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# HIS WORD MY WITNESS

*"I have stored your words in my heart."*

*Psalm 119:11*

## Obedience from the Heart

With uncanny simplicity, the Islamic faith outlines five practices that the Muslim is required to follow. They are measurable, observable behaviors: a statement of faith, five daily prayers, giving alms, pilgrimage, and fasting. Six beliefs provide a backdrop to these practices, but the daily life of the Muslim centers around these proscribed activities. They are meant to be constant reminders of one's submission to Allah—submission to his sovereign will, to his infinite knowledge, to his unknown judgments.

An impersonal, unapproachable Allah does not easily engage the heart; distance and mystery surround what one is submitting to and who Allah is. The Hadith, and even the aura of Mohammad himself, provides a connection to the divine. But submission is the inevitable posture in response to an unknowable, immeasurable power and authority, even if the spiritually sensitive heart might be drawn out in respect and honest belief in Allah's goodness. It still remains, at the Islamic Day of Judgment, that submission is the duty of both the saved and the lost.

Submission also exists within the biblical concept of obedience. But Scripture is insistent that submission is not the only, or even the primary, response God seeks from us. For Him, the mere technical compliance to His requirements is imperfect—maybe not even obedience at all (Luke 11:42). The response He's looking for always involves more than behavior. It always reaches deeper than just external activity. It is opening of my heart to the love that pours out of His heart. Why do I obey Him? I trust His love.

One of the most touching explanations of obedience that Scripture provides is set within the covenant relationship that God offers each of us. He gives Himself fully to us. He accepts our past burdens, our present needs, even the prospect of our eternity. To accept what He's provided is to enter into that life-protecting, life-encompassing love and to live within the safety of the principles by which His universe exists.

This covenant of His, this promise that was sealed by all that heaven could offer, is grounded in love. God is touched by my shame, heartbroken by my separation from Him. He refuses to let me stand alone, to be cut off from life and future. He provides help for my helplessness, honor for my shame, provision for my needs. To accept such love is to honor the One who loves so well.

*"So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—then I will send rain, . . . provide grass, . . . you will eat, and be satisfied."*

Deuteronomy 11:13

But this isn't just a transaction of obedience in return for necessities. God longs for relationship; He makes Himself available so He can be known. Obedience is there, He promises to provide, but those are the effects of the relationship, not causes. Results, not reasons. He has painstakingly revealed Himself in a language and setting I can understand because He wants me to know and love the One I am obeying.

*"O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—  
you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way."*

II Chronicles 6:14

The full meaning of His covenant of love is deeper than I can comprehend. It certainly is more than I can explain to someone who has never known Allah to relate or love. But the testimony of my life and witness exposes the response that not only shows the obedience of love God has drawn from me, but the love I am free to give to others:

*"Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." 1 John 4:11*