

God's Sweet Sixteen – Part 4

Welcome to God's Sweet Sixteen, Part 4, June 4, 2008. In God's Sweet Sixteen in Part 1 we spoke of pray and praise. Part 2 we spoke of seek, surrender, and rejoice. Last week in part 3, we covered repentance. Today in part 4 we will do rest, humble and obey.

Next poster. To rest is to pause, to behold, to gaze at God, to relish and to the point of full satisfaction, all that God has given us in Jesus Christ His Son through Whom we have every spiritual blessing. It's to do so even when we do not understand it all. We're to trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. It's to be peaceful and enjoy letting God be God and enjoy that you're reconciled to God. It's to be peaceful in spite of unanswered questions and in spite of unanswered prayers. It's to peacefully acknowledge the truth of Scripture in the fullness of faith whatever the circumstance as an act of worship to your sovereign God. I'll cover certain key Scriptural points without which it would be hard to rest in God. Deuteronomy 29:29 – The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things revealed belong to us. God is omniscient; we have to handle that. We can never know all that God knows. There'll always be a mystery of God. But we rest in praise that our God is bigger than our minds. Can you imagine resting in a god who is smaller than your mind so that he can be contained in your mind? And we rest in thanksgiving for the truth that He has given us; because one way to assure we would never walk in any of the truth would be to have an omniscient God try to dump it all on us with our finite created peanut brains which would be incapable of handling it.

Next is Isaiah 55:9 (God simply says through the prophet) – My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts. A simple Scripture, but a key Scripture if we're going to rest in God. In fact all of the unrest of man in relationship to God can be summarized in this one verse. The drive in man dating from Adam and Eve and continuing now is over the truth or untruth of this verse. Man tends to consider God as one more source of information. Then man accesses other sources of information. Then man determines that man is capable of determining what the best information is for him to act by. This is self determination; this is self worship; this is rejection of being God determined. This is rebellion and that always causes unrest. That behavior tells God that this verse is wrong; that the thoughts of man are higher than the thoughts of God so that man can judge God and determine when what God says is the higher truth or what man says is higher than what God says is true. No man can rest in God until he fully accepts this verse and walks in it. No man can rest in God until he rests fully that God's ways and God's thoughts are higher than his own. Rest never accompanies rebellion. Rest accompanies surrender. And remember in the Sweet Sixteen, none of them stands in isolation; each one is fed out of and feeds into the other fifteen? Surrendering to being God determined and resting in God can be distinguished but cannot be separated because they are yoked.

Matthew 11:25-26 (This is Jesus Whom we call our Savior; He says) – I praise Thee oh Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth that Thou dost hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes; yes Father, for thus it was well pleasing in Thy sight. As always we look to Jesus, not just as our Savior, but as our model. He's teaching us in this Scripture how to rest in God. Notice that Jesus is praising God the Father for a certain action. He does not praise the Father because the Father explains in full why He took that action. Jesus gives only one

reason for offering praise to the Father; because it was well pleasing to the Father to do it this way. Jesus did not require an explanation. He didn't require understanding in order to accept it. He didn't have to ask why. He didn't suggest a better way. He didn't process all the points of information to determine which source of information might be more likely to be true than what the Father said or did. He did not declare His thoughts higher than the Father's. Jesus simply rested in the Father and offered praise to the Father for doing it whatever way pleased the Father. He accepted the Father's thoughts as higher than His own thoughts. He did not need a list of comparative thoughts so that He could proceed to pick what He self determined to be the best thought. He rested in the Father and taught us to rest in the truth that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

Psalm 46:10 – Be still, cease striving and know that I am God. We used this verse earlier when we talked about surrender. But it has pertinence here; because part of resting in God is to have an inner stillness as you simply know that He is God. As a gyroscope maintains stability, your life then maintains stability around that central point of stillness where you simply know that He is God. That central point then of knowing that He is God is not swayed by doubt, by fear, by circumstances, or by lack of understanding. You simply have stillness where you simply know and simply rest that He is God and that He is God all by Himself..

Isaiah 45:5 (God speaking through the prophet says) – I am the Lord and there is no other. Besides Me, there is no god. And the behavior of man from the time of Adam is to look at what that God besides Whom there is no other says, and then think that he in his audacity can look at what God said, look at other sources of information, and then choose which is the higher source of information in that particular set of circumstances.

Hebrews 4:10 – For the one who has entered His rest (meaning the rest of God) has himself also rested from his works as God did from His. So what works do we rest from? Hebrews 6:1 – Let us press on to maturity not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. No work brings salvation. All works intended to bring salvation are simply dead works. It is all by grace. Immaturity is to prolong repentance from dead works. Maturity is resting from dead works and operating in faith toward your sovereign God Who has declared in His Word that it is all by grace through faith and that through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You can never rest in God if you think that your works put you in that relationship; because if works brought it then works can lose it and there is no room for rest if works can lose it. This is the pitiful state of Muslims because their god has a works based relationship. That's why Muslims live in unrest. They can never have internal rest and they can never have relational rest toward their god. That relational unrest and intrinsic unrest will always be projected into relational unrest with other human beings. The Christian is to rest in his God and specifically in the grace of his God. Then works flow out of that grace. But those works that flow out of grace do not lead to unrest. We do not work so that we can rest. We rest in our God and His grace so that we can work. Only then are our works peaceful and joyful and fruitful because they're flowing out of God and His rest provided through Jesus Christ and Him crucified where He gets the glory rather than us setting on our agenda list of things to do to work at resting.

Matthew 11:28 (Jesus says) – Come to Me and I will give you rest. There's a revelation in that verse for the Christian. It's beautiful to know that Jesus will give us rest if we come to Him. But

coming to Him includes the overlapping behaviors of seeking, repenting, and surrendering that we've already come to discuss in this series. We also need the flip side of that to look at it. That is to say that in any area of unrest, we have not yet completed the process of coming to Him. We are in Him positionally. I'm not talking about salvation; I'm talking about in Him functionally, living a life out of abiding in Jesus Christ and Him crucified; because if we are abiding in Him, He will give us rest. Our persistent unrest will only occur in whatever area that we are refusing to abide in Him. That may be an area where we insist on understanding before abiding; where we insist on being self determined rather than God determined, where we are relying on dead works to accomplish a spiritual pursuit, where we are focusing on self, where we think that our thoughts are higher than the thoughts of God, when we declare that we know a better way. But in that unrest we are called to acknowledge it, but without condemnation. Receive the unrest as a revelation from God about an area related to any of the above. The choice is always the same. Try to rest in self and the power of self, which will always lead to unrest, or quit resting in self and turn and fix your gaze upon Jesus Christ and Him crucified and rest in the grace of that God. When you rest in Him, He gives you rest above all that you could ask or think. That is the rest of God.

The next one of the Sweet Sixteen is humble. Why humble ourselves? Isaiah 66:2 – To this one I will look to him who is humble, who is contrite of spirit and who trembles at My Word. In this one verse are three of the Sweet Sixteen that we're looking at. To him who is humble, who is contrite of spirit (that is the one who is repentant), and who trembles at My Word. And we are yet to cover tremble, but we'll get to it during the Sweet Sixteen. That's the one to whom God will look. That alone is reason enough to humble ourselves before our God. James 4:6 tells us that God gives His grace to the humble. Grace is unmerited favor. Well one aspect of unmerited favor is the empowering presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit that empowers you to be what He calls you to be and empowers you to do what He calls you to do. You function in that power by humbling yourself. All men will be humbled. Philippians 2:9-11 – Therefore God also highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those who are in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We will be humbled. Our only choice is the mechanism and the timing by which it will occur. Luke 14:11 – For everyone who humbles himself shall be exalted and he who exalts himself shall be humbled. So right now as Christians our choice, moment-by-moment, is to either humble yourself or set yourself up to be humbled. Our job is to humble ourselves. God's job is to exalt us. When we try to do God's job, which is to exalt us, then He will do our job which is to humble us. But humble we will be.

Next poster. These concepts are captured on this poster which I've simply titled "Every Knee Will Bow." We will bow on Earth by grace by one of two mechanisms. The first is without requiring a fall to accomplish the humbling. That, of course, can occur even now as a result of our capturing every thought in obedience to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. So we're humbled on Earth by grace without requiring a fall which can occur even while today is yet called today; or we will be humbled on Earth via a fall which, of course, will delay the humbling until the fall occurs. Remember pride goes before a fall. That fall will lead to brokenness; that brokenness will lead to humility; that humility will lead to openness; and that openness will lead to God. And that sequence of events captures my fall after I spent three decades in resistance to God in

self worship without fully realizing it; but then had to have a fall at age 50 in order to come to my recognition that I'm helpless and hopeless apart from my God. That led to the brokenness, the humility that flowed out of that and then to my salvation. Thank you, Lord! It was His good pleasure to crush me. But I delayed three decades because I refused to humble myself and insisted that it be done by a fall. Or we will be humbled by judgment at death in dread and terror at which time it will be too late. I'm speaking here of the unsaved person who goes to his grave in his self worship refusing to humble himself before his God. So our choice is mechanism and timing. But no man has the choice of whether to be humbled before God or not. We will all be humbled.

Many statements can be made about humility. Humility is to be God determined, not self determined. It's to agree with God in all things without argument; because His thoughts are simply higher. It's to know the heart of Jesus Christ; and thus, to know your own heart in the light of the heart of Jesus Christ. Because except for having truth revealed to us in the person of Jesus, we will never know the truth about ourselves. Humility is to know that your value is determined by God, not by your opinion of yourself nor your seeking the approval of others. It's to know that your need is as a sinner before a Holy God who is helpless and hopeless to reconcile himself to God. Humility is to never come before a Holy God, cloaked in your own righteousness whether for salvation or purification. Humility is the condition of the inner man when he's functioning in the fear of the Lord; because if you're holding God in awe and reverence, you will be humbled. If you're not walking in humility, it's simply the revelation you are not holding God in awe and reverence. Humility is to make adjustments to the ways and thoughts of God as opposed to making excuses as to why you should not have to do so.

Next poster. The summary poster for humility is this. In myself, apart from Jesus Christ, I am nothing, I have nothing, I know nothing, and I can do nothing. If you can function in the light of these four Scriptures, then you are walking in humility before your God. I am nothing. Galatians 6:3- The man who thinks he is something when he is nothing deceives himself. I have nothing. I Corinthians 4:7 – What do you have that you did not receive and if you received it, why do you boast? I know nothing. I Corinthians 8:2 – The man who thinks he knows does not know as he ought to know. I can do nothing. John 15:5 – Apart from Me (Jesus says) you can do nothing. So as a created being before a Holy God, if I am nothing, have nothing, know nothing and can do nothing in myself, how can I possibly function in the arrogance and pride of declaring in any circumstance or any moment that my ways and my thoughts are higher than His ways and His thoughts?

Next poster. The last subject for today in the Sweet Sixteen is to obey. Obedience is to do only God's will. Jesus tells us about this. John 5:19 – I only do what I see the Father do. John 14:31 – As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Obedience is to give God pleasure. John 8:29 (Jesus says) – I only do what is pleasing to the Father. Obedience is to love God. It's a fruit of love. John 14:15 – If you love Me, you will obey Me. Obedience is to be easy and not grudging. I John 5:3 – For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome. See, Jesus functioned in the love of the Father; so He not only obeyed, He did not consider the commandments to obey as burdensome. That's why He could say in Matthew 11:30 – My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Obedience is faith. James 2:17 (we all know) – Faith without works is dead. And a major part of works is simply

obedience. Romans 1:5 (even speaks of the obedience of faith) – Wherever there is faith, you will see obedience. Obedience is to be a letter of Christ, a living epistle, to tell a true story of Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 3:3 – Being manifested that you are a letter of Christ written by the Spirit of God. Joyful obedience is to be a letter of Christ that tells a true story, for this is what Jesus did as He joyfully obeyed the Father without considering it burdensome.

So faith in Jesus is the starting point, but it doesn't land there. There is a sequence of Scriptures that leads to this joyful obedience. Hebrews 11:6 – Without faith it is impossible to please God. Well if Jesus always did what was pleasing to the Father, and without faith it is impossible to please God, that means that Jesus (100%) with every thought, word, and deed functioned in faith toward God the Father. Galatians 5:6 – Faith works through love. So we speak of faith as accompanied by works; but the faith that works is faith that works through love. I Corinthians 13:2 tells us how this is totally and completely true. If I have all faith so as to move mountains and have not love, it profits me nothing; because whatever faith that doesn't work through love, is not faith in God. John 14:5 – If you love Me, you obey Me. Then we fulfill I John 5:3 – For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome. So wherever commandments are burdensome, you're not in love. Wherever there's faith that is not obeying, then it is not working through love. Starting out obedience seems burdensome and we often grind it out through clenched teeth while grumbling in the process. But when our faith works through love, we are blessed. Psalms 112:1 – How blessed is the man who fears the Lord who greatly delights in His commandments. So the only way to really function in the fear of the Lord is to delight in the commandments of God; because if you're not delighting in the commandments of God, how can you claim to be in awe and reverence of God? Therefore, joyful obedience is the revelation of your fear of the Lord, your faith in the Lord, and your love of the Lord.

Joyful obedience in the will of God is what Christlikeness is; because that's what Jesus did. And the Bible tells us in I John 2:6 we're to walk as He walked. Part of walking as He walked is to fear the Lord. Jesus always held the Father in total awe and reverence. He stated this very simply. John 14:28 – The Father is greater than I. He's not greater this moment. He's not greater this week. He's not greater this month. He is greater than I. As He humbled Himself as the Son of man, positioned Himself under God the Father, only beheld the Father, fixed His gaze upon the Father, only did what the Father did, only spoke what He heard the Father speak, always did what was pleasing to the Father, always operated by faith in the Father, and so on. That is our model; but it only works when we are in awe and reverence of God, particularly as revealed to us through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Had He not regarded the Father with that kind of awe and reverence, He would not have always obeyed the Father and certainly would not have regarded His burden as light. It's always useful to remind ourselves, where does the sequence begin for joyful obedience?

I'm sure it will stun you to hear it. Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. Why? Because that's the beginning of the revelation of the Holiness of God; and regarding God as Holy is necessary to operate in what's called the fear of the Lord—regarding this God with awe and reverence. And the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, the beginning of understanding, the beginning of wisdom. And the fear of the Lord, therefore, is the only thing that will result in obedience and particularly joyful obedience.

That was clear even in the OT. We think that we're so enlightened. Ecclesiastes 12:13 (in the KJV; Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man. What you do not hallow, you will not follow. What you do not fear, you will not trust; and I'm using fear, of course, to mean hold in awe and reverence. Fear of the Lord is required for the fullness of faith; because how can you have fullness of faith in something which you do not regard with awe and reverence? Fear of the Lord leads to faith. Then comes Galatians 5:6 – Faith works through love. Then comes John 14:5 – If you love Me, you will obey Me. And then comes I John 5:3 – We obey and do not regard His commandments as burdensome. If you regard them as burdensome, you will either disobey or you will give grudging obedience. And neither one accesses the joy of the Lord. And remember rejoicing is part of the Sweet Sixteen.

Next poster and last poster for today just to show how all of this flows on this flow sheet. Love flows through authority which leads to joy and here's how. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of everything in our relationship with God. Fear leads to the fullness of faith. That faith works through love. So the #1 there is the Scripture reference, Galatians 5:6 – Faith works through love. Love then is expressed in part as authority. Why is love expressed as authority? I Corinthians 14:33 – God is not a God of confusion. He is love; but He's not a God of confusion. So love sets up an authority structure to eliminate all confusion at least if man will be God determined and not self determined. Then the authority flowing out of the love of God is exercised gently. Love is patient. Love is kind, and so on. I Peter 5:1-3 (Is Scripture reference #3 where in giving counsel to the elders, Peter writes) – Not as lording it over them. In other words, the authority structure is to be exercised through love and love is gentle, patient, kind, and so on, not authoritarian. Then the authority, operating out of the love of God to eliminate confusion, implemented gently, brings us to the left side of the bottom portion of the diagram where joyful obedience flows back to the gently delivered authority structure which is set in place out of the love of God. That brings us to Scriptures 4 and 5. John 14:5 (Jesus says) – If you love Me, you will obey Me. That's the obedience part. But I John 5:3 says – We keep His commandments and they are not burdensome. That's joyful obedience. Only when you're operating in joyful obedience out of the love of Jesus Christ, not regarding His commandments as burdensome, do you bring joy to all. And the Scripture reference for that is Hebrews 13:17 – Obey your leaders and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account; let them do this with joy and not with grief for this would be unprofitable to you. So if your authority structure set up in the Word of God, flowing out of the love of God is to eliminate confusion to result in joy to all, it only operates that way when joyful obedience flows back to the authority structure.

I Corinthians 13, the love chapter, is to govern all levels of this; because only love accesses joy. If you are not operating in joyful obedience to the gently delivered authority structure received out of the love of God and functioning in the love of God, then you will do one of the following. You will display grudging obedience. In that case the authority structure may still be exercised gently, but there will be no joy and only grief in the authority structure when the response coming back from below is grudging, grind it out, clenched teeth, kind of obedience. Or it will be exercised as disobedience. When disobedience flows back to the gently delivered authority structure, joylessness is again the result; because how can the authority structure function in joy

when the reciprocation coming back is disobedience. Then the flow sheet tends to be the following. When disobedience flows back to the gently delivered authority structure, that gentleness tends to change into authoritarianism, at least heading that direction; because if disobedience flows back, what can you do other than try to up the ante in regard to the energy to try to bring about obedience? Authoritarianism tends to be tried. If disobedience keeps flowing back when authoritarianism is tried, then the authority structure begins to withdraw. Then it becomes apathetic toward the one who keeps insisting on reciprocating disobedience back in spite of the authority structure that's in the Word of God. Carried to its extreme, then, the gentleness changes to authoritarianism, authoritarianism changes to apathy and apathy changes to abdication, none of which brings any joy to the one who's in disobedience, to the one who's exercising in the authority structure, nor to God Himself, Who set up the authority structure to bring us to joy.

To review some of the concepts in summary: God is love. God is also not a God of confusion. Love does not function in confusion. That's why it is not love to leave your children thinking that they can fight and gain the authority structure in the home. Where there is no authority structure, there will be a battle over authority. Anarchy results and anarchy is confusion. To prevent all that, our God Who is not a God of confusion and that God being love, sets up an authority structure. He tells us in His Word very clearly what that authority structure is. He makes it simple for us so we can't miss it. Faith in God is not only to believe in God, it's to believe God which is to take God at His Word. Walking by faith in God includes joyful submission and obedience to God's authority structure as revealed in the Word of God. Failure to do that is rebellion. That means that you are not fearing God, not walking by faith in God, not loving God, not surrendering to God, not resting in God, not humbling yourself before God, and not obeying God as you self determine what you think a better authority structure would be. Since communion with God is the source of joy, is it any wonder that joylessness flows out of that kind of disobedience or grudging obedience? So, may we simply repent of it as we draw from another of the Sweet Sixteen; and not just repent, but repent in full. Repentance in full, remember, has seven stages. It is to end with growing in loving joyful obedience and growing in hatred of disobedience and growing in hatred of grudging obedience. Only that completes the last two stages of repentance. And only going through the last two stages of repentance as you grow in loving the opposite of what you're repenting of, and grow in hatred of what you're repenting of, will bring deliverance. And only deliverance will bring joy to all in the authority structure as established by God. Obedience is in God's Sweet Sixteen; but only joyful obedience will access the fullness of the sweetness of it.

So again my time is up and I thank you for yours.