



Obedience

Featuring Jose Campo

National Wrestling Hall of Fame Coach

The United States military has been built upon two very simple, but bedrock principles—respect and obedience. When men and women join the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard, they are automatically expected to show respect for their superiors. And that respect is then translated into obedience, no questions asked.

Great teams are built upon that same concept. The ones that respect their coaches, obey the rules, and follow instruction will have a solid foundation for success. The teams that resist that authority will struggle to meet its goals and may run the risk of complete failure.

Jose Campo faced some very harsh consequences when he strayed from those principles as a high school athlete. As a child, he saw his father Jose Campo Sr., a legendary wrestling coach from New York, as the ultimate authority figure. He obeyed his every command out of love and respect. But as he got a little older, Campo decided he was smart enough to make his own decisions. That led him to take some shortcuts in his career that eventually led to some serious health problems.

While competing at West Point, Campo dealt with injuries that ended his days as a wrestler. He strayed even further from his father's example when he was caught in an embarrassing cheating scandal and was expelled from the academy. That led Campo into a life of drug abuse and shame.

But thankfully, he accepted Christ and turned his life around. Campo followed in his father's footsteps and became a coach, got involved in FCA, and started telling his story. His message to young athletes is about the importance of obeying God.

“God placed a dream in your heart,” Campo says. “You have to follow that dream and not do things to try to please your dad or anyone else. Your first responsibility is to please and obey Him.”

Campo's story is a cautionary tale for what can happen when we don't respect and obey those in authority over us. There are many more examples that can be found throughout the Bible including many in the Old Testament that involved the Israelites. In every instance, whether it was one of the kings or the nation as a whole, grave consequences such as famine, enslavement, and mass destruction were the result of disobedience. This was duly noted in an apostolic letter to one of the early Christian churches:

“But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.” (Hebrews 4:11b/NLT)

Paul wrote something similar to the church in Ephesus:

“Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse those sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey Him.” (Ephesians 5:6/NLT)

So why is obedience so important?

In a family, parental rules are there to protect their children. In the military, authoritative rules are there to prepare the soldiers for battle. On a team, a coach’s rules are there to help the athletes reach their fullest potential. In all cases, the rules are often a way to shield us from harmful situations.

That is certainly the case with God’s commands. Even though we sometimes view biblical rules as a hardship, they are in reality guidelines that will protect us and, when followed, open up the door to His blessings.

But that shouldn’t be our primary motivation. Much like our relationship with our parents or with our coaches, there’s something much greater that should fuel our desire to obey.

“If you love me, obey my commandments.” (John 14:15/NLT)

Obedience isn’t always easy. It requires an attitude of surrender, which that tends to go against our human nature. However, if we truly love God, we will do what He asks us to do, and we’ll find ourselves much better off than if we were to go our own way.

Jose Campo knows this to be true. So do the Israelites and countless others who learned the hard way that disobeying God will cause nothing but trouble whereas obeying Him will keep you on the right path.

Discussion Questions

1. As a kid growing up, did you find it easy or difficult to obey you parents? Can you recall an instance where disobeying your parents caused you a lot of trouble?
2. What are some rules that are meant to protect you? Have you ever faced the consequences of breaking one of those rules?
3. What kind of relationship do you have with your coach? How much do you respect him or her and how does that impact your ability to obey their rules and follow their instructions?
4. What are some of God’s commands that you’ve had trouble obeying? What about those commands make them difficult to obey?
5. Go back and read John 14:15. Why do you think love is such an important part of obedience? What are some tools that you think might help you more effectively and consistently obey God’s commands?

Closing Prayer