

- Is this something that God is calling me to act on immediately?*
- If I don't act now, will I get another chance later?*
- Is it important enough to put someone else's needs first?*
- Is this a teaching moment for someone to be patient and wait for me?*
- What message will I send if I don't act now?*
- How long do I like to be put "on hold"?*

If asking someone to wait, give them an answer as to when you will attend to them (after I finish my phone call, let's set a time to talk tonight, etc.). If it's a major life decision, waiting for the "right time" to obey may never come. Now may be the time God is calling you to drop everything and follow Him.

ANSWERING JESUS' CALL

By Whitney Stager, M.S., MFT

There is a story about how monks in a monastery were to obey the tolling of the bell. Whenever the bell tolled, they had to immediately stop what they were doing and move on to the next task. Even if it meant leaving a sentence unfinished, they were to drop everything and go on. This rule was meant to help monks obey Jesus' call in their lives. When He called, they were to immediately answer; "yes, Lord."

In the Bible, there were people to whom Jesus said, "follow me" but they each found a way to not immediately follow Him. *"And to another Jesus said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord let me go first and bury my father" ... and another said, "I will follow you Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home"* (Luke 9:59-62). Jesus was calling them to immediately follow and obey, instead of finishing other things first.

In our lives today, how would it feel to have someone say, "drop everything you are doing and obey me." Ha! We might either be angry or laugh it off because it would seem so ridiculous. Perhaps even monks stopping their tasks in midstream seems extreme. However, in some situations, dropping everything and obeying is God's call to us.

In today's culture, the word "obey" carries a negative connotation. It can seem "old-fashioned" and may oppose the immediate gratification that we have come to expect. In obeying God's call (or our parents, or our boss) "right now," we might need to wait on doing our own desired tasks.

Part of the root word of obey is "to listen." Obeying God is to listen to His voice and then act on it. What happens when we feel God's tug on our heart? Do we respond immediately? How do we respond when, in our busyness, a family member asks us to drop everything? Are we angry? Do we laugh it off? Do we put them and God "on hold" by saying, "maybe later" or, "let me finish this first?"

How do we listen to God's call? It may mean dropping what we are doing. With parenting, being asked to immediately respond happens on a regular basis. An infant needs to have a diaper changed, a toddler may want you to play with them - "now!" Older children may seek your attention, possibly interrupting a phone call or the paying of bills. It is wise to teach a child to wait patiently until your task is done. However, sometimes it is necessary to show children that they are important, and you can drop what you are doing to attend to them.

Our spouses' needs, other family members, our co-workers' and our boss' needs are also important. Is there a moment where acting immediately provides an extra outpouring of God's grace, and deepens our bond with someone?

There is a balance between always dropping everything to do for others and attending to our own needs. We do not always need to be at another's beck and call. But being aware of God's call and the willingness to follow - even if it's immediately - helps us to learn to prioritize what is important and what is not.

Here are some questions to help you prioritize an immediate response: