

Simon Says

By: David Burruss

Last week at Camp Ida, during one of the Bible classes, the teacher had the kids play Simon Says. You know the game. Someone gives commands like “Simon says touch your head” or “Simon says jump,” and everyone scrambles to obey. But if you act when Simon didn’t say it, you’re out. The whole point is to listen carefully and only do what Simon says.

As I watched, something hit me. This little kids’ game actually teaches a huge spiritual lesson. Because in our Christian walk, we’re playing a very real version of Simon Says. Only in this case, it’s not Simon giving instructions. It’s God. And He’s not playing.

The outcome isn’t just a game. It’s eternal. Life or death. Heaven or hell. And obedience, in this case, is not optional. It’s the very foundation of our faith. God expects us to follow His commands exactly as He gives them, nothing more and nothing less.

Let’s be honest. Most of us don’t love rules. We like options. We want flexibility. We like doing things our own way and in our own time. And that mindset can creep into our spiritual lives.

When God says, “Do this,” it’s tempting to reply, “But what if I do it this way instead?” Or, “It’s not a big deal, is it?” But that kind of thinking is dangerous. That’s where division starts in the church. That’s where confusion in worship and doctrine takes root.

It’s not that God hasn’t been clear. The problem is that we often don’t want to follow what He already said. We try to adjust His Word to fit our ideas. And when that happens, we end up doing things He never authorized.

If we’re honest, the problem isn’t understanding God’s Word. It’s submitting to it. Paul lays out the principle in Colossians 3:17. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

To act “in the name of the Lord Jesus” means to act by His authority. Not ours. Not traditions. His.

This idea shows up again in Acts 4:7, when Peter and John were asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” The Jewish leaders understood something we often forget. If you’re going to do something in the name of God, you need His permission.

Too often, people believe that as long as God didn’t specifically say not to do something, it must be okay. But silence isn’t the same as approval. Think back to Simon Says. If Simon didn’t say it and you did it anyway, you were out. Even if it wasn’t harmful. Even if it felt right.

The same is true in our relationship with God. If He hasn’t commanded it, we don’t have the authority to act. It doesn’t matter how sincere we are. It only matters if we’re obedient.

Does God Really Expect Exact Obedience? Yes, He does. Scripture gives us several examples that prove this.

Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1–2): They offered fire to the Lord that He had not commanded. That's it. They didn't worship idols. They didn't rebel outright. They just did something God never authorized. And they died because of it.

Moses (Numbers 20:8–12): God told Moses to speak to the rock, but Moses struck it instead. Water still came out. The people were happy. But God was not. Because Moses disobeyed, he wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land.

King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16–20): He entered the temple and tried to burn incense, something only priests were allowed to do. The priests warned him, but he went ahead anyway. God struck him with leprosy. His sin wasn't rebellion. It was assuming he had the right to do something God had never authorized him to do.

King Saul (1 Samuel 13:8–14): Saul was under pressure and decided to offer a sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel. He thought it was the right thing. But it wasn't what God had commanded. And because of that one act, Saul lost the kingdom.

Each of these examples shows the same pattern. People did something religious that God had not told them to do. And every time, God held them accountable.

Some people treat obedience like it's a lesson for little kids. Like it's only for Sunday School. But obedience is central to a mature Christian life. You can't say you love God and then ignore what He says. You can't create your own version of Christianity and expect Him to bless it.

And no, good intentions aren't enough. Nadab and Abihu probably meant well. Moses was trying to help. Uzziah thought he was honoring God. Saul believed he was doing the right thing. But none of that excused their disobedience. In the end, partial obedience is still disobedience.

Let's go back to Camp Ida for a second. Watching those kids concentrate during Simon Says was kind of inspiring. They were careful. They were focused. They were trying hard to follow the voice.

That's exactly what we're called to do with God. Colossians 3:17 tells us that whatever we do, in word or deed, must be done in the name of Jesus. That means with His authority.

Jesus says, "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38), so we do.
He says, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44), so we do.
He says, "Worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24), so we do.

We don't do what feels right. We do what God says. Because that's what faith looks like. Let's not be law-makers. Let's be people who listen. People who obey.

Because in this life, the only way to truly win is to do what Simon (God) says.