

# Submission and Obedience for Home Schoolers

By Steve & Carol Ryerson

Hebrews 5:8-9 "...though he was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."  
(NKJV)

**T**hese verses have long been favorites of mine because they speak so loudly of the humanity of Christ—especially an aspect of His humanity that is encouraging to me, namely, that He learned obedience by suffering. In His flesh, because He was a real man, He had to learn things. Suffering was a major mechanism for that learning. Though His flesh was without sin, He still had to train that flesh to submit.

Why should we expect that our lives would be different, i.e. without suffering? Why should we expect that obedience would not be a means by which the Lord would work His will in our lives? Why should we expect that we would not need to be perfected if our Mediator and High Priest needed to be perfected (completed)?

God saw in Abraham the fact that he would command his household well. When the Lord as a theophany went to Abraham on the plains of Mamre to talk with him about the coming judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah, He made an interesting comment to the other two angels who were with Him (Genesis 18). He was speaking of His friend Abraham and how much He should tell him. God said in essence that it wouldn't be right for Him to withhold the story of what was about to happen to the cities of the nearby plain since He had promised Abraham He would make a mighty nation of him. The Lord adds the following as additional justification for being open with Abraham: "For I have known him in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD to do righteousness and justice that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." (v.19)

Abraham's willingness to lead his family in the right way despite opposition was a major factor in God's commitment to him. Take note of the fact that at the time God made the above statement, the great test of Abraham's own submission in the matter of sacrificing Isaac on Mt. Moriah had not yet taken place, but that test did come. Abraham's leading his family (yet to be born) was reflective of his own submission to God, and it was not a matter of simply barking orders. Abraham was a humble man of faith who strove to do right.

The new commandment of love that we receive from the ministry of the Messiah does not negate the centrality of submission and obedience (John 13:34). Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). He said that His true family are the ones who do the will of the Father; they don't just think about it (Matthew 12:50). For John, the tenderhearted one, the test of whether a person is a true disciple is whether he does the truth (I John 1:6, 2:4). Walking with the Lord in Spirit and in truth certainly does involve obedience (John 4:24). II Corinthians 6:14-18 makes some strong points related to the necessity of allowing the Spirit to lead the believer out of the world. Verse 17 quotes Isaiah in saying, "Therefore 'Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.'" (NKJV)

We home schoolers are courageous people. We have been swimming against the current for a long time. Not following the crowd is normal for us. Just consider the myths that we have overcome: Education should take place in a school building. Students need textbooks to learn.

Schooling takes place between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. A teacher has to have a college degree. Your ten-year-old needs to be around a lot of other ten-year-olds to be properly socialized. Your child will be warped if he doesn't go to the high school prom (or even the "Christian" substitute for it). God has helped us (or is helping us) to overcome such worldly traditions as these. So, like Abraham, we have taken some key steps to lead our families in the right way despite opposition. Also, like Abraham, we need to be tested. Doesn't any "product" need to be tested before it is considered complete?

We know that not everyone is enthusiastic about home education. Sometimes Christian public school teachers are offended because they think we are tearing down the good they are trying to do. Sometimes grandparents are nervous about what we may be doing to their dear grandchildren. Sometimes pastors are concerned about some things they see. Suppose a pastor has been working with people in the congregation to get them to "drink their milk" faithfully. He has been preaching and teaching about things such as prayer, tithing, Bible study, and sharing their faith. He is a good-hearted man trying to do what the Lord wants him to do. Then one of the folks who hasn't been doing too well in the basics comes to him and says, "I'm going to home school my children." What would you expect him to think? He's going to wonder what kind of consistency the children will have. Of course he should be concerned!

Let me relate two conversations I've had with pastors regarding home schooling. One concerned a highly capable and experienced man with whom I've had a good relationship for a long time. He has several home schooling families in the church he pastors, and I was talking with him about them. He said that for the most part he thought that they were doing a good job, yet he had noticed something through the years. He said they do tend to have "a bit of an independent spirit." He didn't elaborate, and I didn't ask. I was sure that I knew what he meant.

The second one took place with a man who is very friendly to home education. He works effectively with families in public education, Christian schools, and home schooling. He believes that "When it is done well, home schooling is the best." He told me that the only problem he's had has been that in a few cases the home educated children don't want to submit to their Sunday School teachers because they have the idea that only their parents are qualified as their teachers.

James 3:13-17 ~ Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. 14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (KJV)

If we are allowing the Lord to build in us the qualities to which our teacher James refers, shouldn't the public school teachers in the church notice it? Shouldn't the nervous grandparents be comforted? Shouldn't the spiritual leaders in the church see that people with spirits like ours are to be encouraged...yea, even held up as examples?

Enter the suffering. We are not talking about anything approaching what Christ experienced on the cross, but we are talking about the consternation that comes when you are doing what is right and people don't understand. Not only do they not understand, but they express it to you with comments such as, "Do you think your child will be normal?" Or, "Don't you think she's missing out on some things?" Or, "Aren't you afraid that there will be some gaps in her learning?"

Home educators who have been on the front lines for awhile are confident when presented with these challenges. They think, "No, I don't want my child to be normal. Normal means following

the prevailing norms. Do you know what the norms are for children in our society today? Do you realize that many teens today have difficulty carrying on sensible conversations with adults because their focus is so much on themselves?" Or, "Do you realize that unless a teenager is a committed conservative in spiritual matters, the norm is that he has decided homosexuality is an acceptable choice to make?" How much of this they say depends upon the circumstances, but they are ready with answers akin to these.

Regarding the second question, they think, "Yes, she will miss out on some things, such as the embarrassment of showing up to class wearing something less than the latest fad tennis shoes. She will miss out on the joy of waiting in line to get a lunch made up of the latest in government surplus ketchup and peanut butter. Yes, she will miss out on getting beat up on the playground." But, you probably don't say these things because you don't want to be offensive, and you know that some good things do happen in institutional schools.

Regarding the gaps-in-learning question, you think, "Are you implying that you, as a graduate of the government school, have no gaps in your learning?" Again, you are cautious in what you say.

In these examples, the "suffering" is minor. However, suppose you are in an assembly of believers where the leadership is not supportive of home schooling. You have reluctantly put your children in the Sunday School program. Your children are starting to come home with stories of misbehavior among their classmates. Unlike your explanations when you are talking about behavior at the mall ("I know, honey, but they don't know Jesus), you can't say that the children of the respected saints do not know the Lord. You can say that they are not mature yet, but your immature offspring won't understand that. What do you do?

Plan A is get involved. You volunteer to help in the class so you can monitor and mitigate. Uh-oh! Now you are seeing first hand that the children of Deacon Jones not only do not know the Lord, but they aren't being trained to obey. So, at home you have a lesson with your children about patience with people. That seems to work until you start seeing and hearing some of the Jones' children's behavior from your children. What now?

Plan B is get a transfer to another class. But, you remember that there isn't one.

Plan C is that you become the teacher of the class so you have more control over the situation. But, Sister Smith has been the teacher in that class since Noah got off the Ark. Besides, she is Deacon Jones sister, so she is an aunt to the undisciplined Jones children. You're pretty sure she knows there is a problem, but you are equally sure she won't do anything about it.

Plan D is what should have been Plan A: you begin to seriously pray about the situation. The Lord begins to speak with you and your husband about having a serious talk with the pastor. It's time to keep your children with you in the adult Sunday School class. You are frightened about the reverberations that will cascade through the congregation, but you really feel the promptings of the Lord. You continue to pray, and the Comforter brings James 3:13-17 to your mind. You find it in your Bible. You study and pray over it, asking the Lord to allow such a pure, peaceable, and gentle spirit to settle over you that the pastor will recognize the presence of the Lord and grant your petition.

Possible Outcome One: The Lord gives you favor with the pastor. Your children stay with you until the storm passes. Your whole family is blessed; others in the congregation follow your lead, and the assembly becomes age-integrated as the pastor sees the wisdom of working with families together.

Possible Outcomes Two through Seventy-two: Some variations of number one that are positive to lesser degrees.

Possible Outcome Seventy-three which is really number one in likelihood: The pastor says, "Well, we love you folks and we really want to help you. If you feel that you must keep your children with you, go ahead and do it for awhile. I'll explain to the teacher and the Sunday School Superintendent that we're doing something short term to help you. But in a few weeks, I'd like you

to put them back into the class." What do you do?

Since you are learning the value in submission and obedience, you say, "Thank you so much for your help. We appreciate your kind spirit. We will pray seriously about this and see what the Lord will do. Please pray for us." Then as the weeks pass you make real progress in your home as you are preparing your children for the adult lessons. You have some great family discussions to help the children grasp what is being taught to the adults. And, you truly ask the Lord to give you favor with the pastor.

We'll leave the outcome of this little story in the hands of the Lord. Either the local church truly flexes to help the individuals or it doesn't. You may have to leave that assembly, but your attitude is vital. Are you or are you not demonstrating the spirit of James 3:13-17, Philippians 4:4-9, Colossians 3:15 and others? Are you really submitting yourself to the Lord? Or, are you just demanding your own way and falsely connecting that with being a home schooler? Are you really seeking God's will, or are you just giving in to a rebellious, whining spirit? Do you really care about teaching your children the need to "...obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you"? Or, do you really enjoy complaining about all the pastors who you think get a sick pleasure out of using Hebrews 13:17 as a hammer to beat on people? By the way, to whom are you accountable?

Our call here is for submission to the Lord. Our call is for a humble spirit that our Wonderful Counselor can direct. Our call is for such gentleness that no person of faith could do anything but marvel at how God is working in our lives. If we demonstrate that and are rejected, then the Lord will handle our rejectors; we won't. If we demonstrate any other attitude, the Lord will deal with us. Let's submit to Him.