

Difficult Commandments

Introduction. “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6:60). This was said by many after Jesus had taught them regarding the bread of life (John 6:53-56). They could not understand it because they were too carnally minded. We do not literally eat His flesh and drink His blood, but we assimilate Him by taking His word into our hearts (James 1:21).

From that time, many of His disciples went home and no longer followed Him (John 6:66). If we do not understand everything at first, it is no reason to quit. Peter made a marvelous statement at that time (John 6:67-68).

As we search the scriptures, we find a number of instances where the will of God was particularly difficult to accomplish. Nonetheless, we see the determination of faithful people who dealt with very difficult commands. They give us strength and encouragement to carry out whatever God requires of us.

I. ***Difficult Commandments In The Old Testament***

A. Genesis 22:1-2.

1. Without murmuring or complaining, Abraham set in his heart to do as commanded.
2. We wonder how he may have felt when he was questioned by Isaac (Genesis 22:7).
3. Abraham was ready to carry out God’s command, thinking that God would take care of the matter (Hebrews 11:17-19).

B. Exodus 14:21-22.

1. God told Moses to lift up his rod and stretch it over the sea so it would be divided. Can you imagine how the Israelites felt walking through the Red Sea?
2. They did what was commanded, trusting in good results (Hebrews 11:29). The Egyptians followed, and were destroyed.

C. Hosea 1:2-3.

1. Hosea was commanded to take an adulterous woman as wife.
 - a) As was expected, she was not faithful to her husband.
 - b) The third child was named, “Not mine.” Evidently, her baby was not Hosea’s.
2. God made a comparison of Hosea’s wife to the Israelites (Hosea 2:5).
3. Later, after Hosea’s wife had been used by her so-called lovers, she was being sold on the auction block as a slave. Hosea was commanded to go get her.

D. Jonah 1:1-3.

1. To go preach to the Ninevites was a hard command because they

- were the hated enemies of the Israelites. The Ninevites were noted for their cruelty to their captives.
2. Jonah wanted them dead! He did not want to preach to them, because if they repented, God would be merciful to them (Jonah 4:2-3).

II. ***Difficult Commandments Of Jesus***

A. Matthew 5:28-30.

1. Here, as in reference to murder, Jesus legislates against the thought which lies in back of the act. He cuts off sin at its lowest root.
2. The essence of all sin is intention. Looking with lust is the same as adultery and those who indulge in it are guilty before God (2 Peter 2:14).

B. Matthew 5:31-32.

1. The law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was given because of the hardness of the people's heart, i.e., to prevent greater evils (Matthew 19:8-9).
2. It is very hard to sit across from a couple and tell them that if they marry it will result in adultery or tell them that the only way to remedy a sinful marriage is to divorce.

C. Matthew 5:38-39.

1. This initial command, found in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21, was given to regulate the decisions of judges.
2. However, the Jews had extended this rule to private conduct, and made it the rule by which to take revenge. We are not to set ourselves against the evil person injuring us (John 18:22-23).

D. Matthew 5:44.

1. The exact meaning of the term "love" is best understood in the light of some examples (Luke 10:35-37; 23:34; Acts 7:60).
2. The feeling which enables us to deal with an enemy after the manner of the Samaritan, Jesus or Stephen is the love for our enemies which is commanded.

III. ***Difficult Commandments Of Paul***

A. Galatians 6:1.

1. There will always be brethren who are weak and/or have sinned in local congregations (Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
2. These brethren should not be left alone, but should be encouraged and built up so that they might be saved. They need to be built up by the Bible (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

B. Galatians 6:9-10.

1. Continually doing good is a mark of a child of God and is following

- the example of Christ (Acts 20:35).
2. In the first century, brethren helped saints who were poor (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; Hebrews 6:10). We need to make sure that we also practice our own private benevolence as well (1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Timothy 6:17-18; Hebrews 13:16).
- C. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7.
1. Withdrawing from the disorderly was commanded to the Roman, Thessalonian and Corinthian churches (Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:4).
 2. It is easy to let this command slide because it involves stress and difficulty. This would become especially difficult when a family member is involved.
- D. 1 Timothy 6:12.
1. Fighting the good fight will entail many difficulties, trials and adversities. However, our perseverance will result in eternal life.
 2. One of the easiest things in the world to do is to quit!
 - a) Fighting is not always easy (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:3-5).
 - b) Persistence is for the strong, not for the weak (Romans 5:1-5; 1 Peter 1:6-9).
 3. The Lord encouraged us to be faithful in His service (Matthew 24:44-51). No one knows when the Master will come, so we must be prepared at all times.

Conclusion. I have never heard of anyone letting the difficulty of learning to ride a bike or to drive a car deter us from the challenge. There is a story about a man standing on a crowded bus. The young man standing next to him asked, "What time is it?" The man refused to reply. The young man moved on. The man's friend, sensing something was wrong, asked, "Why were you so discourteous to the young man asking for the time?" The man answered, "If I had given him the time of day, next he would want to know where I am going; and then we would talk about our interests; and, if we did that, he would invite himself to my house for dinner; and, if he did, he would meet my lovely daughter; and, if he met her, they would both fall in love, and I do not want my daughter marrying someone who cannot afford a watch."

In view of all these examples, are we also determined to faithfully obey God? If we think that some command is too hard, do we think God wants us to simply disregard it? We must meet the challenges as set before us by God. God requires faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Repentance is not always an easy command. When the Lord calls on us to repent and change our lives, let us meet the challenge.