

KIRBSTONES

ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kûrb'stôn') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed, and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served ¹to hold the material in the roadbed, ²to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and ³to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

01.2026 | #273

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV



One of the most difficult and truly elusive lessons in the Christian life is learning that God rarely explains himself before asking us to act. Human beings crave clarity, logic, confirmation, and a carefully footnoted plan. God, on the other hand, offers direction without disclosure. Scripture teaches us repeatedly that our obedience must precede any clear understanding, both for the individual and for the community of faith.

This direction runs counter to our cultural instincts. We are trained to gather information, to weigh options, and to decide only after we are satisfied with what we have received and how we have processed it relative to our own personal preferences. However, faith is not a risk-management strategy. Faith is trust expressed through obedience, even when the reason is hidden from us.

God reveals throughout Scripture that obedience is *not* a response to revelation; it is the *pathway to revelation*.

Abraham: Go First, Understand Later

¹ The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.' ⁴ So Abram left, as the LORD had told him...
Genesis 12:1, 4a - NIV

God does not give Abraham a destination, a map, or an explanation. God gives a command and a promise. The revelation comes later. Obedience comes first. Only after Abraham leaves, does God begin to clarify what he is doing. Covenant, blessing, legacy, and nationhood all will unfold downstream from obedience. Had Abraham waited for full understanding, the story of salvation history would have stalled at the edge of Haran.

Obedience mattered because Abraham's life was not only about his own fulfillment. God's redemptive purposes for the world were tied to Abraham's willingness to move before he knew why.

Israel at the Red Sea: Step Into the Impossible

¹⁶ Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.
Exodus 14:16 - NIV

As Pharaoh's army closed in and the sea blocked the way forward, Israel did what we often do when we seem to be

trapped between fear and uncertainty: they cried out and complained. God's response to Moses: *Tell them to move on*. Move on where? Into the sea? The waters do not part until Moses raises his staff and steps forward in obedience. The miracle follows the movement.

Deliverance is released only after obedience is expressed. This moment teaches us that God often waits until we exhaust our demand for explanation and choose trust instead. Israel did not need more information. They needed obedience.

For communities of faith, this is especially instructive. God's provision and power are revealed only after a congregation commits itself to faithful action, even when the path and the outcome are unclear.

Jesus at the Jordan: Obedience Before Affirmation

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"
Matthew 3:13-14 - NIV

Jesus comes to John to be baptized. John resists. From a human standpoint, John's objection makes perfect sense. Why would the sinless Son of God submit to a baptism of repentance by John?

Jesus' reply is decisive: "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Only after Jesus submits in obedience does heaven open. Only after he comes up out of the water does the Spirit descend. Only after obedience does the voice from heaven declare that he is, in fact, God's Son, with whom he is well pleased.

Affirmation follows obedience, not the other way around. This moment is critical for our understanding the core of the Christian life. Jesus is not baptized because he needs cleansing. Jesus is baptized to model obedience to the Father, solidarity with the people, and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus does not demand explanation before obedience.

Obedience is not about earning God's favor. Obedience is about positioning us to receive what God is eager to give. Delayed obedience disguises itself as discernment, but in reality, *delayed obedience is simply disobedience*.

Copyright © - 2026
Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min.