

# **The Power of Obedience**

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# The Power of Obedience

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## Introduction

There is nothing in all of creation more powerful for the human than obedience. Nothing affects man's existence more than this quality. It governs intellect, emotions, and physical ability. The ultimate obedience is rooted in the fear of the Lord. The least obedience is discovered in passive compliance with society's customs. The purpose of this booklet is to examine the influence obedience plays in our lives.

Perhaps one of the easiest ways to determine how powerful obedience is would be to observe the effects of disobedience.

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for persons from six to twenty-seven years of age. Forty-one thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven people were killed in over 67 million motor vehicles during 1997. Obedience to just the one law on seatbelt usage would have saved the lives of over 18,000 of these individuals. If the laws pertaining to excessive speed had been observed thirteen thousand people would not have lost their lives.

People have known for years that cigarette smoking leads to an early death. In fact 430,000 people die each year with diseases directly connected with smoking. It is estimated that 47 million adults in the United States smoke cigarettes, even though this behavior will result in death or disability for one out of every two users. Willful rejection of vital health information leads to early death.

In 1996 residents over the age of 12 experienced nearly 37 million crimes. Over 9 million of these were violent crimes. On any given day in 1994, there were approximately 234,000 offenders convicted of rape or sexual assault under the care, custody, or control of correction agencies. About 8 in 10 inmates in State prison for sexual violence had injured or killed their victim.

Over 32,000 died in 1997 because of HIV/Aids induced immorality. Eighty-nine percent acquired the virus through immoral sexual activity. Nearly 31,000 killed themselves in direct conflict with biblical and State law. It is estimated that over 75% die in the United States each year because of violations of some law or rule either by the person themselves or someone else's disobedience to some law. This includes deaths due to inappropriate eating, drinking, drug or chemical use, and accidents. During 1996 there were 2,322,421 deaths. Over 93,000 of these deaths were due to preventable accidents caused by the disobedience, or neglect of some rule, law, or order.

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Rank <sup>1</sup>	Cause of Death and Age Based on Ninth Revision, International Classification of Diseases, 1975-1996 All ages <sup>i</sup>	Number	Rate
	All causes	2,322,421	875.4
1	Diseases of heart	733,834	276.6
2	Malignant neoplasms, including neoplasms of lymphatic and hematopoietic tissues	544,278	205.2
3	Cerebrovascular diseases	160,431	60.5
4	Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and allied conditions	106,146	40.0
5	Accidents and adverse effects	93,874	35.4
	Motor vehicle accidents	43,449	16.4
	All other accidents and adverse effects	50,425	19.0
6	Pneumonia and influenza	82,579	31.1
7	Diabetes mellitus	61,559	23.2
8	Human immunodeficiency virus infection	32,655	12.3
9	Suicide	30,862	11.6
10	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	25,135	9.5
	All other causes Residual		

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<sup>i</sup> Ibid

If the historical trends of the 1990s continue then nearly two million people in the United States will die during 1999 because they failed to observe warnings from parents, doctors, ministers, governmental agencies, or the Word of God. Those figures indicate the seriousness of the subject before us. Our study will view the connection between obedience and longevity from scientific and biblical perspective.

Support for a connection between obedience and longevity is found in the scientific community. Friedman and others found that childhood personality was indeed a predictor of longevity. Two major points are made in this article; divorce in childhood is a predictor of a shortened life span, and degree of conscientiousness in childhood is a predictor of longer life. In another article psychosocial behavior was also found to be predictors of longevity.

Numerous other sociological and psychological studies support the basic concept that the impulsive and uncontrolled personalities, along with major family disorganization, are predictors of long-term health problems.

In 1921, the Terman Life-Cycle Study began. Terman chose some 856 boys and 672 girls with IQ's of at least 135 to study over an extended period. The participants have been followed at five-and ten-year intervals since the onset of the study, for nearly 75 years. A more recent evaluation of the data has focused on psychosocial variables in participants' physical health. The one factor found to be a consistent predictor of greater longevity in this group was a factor the investigators called

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'conscientiousness.' What did the investigators define as conscientiousness? They define it as prudence, truthfulness and social dependability.

Factors the researchers expected to account for a longer life such as sociability, high self-esteem, optimism, high energy, and permanency of mood, all failed as indicators. The sole predictor outweighing all of the others was the trait of conscientiousness. What difference exists in the length of the participant's lifespan? One study indicates at least six years difference been the attainable age, that is 74 for unconscientious males and 81 for conscientious males.

Obedience or lack of it affects practically everything we do. Failure in this area is most evident in the "accident" rate of any society. Traffic accidents are a prime example. Notice how the majority of all accidents are due to the failure to obey a rule, law, ordinance or known truth. The majority of all traffic accidents accounting for over forty-five thousand deaths per year are preventable. Simply obeying the rules results in an increased life span.

Violation of our body by improper diet, inadequate exercise and the use of known harmful substances accounts for a majority of admissions to medical and psychiatric facilities. Most violations are of known rules, laws, ordinances and instructions.

As already noted 430,000 plus each year in the United States die from smoking. Another 14,000 die from drug use, and hundreds of thousands from food related abuses. These deaths are not due to lack of information for our society is flooded with a constant barrage of information; most goes unheeded.

Thus, one readily sees why disobedience to authority, whether toward a parent, government or biblical laws, results in a shortened life span. Only a willful rejection of disobedience will bring about the ability to live longer. It is God's promise regardless of one's color, creed, or sex. Respect for God's creation and obedience to His laws lay the foundation for obedience to those who have the rule over us.

This connection between the obedient life and longevity was discovered a long time before our century. Moses more than three millennium ago, told the Jewish nation "... know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God gives you forever. "

## **I. Significance for Obedience/Disobedience in Our Time**

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## II. A Longitudinal Examination of the Kings of Judah

The Terman life -Cycle studies and other studies similar to it are revealing to us that a correlation between ones character and longevity exists. Moses warned the nation of Israel thirty- four hundred years ago that length of life was tied to character. The writer of Chronicles was impressed by the correlation twenty-four hundred years ago and set forth historical proof of it.

Marching through the list of the kings of Judah and Israel, the chronicler sums up each reign based on this theme. At the end of the summation for each king, he pronounces judgment based on their obedience to the Torah or lack of it. Conclusions such as ..."and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper..." (2 Chronicles). 26 are common. His requiem for the disobedient, was somewhat less impressive; ... "and he departed with no one's regret". 2 Chronicles 21:20

The measure of our own lives will one day adorn our graves. Perhaps as was with the good kings' remarks like; "they made a great fire in his honor" 2 Chronicles 16:11; or as in Hezekiah's case "and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death."

Just as sobering is the requiem for the unfaithful such as the one for Jehoram ..."and after all this the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. In the course of time, at the end of two years, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great agony. His people made no fire in his honor, like the fires made for his father. He was 32 years old when he began to reign; and he reigned 8 years in Jerusalem, and he departed with no one's regret."

Let's examine more closely the intriguing study found in Kings and Chronicles which supports differential life span. Its clear as one reads the text of Chronicles that the main idea or purpose of the writer was to show the connection between prosperity along with longevity over against the brevity and poverty of the disobedient. Appendix I lists many of these passages, which from both a negative and positive perspective, reinforce the writer's convictions about this theme.

Moreover, one discovers an amazing insight when closely examining the kings of Judah. All of the kings were of the lineage of David. Genetically these kings are related. They all are of the lineage of David. Now what is amazing is that the good kings of Judah lived, on an average, nearly ten years longer than the evil kings of Judah. God promises a longer life to those who obey and fear Him. Below is summarized some of the information about the reign and ages of the kings.

## KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

	RULER	RULED	DEATH	AGE	OBEY	DISOBEY
SAUL	2	37	2	62	1	4
ISHBOSHETH	2	2	2	42	1	3
DAVID	3	40	1	70	4	1
SOLOMON	3	40	1	60	4	2
REHOBOAM	1	17	1	58	2	2
JEROBOAM	2	22	2		1	4
ABIJAM	1	3	1	38	2	3
ASA	3	41	1	61	4	1
NADAB	2	2	2		0	3
BAASHA	2	24	2		0	4
ELAH	2	2	2		0	3
OMRI	2	12	1		0	4
TIBNI	2	5	1		0	1
ZIMRI	2	0.52	2		0	4
AHAB	2	22	2		1	5
JEHOSHAPHAT	3	25	1	60	5	1
AHAZIAH	2	2	2		0	4
JORAM	2	12	2		1	2
JEHORAM	1	8	2	40	1	4
JOASH	3	40	2	47	4	2
AHAZIAH	1	1	2	23	0	4
ATHALIAH	1	6	2	45	0	5
JEHU	2	27	1		1	2
JEHOAHAZ	2	16	1		0	2
JEHOASH	2	15	2		0	1
AMAZIAH	3	18	2	54	1	2
JEROBOAM	2	40	1		1	4
UZZIAH	3	52	1	68	2	2
ZECHARIAH	2	0.6	2		0	5
MENAHEM	2	10	1		0	4
SHALLUM	2	0.12	2		0	3
JOTHAM	3	16	1	42	3	1
PEKAHIAH	2	2	2		0	3
PEKAH	2	8	2		0	3
AHAZ	1	16	1	36	0	5
HOSHEA	2	10	2		0	3
HEZEKIAH	3	29	1	54	5	1
MANASSEH	1	55	1	67	3	3
AMON	1	2	2	24	0	4
JOSIAH	3	31	2	39	5	1
JEHOAHAZ	1	0.12	2	23	0	2
JEHOIAKIM	1	11	1	72	1	3
JEHOIACHIN	1	0.4	2	55	0	5
ZEDEKIAH	1	11	2	32	0	4

The chart of the Kings of Judah and Israel summarize how long each king ruled, type of death, their age at death if known, and degree of obedience or disobedience according to the biblical writers between the years 931 B.C and 586 B.C. The column labeled Ruler indicates which kingdom either, Judah or Israel, and whether he was declared good or evil by the chronicler.

The column labeled "Ruled" gives the number of years the king ruled either as regent and or co-regent. The column labeled "Death" indicates whether the death was violent (2) or non-violent (1). The column "Age" indicates the number of years the king lived. The column labeled "Obey" uses a scale to indicate degree of obedience, zero being none and five being the greatest. The column "Disobey" numerically rates the degree of disobedience, zero being none five being very disobedient.

An examination of the columns reveal that those who were disobedient reigned an average of only 7.05 years. During the same period those who were obedient to the laws of the Lord ruled an average of 35.18 years. Additional information not listed in the chart but information found in Chronicles indicate that these obedient kings were prosperous, had strong backing from the population, and enlarged the borders of their kingdom.

Examination of the lives of the kings of the Southern kingdom of David reveals further differences. Those kings who were declared evil by the chronicler lived to be about 42.75 years old. Those who were judged good lived an average 55.50 years. It is notable that none of the ages are given for the Northern kings.

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The age spread is roughly equivalent to the eight years difference attributed to conscientiousness found in the Terman Life Cycle Study. Some 3500 years separate the two studies, and while longevity has increased due to discoveries in medical science, one still observes this basic eight to ten year difference in longevity between the obedient and disobedient.

### **III. Biblical Studies**

We have seen the larger view of population response to obedience. Let's take a more individual view of some of the biblical characters. Our desire is to show some of the specific types of sins that affect the mind, emotions, and body.

The Holy Bible is filled with numerous passages dealing with the subject of longevity and obedience. There is an increase in the frequency of these references beginning in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

The Lord speaking to Solomon in the year 931 B.C., addresses obedience and the ills of disobedience. I Chr 28:9; "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. "

Let's examine some specific examples of this process in action. Relevant passages might be summarized under three headings: passages suggesting mental or intellectual effects of disobedience, emotional effects of disobedience, and physical effects of disobedience.

### **IV. Passages Suggesting Mental Or Intellectual Effects Of Disobedience**

Biblical history presents to us through the life of Nebuchadnezzar, an excellent example of the direct effect of disobedience on the mind. The King, in his own words, tells us the story about what happened.

Nebuchadnezzar begins by telling us a dream the Lord gives him. In this dream he observes a great tree visible to all. This great tree provided for the needs of a great many people. As he watched an angel comes down from heaven and has the great tree chopped down.

The angel then declares; " ... Let his mind be changed from that of a human, and let the mind of an animal be given to him. And let seven times pass over him. The sentence is rendered by decree of the watchers, the decision is given by order of the holy ones, in order that all who live may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals; he gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of human beings.'

Daniel is called in to interpret the dream for the King. The text says:

" Then Daniel, was severely distressed. The king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or the interpretation terrify you." Belteshazzar answered, "My

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lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies! The tree that you saw, which grew great and strong, so that its top reached to heaven and

was visible to the end of the whole earth, whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and which provided food for all, under which animals of the field lived, and in whose branches the birds of the air had nests-- it is you, O king! You have grown great and strong. Your greatness has increased and reaches to heaven, and your sovereignty to the ends of the earth. And whereas the king saw a holy watcher coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let him be bathed with the dew of heaven, and let his lot be with the animals of the field, until seven times pass over him'-- this is the interpretation, O king, and it is a decree of the Most High that has come upon my lord the king: You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, you shall be bathed with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom he will. As it was commanded to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be re-established for you from the time that you learn that Heaven is sovereign. Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged."

The chief problem of King Nebuchadnezzar was pride, and pride is one of the sins the Lord judges most severely and the quickest. The King tells us in his own words what happens next.

At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king said, "Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?" While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has departed from you! You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and

gives it to whom he will." Immediately the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven away from human society, ate grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers and his nails became like birds' claws. When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored the one who lives forever. For his sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does what he wills with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can stay his hand or say to him, "What are you doing?" At that time my reason returned to me; and my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. My counselors and my lords sought me out, I was re-established over my kingdom, and still more greatness

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was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are truth, and his ways are justice; and he is able to bring low those who walk in pride.

Thus disobedience in these circumstance gave rise to mental illness which affected the intellectual processes. The root sin was pride which is testified to by the king himself..

## V. Passages Suggesting Emotional Effects Of Disobedience

I suppose that King Saul is one of the most outstanding examples of the consequences of disobedience upon the emotions of a person. In I Samuel 15 we start to read of the sordid story of this man. The writer tells us that God, through his prophet Samuel, commanded Saul to destroy the nation of the Amalek leaving nothing alive, human or animal. Saul failed to do this seeking rather to keep the best of the people as slaves along with the sheep and cattle. Hear then what takes place.

"Saul went to Carmel, where he set up a monument for himself, and on returning he passed on down to Gilgal." When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, "May you be blessed by the LORD; I have carried out the command of the LORD." But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of cattle that I hear?" Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people

spared the best of the sheep and the cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed." Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." He replied, "Speak." Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But from the spoil the people took sheep and cattle, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,

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he has also rejected you from being king."... Now the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

And Saul's servants said to him, "See now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord now command the servants who attend you to look for someone who is skillful in playing the lyre; and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will feel better." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me someone who can play well, and bring him to me." One of the young men answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the LORD is with him." And whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

It should be noted that David's musical displays had a significant effect on Saul. It is also significant that in our time just the reading of the psalms has a significant effect on the emotional state of a person. Frequently the psalms are used to therapeutically reduce anxiety in a person.

## **VI. Passages Suggesting Physical Effects Of Disobedience**

A unique passage in I Corinthians 11 promises an ongoing physical effect for disobedience. Speaking of the Lord's Supper Paul says; "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died."

Some other referrals addressing physical effects of disobedience include the following.

2 Chr 16:12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe; yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD but sought help from physicians. This passage is not saying do not go to physicians, rather do not make gods out of them. The passages suggest as well that illness may be used by the Lord to test us and correct us.

PROV 3:7-8 "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body." The concept here emphasizes a healing process occurring when one turns away from evil. Notice that in this process the body is not only healed but is refreshed as well.

2 Chr 21:16-20 "And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. In course of time, at the end of two years, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great agony. His people made no fire in his honor, like the fires made for his fathers. He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem; and he departed with no one's regret." It is noteworthy that a similar incident occurred in New Testament times when King Herod is struck down by an angel of God for putting himself in the place of God(Acts 12:23).

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In each of these incidents, the Lord intervenes, but there are numerous instances in which a simple cause and effect paradigm occurs. Scripture reinforces the correlation between the longevity and one's attitude toward the Lord.

An element of all the passages dealing with longevity is a factor called Fear of the Lord. If this element exists according to scripture, then it leads to acts of obedience and rejection of disobedience resulting in greater length of life. Fear of the Lord is strongly connected to the heart or emotions. Thus, as fear of the Lord thrives so does emotional welfare. At the same time the physical body is affected in a positive manner by the emotional stimulus brought about by fearing God. What we have here are specific laws put in place at the creation.

Proverbs 10:27: "The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short." It should be noted that a lack of this quality does not determine illness--sin brings about illness.

Fear of the Lord helps one avoid sin, Proverbs 16:6, thereby avoiding the physical consequences of sin. Moreover, where sin has occurred and illness results, then introduction of the fear of God brings about healing. "But for those who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings" Malachi 4:2.

## **VII. Attention Deficit Disorder**

At its most primitive level the difficulties observed in children with ADHD exemplify the overall progress and effect of disobedience, in one's life. The heart and mind show the effects of obedience/disobedience but the function of obedience is a trait rooted into the spirit of man. ADHD, once in the system always remains; however, it can be controlled and balanced by obedience. The more one disobeys, the more chemical release occurs in the body--that is why as one watches a child with ADHD, he observes that disobedience begins with small tests like confrontations, and then develops into a raging temper tantrums.

The foundation of obedience or disobedience as the case may be, begins in early childhood. Beginning about the age of two and extending through four, the child experiences a series of trials the outcome of which influences a lifetime of behavior. Often known as the terrible two's, a child repeatedly must choose obedience or disobedience. As this process develops, the child experiences a chemical release in the brain resulting in feelings of joy, peace, or euphoria when he obeys. A wise parent will discover that repeated obedience calms the child. The child must receive an instant reward for obedience.

Conversely, each stimulus of disobedience brings a chemical release which results in distraction, agitation, and insecurity. During this period lasting from about 18 months to three years, the child experiences intense releases of these chemicals as a result of obedience or disobedience.

I am suggesting that when we are obedient, our bodies physically experience an event that promotes physical health. When we are disobedient, our bodies experience a physical event which causes physical deterioration.

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If the child continually disobeys and or defies authority, his agitation increases to the point that the child may exhibit the symptoms of Secondary ADHD. These symptoms are summarized below.

1. Incessant fidgeting
2. Easily distracted
3. Impulsive responses
4. Difficulty following instructions
5. Inability to complete activity
6. Frequent excessive talking
7. Intrudes on others
8. Not listening
9. Thrill seeking behavior

These symptoms may only be present just at home, or at school, or in another singular situation, or they may be present in all areas of life. Secondary ADHD should be distinguished from primary ADHD in that the latter is traceable to a physical cause (brain or central nervous damage caused by illness, physical trauma, or birth disorder). The former is most often associated with emotional trauma. Two other disorders of childhood that may be traced to disobedience and represent progressive rejection of authority are Conduct Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

## VIII. Fear of the Lord

The length and breadth of one's existence is measured by one's fear of the Almighty. Fear of God, which results in obedience, has a dramatic effect on the body. In the moment that one begins to fear the Almighty, he is overtaken with a deep sense of calmness. This experience is akin to a feeling of relaxation and extends beyond the physical experience to affect the mind, emotions, and spirit. Conversely, fear of anything else results in agitation and anxiety. Because of its importance, it will be the subject of a later essay.

The fear of authority as exhibited in fear of the child toward the parent is the foundation upon which is built the fear of the Lord.

## Summary

When viewed at an individual level, the effects of obedience may be indistinguishable particularly when we fail to assess cause and effect. When observed from a large group and longer period of time, certain conclusions become unmistakable. The overall longevity of a person may affect a person for as little as a seven to eight-year reduction in over all life span to as much as thirty to forty years of life. Much like the ocean tides, change is slow but ever proceeding with an unstoppable tenacity.

Moses, some 3500 years ago, summed it up nicely when speaking to the new nation of Israel Deut, 4:39; "know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is

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God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days..." This very theme is set forth a millennium later by the author of Chronicles and three thousand years later in our own century, as studies investigate the sources of longevity.

## Appendix I

Passages reflecting the importance of obedience to health and longevity:

(Exo 20:12 RSV) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

(Lev 26:16 RSV) I will do this to you: I will appoint over you sudden terror, consumption, and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it;

(Lev 18:5 RSV) You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live: I am the LORD.

(Deu 4:9 RSV) "Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'

(Deu 5:33 RSV) You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land which you shall possess.

(Deu 6:2 RSV) that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged.

(Deu 8:1 RSV) "All the commandment which I command you this day you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply,

(Deu 11:9 RSV) and that you may live long in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.

(Deu 11:21 RSV) that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

(Deu 12:1 RSV) "These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be careful to do in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live upon the earth.

(Deu 16:20 RSV) Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God gives you.

(Deu 22:7 RSV) you shall let the mother go, but the young you may take to yourself; that it may go well with you, and that you may live long.

(Deu 30:16 RSV) If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you

(Deu 30:18 RSV) I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.

(Deu 30:19 RSV) I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days,

(Deu 31:13 RSV) and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess."

(Deu 32:47 RSV) For it is no trifle for you, but it is your life, and thereby you shall live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess."

(Deu 28:66 RSV) your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day you shall be in dread, and have no assurance of your life.

(2 Ki 20:6 RSV) And I will ADD fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake."

(2 Chr 1:11 RSV) God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life, but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king,

(2 Chr 26:5 RSV) He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.

(Job 12:10 RSV) In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.

(Job 24:22 RSV) Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power; they rise up when they despair of life.

(Job 33:4 RSV) The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

(Psa 6:4 RSV) Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of thy steadfast love.

(Psa 23:6 RSV) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

(Psa 25:20 RSV) Oh guard my life, and deliver me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in thee.

(Psa 27:1 RSV) A Psalm of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

(Psa 32:3 RSV) When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

(Psa 36:9 RSV) For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light.

(Psa 54:4 RSV) Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

(Psa 90:10 RSV) The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

(Psa 91:16 RSV) With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

(Psa 116:4 RSV) Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I beseech thee, save my life!"

(Psa 119:17 RSV) Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and observe thy word.

(Psa 119:144 RSV) Thy testimonies are righteous for ever; give me understanding that I may live.

(Psa 119:50 RSV) This is my comfort in my affliction that thy promise gives me life.

(Psa 119:77 RSV) Let thy mercy come to me, that I may live; for thy law is my delight.

(Psa 119:88 RSV) In thy steadfast love spare my life, that I may keep the testimonies of thy mouth.

(Psa 119:93 RSV) I will never forget thy precepts; for by them thou hast given me life.

(Psa 119:107 RSV) I am sorely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to thy word!

(Psa 119:109 RSV) I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget thy law.

(Psa 119:149 RSV) Hear my voice in thy steadfast love; O LORD, in thy justice preserve my life.

(Psa 143:11 RSV) For thy name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In thy righteousness bring me out of trouble!

(Prov 1:19 RSV) Such are the ways of all who get gain by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors.

(Prov 2:19 RSV) none who go to her come back nor do they regain the paths of life.

(Prov 3:2 RSV) for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare will they give you.

(Prov 3:16 RSV) Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

(Prov 3:18 RSV) She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

(Prov 3:22 RSV) and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.

(Prov 4:4 RSV) he taught me, and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live;

(Prov 4:10 RSV) Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.

(Prov 4:13 RSV) Keep hold of instruction, do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

(Prov 4:22 RSV) For they are life to him who finds them, and healing to all his flesh.

(Prov 4:23 RSV) Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life.

(Prov 5:6 RSV) she does not take heed to the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.

(Prov 5:11 RSV) and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed,

(Prov 6:23 RSV) For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

(Prov 6:26 RSV) for a harlot may be hired for a loaf of bread, but an adulteress stalks a man's very life.

(Prov 7:2 RSV) keep my commandments and live, keep my teachings as the apple of your eye;

(Prov 7:23 RSV) till an arrow pierces its entrails; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life.

(Prov 8:35 RSV) For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD;

(Prov 9:6 RSV) Leave simpleness, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

(Prov 9:11 RSV) For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be Added to your life.

(Prov 10:11 RSV) The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

(Prov 10:16 RSV) The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin.

(Prov 10:17 RSV) He who heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof goes astray.

(Prov 10:27 RSV) The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.

(Prov 11:19 RSV) He who is steadfast in righteousness will live, but he who pursues evil will die.

(Prov 11:30 RSV) The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but lawlessness takes away lives.

(Prov 12:28 RSV) In the path of righteousness is life, but the way of error leads to death.

(Prov 13:3 RSV) He who guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

(Prov 13:12 RSV) Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

(Prov 13:14 RSV) The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death.

(Prov 14:27 RSV) The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death.

(Prov 14:30 RSV) A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh, but passion makes the bones rot.

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(Prov 15:4 RSV) A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

(Prov 15:27 RSV) He who is greedy for unjust gain makes trouble for his household, but he who hates bribes will live.

(Prov 16:17 RSV) The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; he who guards his way preserves his life.

(Prov 16:22 RSV) Wisdom is a fountain of life to him who has it, but folly is the chastisement of fools.

(Prov 18:21 RSV) Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

(Prov 19:16 RSV) He who keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises the word will die.

(Prov 19:23 RSV) The fear of the LORD leads to life; and he who has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.

(Prov 21:21 RSV) He who pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor.

(Prov 22:4 RSV) The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.

(Prov 22:23 RSV) for the LORD will plead their cause and despoil of life those who despoil them.

(Prov 29:24 RSV) The partner of a thief hates his own life; he hears the curse, but discloses nothing.

(Eccl 7:12 RSV) For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money; and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.

(Isa 38:5 RSV) "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.

(Isa 38:16 RSV) O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh, restore me to health and make me live!

(Ezek 3:19 RSV) But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you will have saved your life.

(Ezek 3:21 RSV) Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and you will have saved your life."

(Ezek 18:27 RSV) Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life.

(Ezek 18:17 RSV) withholds his hand from iniquity, takes no interest or increase, observes my ordinances, and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live.

(Ezek 18:19 RSV) "Yet you say, 'Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?' When the son has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live.

(Ezek 18:21 RSV) "But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

(Ezek 18:23 RSV) Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

(Ezek 18:28 RSV) Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

(Ezek 18:32 RSV) For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

(Ezek 20:11 RSV) I gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live.

(Ezek 20:13 RSV) But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not walk in my statutes but rejected my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. "Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them.

(Ezek 20:21 RSV) But the children rebelled against me; they did not walk in my statutes, and were not careful to observe my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live; they profaned my Sabbaths. "Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness.

(Ezek 20:25 RSV) Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life;

(Ezek 33:10 RSV) "And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: 'Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness; and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins.

(Ezek 33:13 RSV) Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in the iniquity that he has committed he shall die.

(Ezek 33:15 RSV) if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right, he shall surely live.

(Ezek 33:19 RSV) And when the wicked turns from his wickedness, and does what is lawful and right, he shall live by it.

(Ezek 37:14 RSV) And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, says the LORD."

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(Amos 5:14 RSV) Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.

(Hab 2:4 RSV) Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

(Mal 2:5 RSV) My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him, that he might fear; and he feared me, he stood in awe of my name.

(Mat 6:25 RSV) "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

(Mat 6:27 RSV) And which of you by being anxious can ADD one cubit to his span of life?

(Mat 16:25 RSV) For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?

(Luke 17:33 RSV) Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.

(Luke 18:30 RSV) who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

(John 6:48 RSV) I am the bread of life.

(John 11:25 RSV) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

(John 12:25 RSV) He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

(Rom 6:23 RSV) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Rom 8:6 RSV) To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

(Eph 6:3 RSV) "that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.

(1 Tim 4:8 RSV) for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

(1 Pet 3:10 RSV) For "He that would love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile;

(2 Pet 1:3 RSV) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

(1 Pet 2:24 RSV) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

I Cor. 11:27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

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## About the Author

Dr. Jerry Stettheimer, Director of Christian Family Services, is a Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and is certified by the Texas Board of Marriage and Family Therapists. He earned a Doctorate in Ministry in the field of Counseling from Harding Graduate School and a Ph.D. from Pacific Western University in Psychology.

He has been in private practice for fourteen years. Dr. Stettheimer has authored numerous articles and conducted seminars and workshops in the areas of addiction, incest, family violence, biblical character training, the motivational gifts and Christian women's issues. Prior to establishing CHRISTIAN FAMILY SERVICES MINISTRIES, he served thirteen years as the Coordinator of Aftercare Services for the Substance Abuse Unit at Terrell State Hospital. He has been married to Mary Stettheimer for over thirty-three years and is the father of two and grandfather of two.

It is Dr. Stettheimer's belief that God's Word provides the answers to life's problems and that difficult family problems provide an opportunity to acquire discipline and develop character. Regular participation in church and home devotionals is strongly encouraged in order to provide a firm foundation upon which character is built. It is through this process that enduring solutions are discovered and strong marriages created.

In addition to this booklet, Dr. Stettheimer has authored the following Character Building Booklets:

PUTTING ASIDE ANGER

A STUDY OF AUTHORITY, RESPECT, OBEDIENCE, AND CORRECTION

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

ADDICTION: CAUSES AND CURES

CHRONICLING GOD'S BLESSINGS

SEX

ADULTERY: CAUSES, CURES, & CONSEQUENCES

THE POWER OF OBEDIENCE

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