to work, and your boss tells you to do something, just do it and do it well. Remember Colossians 3:23-34: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

"The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility" (Proverbs 15:33). Do you fear the Lord? Then submit to and obey Him. This also means submitting to your government and the church leaders He has called to lead you. This means obeying even when you don't see the destination.

Do you have certain prerequisites that must be met before you'll obey? If so, you're not being obedient. You're just casting in your lots so long as it is mutually beneficial. That is not obedience. Obedience is Abraham taking Isaac up the mountain (Genesis 22). Obedience is Ezekiel prophesying to Israel even after God told him they wouldn't listen (Ezekiel 3:7).

Obedience is Jesus going to the cross to die for people who hated Him. Obedience is every Christian martyr who died for their faith. So, the next time you don't want to obey God, your boss, your family, the government, etc., remember that God doesn't ask you to obey if you feel like it. He just asks you to obey.

AREA CHURCH LISTINGS

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Foundation Church, Spencer
Rev. Nicholas Hanges, Senior Pastor
1410 W. 18th St.
712-262-6292
foundationspencer.com
• Sunday School K-12, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Prayer/Fellowship, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.
• Kids Church Sunday, 10 a.m.
• Wednesday All Ages, 6:30 p.m.

BAPTIST

Baptist Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. James Marshall
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

First Baptist Church, Spencer
Rev. Tim Smith
1200 Grand Ave.
712-262-1325
firstbaptistspencer.com
• Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.
• Sunday Upward Look — KICD 1240 AM, 10 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday AWANA, 4 p.m.
• Sunday FBC Youth Group, 6 p.m.

CALVARY CHAPEL

New Life Worship Center, Spencer
Rev. Tracy Baugh
1217 Fourth Ave. W.
712-262-3125
• Sunday Bible Church, 10 a.m.
• Wednesday Prayer, 6:30 p.m.

CATHOLIC

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Hartley
Rev. Kevin Richter
260 N. Fourth Ave. W.
712-928-2626
• Primghar St. Athony, Sunday, 8 a.m.
• Hartley St. Joseph, Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Milford
Rev. Brian Hughes
1305 Okoboji Ave.
712-338-2274

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Ruthven
Rev. Paul Kelly
1801 Rolling St.
712-852-3187

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Spencer
Rev. Kevin Richter
1111 Fourth Ave. W.
712-262-3047
• Saturday Service, 4:30 p.m.

• Sunday Service, 11 a.m.
Livestreamed at: spencersacredheart.com/online

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Trinity United Church of Christ, Hartley
140 N. Fifth Ave.
712-728-2889

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Spencer Family Church, Spencer
Rev. Larry Neiderhiser
905 Fifth St. SW
712-262-7298
spencerfamilychurch.org
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday Kid's Church, 10:30 a.m.
• Wednesday Life Group, 7 p.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Spencer
1701 W. 11th St.
712-262-6172
• Sunday Sacrament Meeting, 10 a.m.
• Sunday School; Primary and Youth Meetings, 11:10 a.m.
• Sunday Men's Priesthood Meeting and Women's Relief Society, 12:10 p.m.

CONGREGATIONAL

Grace Congregational Church, Greenville
Rev. Tonna Parsons
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

EPISCOPAL

The Way Station, Spencer
Rev. Beth Preston
120 W. Fourth St.
712-580-5463
revbethpreston@gmail.com
• Sunday Service, 3 p.m.

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Spirit Lake
Rev. Carolyn Tuttle
23rd and Zenith
712-336-1117
• Sunday Mass/Eucharist, 10 a.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church, Storm Lake
Rev. Stacey Gerhart
121 W. Marina Road
712-202-6624
• Sunday Eucharist, 10 a.m.

EVANGELICAL FREE

Riverside Evangelical Free Church, Linn Grove
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Ignite: 6:30 p.m.
• Salt Youth: 7:15 p.m.

CrossWinds Church, Spencer
Campus Rev. Jordan Gowing
Rev. Dr. Kurt Trucksess
1900 Grand Ave, Suite A
712-584-3151
spencer@crosswinds.tv
• Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN

First Christian Church, Spencer
(Disciples of Christ)
Pastor Interim
915 Fourth Ave. SW
712-262-2945
• Sunday Service, 9:30 a.m.
In-House and Facebook Live
• Wednesday Kids Sunday School: 4:30 p.m.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

First Congregational Church, Peterson
712-295-7150
• Sunday Worship, 8:45 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10 a.m.

First Congregational Church, Spencer
Rev. Dr. Shazzy Britz
DCYM Katie Baltis
1212 First Ave. W.
712-262-4392
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Adult Sunday School, 9 a.m.
• Sunday School, 4 years old to fifth grade, 9:30 a.m.
• Adult Bible Study Tuesday, 10 a.m., Wednesday 7 p.m.
• Spencer Congo Youth Wednesday's, Middle School, 6-7 p.m., High School, 7-8 p.m.
Livestream on YouTube
All are welcome

LUTHERAN

Hope Lutheran Church, Everly
Rev. Dan Taylor
206 N. Washington St.
712-834-2767
• Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
• Sunday School and Adult Education, 9 a.m.
Services livestreamed on YouTube at "Hope Lutheran Church — Everly, IA"

Lost Island Lutheran Church, Graettinger
Rev. Peter Morlock
• Sunday Service, 8:45 a.m.
• Fellowship, 9:45 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10 a.m.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran, Hartley
Rev. Christopher Nitzel
60 N. Central Ave.
712-728-2711
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
• Sunday School 10 a.m.
• Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.
• Confirmation, 11 a.m.
• Choir Practice, 11 a.m.

Harbor of Joy Lutheran Church, Milford
Rev. Tim Voth
1204 L Ave.
712-338-2355
• Sunday Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday School, 8:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

First Lutheran Church, Milford
1525 Three Cross Road
Rev. Perry Aalgard, Senior Pastor
Rev. Brian Jack, Associate Pastor
712-338-4514
3cross.org
• Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.
• Education/Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Royal
Rev. Dr. Mark F. Wilms
207 Church St.
712-933-2229
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Church, Ruthven
Rev. Eric Patten
• Sunday Service, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.

First Lutheran Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. Tonna Parsons
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Bethany Lutheran Church-ELCA, Spencer
15 W. 14th St.
712-262-2327
bethluthspencer.com
• Worship, 9 a.m.

Christ the King Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael McGinley
500 Fourth Ave. SW
712-262-2244
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
• Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.
• Services on Facebook, 9 a.m.
Podcast" released Sundays

Faith Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Ben Unseth
2912 Highway Blvd.
712-580-4316
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.
Services are streamed on YouTube
flcspencer.org

First English Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Paul Kaldahl
1311 E. 18th St.
712-262-5598
spencer-church.com
• Divine Worship, also broadcast on 1240 AM

and 102.5 FM, 8 a.m.
• Fellowship, 9 a.m.
• Child care in the nursery, 9:15 a.m. to Noon
• Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
• Bible Class, 9:40 a.m.
• Divine Worship, 10:45 a.m.
• Communion on first and third Sundays.
Services & Bible Class livestreamed via website

Riverview Terrace Chapel, Spencer
1501 St. Luke Drive
712-262-5932
• Sunday Worship, 10:45 a.m.

St. Luke Home and Services, Spencer
Rev. Perry DeGroot
1301 St. Luke Drive
712-262-5931
• St. Luke Lutheran Home Worship, 10 a.m.
• Riverview Terrace Worship, 10:45 a.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Renae Behrends
900 11th Ave. W.
712-262-1287
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

NONDENOMINATIONAL

Faith Community Church, Milford
805 Okoboji Ave.
Rev. Jennifer Hesebeck
faithcommunitymilford.com
fcc@milfordcomm.net
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

The New Light of the Lakes Friends Church, Okoboji
• Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Service, 10:30 a.m.
• Group Bible Study, 5 p.m.

Living Word Outreach Ministries, Spencer
Rev. Barb Dean, Lead Pastor
Rev. Mark Feauto, Associate Pastor
905 10th Ave SE
712-262-9545
livingwordsspencer.org
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.
• Livestream also available on the website, Facebook and YouTube.

River's Edge Church, Spencer
Rev. Tim B. Frasher
Pastor Joseph Leggett
701 E. 18th St.
712-580-3013
• Sunday School, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Spirit Life Fellowship, Spirit Lake
Rev. Eric Holdeman
2504 Enterprise Ave.
712-336-0114
• Sunday School, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Maple Grove Church of God, Sutherland
Rev. Michael Hyde
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday School, 11 a.m.

PENTECOSTAL

Faith Pentecostal Church, Spencer
1700 11th Ave. SW
712-262-3368
fpcspencer.com
Rev. Brad Wallace
Rev. Dale Hodges
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Wednesday Bible Study, 6:30 p.m.

REFORMED

Good News Community Church, Okoboji
Rev. Brandon Morrow
1010 Julia St.
712-332-5698
• Sunday Worship Services, 9 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.
• Fellowship. 10:15 a.m.

Hope Church, Spencer
Pastor James Runcorn
919 Grand Ave.
712-262-3016
• Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m.
• Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Seventh Day Adventist Church, Spencer
1910 10th Ave. E.
712-262-5766
• Saturday Sabbath School, 9:45 a.m.
• Saturday Worship, 11 a.m.

UNITED METHODIST

Calvary United Methodist Church, Arnolds Park
Rev. Chris St. Clair
209 N. Okoboji Grove Road
712-332-2447
• Saturday Worship, 6 p.m.
• Sunday Lakeshore Worship, 7:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Dickens United Methodist Church, Dickens
Rev. Donna Gray
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Everly
Rev. Michael Eeten
301 N. Ocheyedan
712-834-2501
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Community United Methodist Church, Gillett Grove
Rev. Donna Gray
• Sunday Worship, 10:15 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Hartley
361 Eighth Ave.
712-928-2649
• Sunday Church School/Confirmation Classes, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship Service, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Langdon
Rev. Chris St. Clair
• Sunday in-house and Facebook Live Worship, 11 a.m.

First United Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. Dr. Mike Currier
Rev. Karen Currier
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
Church of Christ, Spencer
Contact Jeff Cookinham
1304 St. Luke Drive
712-262-2294
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday Bible Study, 11:15 a.m.

First United Methodist Church, Peterson
Rev. Tyler Thomsen
103 E. Third St.
• Sunday Worship, 9:15 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 10.15 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

First United Methodist Church, Royal
Rev. John Battern
408 Church St.
712-933-2489
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Ruthven
Rev. Kathy Kluis
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

First United Church, Sioux Rapids
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Grace United Methodist Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael Slininger
311 Second Ave. W.
712-262-5970
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

Zion United Methodist Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael Eeten
• Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10:45 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Terril
Rev. Terry Luiken
302 S. State St.
712-853-6549
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Trinity United Methodist Church, Webb
Rev. Kari A. Etherington
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.

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