

What Outlandish Obedience to Holy Spirit Looks Like

A woman in mid-Michigan had just begun to listen for the voice of God while she prayed. Driving home one day, she felt something in her spirit say, "Stop in the 7-Eleven and go stand on your head next to the pop machine."

Was that God? Then she heard that internal voice again, "Stop in the 7-Eleven and go stand on your head next to the pop machine."

By now she could see the 7-Eleven, but she was determined to continue on her way home. God didn't make insane requests like that, especially not to people like her. Old Testament prophets and ascetic Nazarenes, maybe—but not normal people.

This time, the nudge had urgency. "Go back to the 7-Eleven and stand on your head next to the pop machine."

She turned her car around and parked in front of the 7-Eleven. There were no other cars. At least no one would stare at her, she thought. When she entered, she saw a young man standing behind the counter. The woman wished that he would go into the back room to stock some things. She walked over next to the pop machine, stood on her head, and—nothing happened.

The woman began to walk out when the young man behind the counter stopped her. "Excuse me, why did you just do that?"

OK, how does one explain this in a spiritually relevant way? "Ah, yes, I was driving home, communing with the God of the universe, the Maker of heaven and Earth, and He said to me, 'Oh, woman of faith and power, go thou to the 7-Eleven and stand upon thy head by the pop machine!'" Does that sound normal? Does it sound sane? Does it even sound like God? No, it sounds stupid.

She told him to please just forget about it. "I'm sorry to have bothered you. I'm a little embarrassed. I think I'll just leave."

He insisted, "No, wait, I have to know why you did that." Then he pulled a gun out from under the counter. "A few minutes ago, I had this gun in my mouth. My life isn't worth living, and I was going to kill myself. At the last moment, I gave God one more chance. I said, 'God, if You are real, why don't You send somebody in here to stand on his or her head by the pop machine?' So I really need to know why you did that. Could you tell me about your God?"

So was that God? How do you know if it was God? Would you have obeyed?

Learning to Trust God

My family (Isaiah) has heard about and seen some pretty amazing miracles that happened after people obeyed God's voice. The willingness of people to follow through on the direction of the Holy Spirit allowed God to work in their lives or in the lives of others in profound ways.

In one instance, God told a young woman, "Give the Kallmans bags of frozen chicken." Back then, my family didn't have much money, and we had very little food. I remembered feeling frustrated. My family had tried to follow what we heard from God. *Why wasn't He blessing us?* we wondered.

That night, my family had just sat down to a humble dinner of seasoned rice when they heard this woman knock at the door. According to Dad, no one in our family had ever met her before. She handed the food to my dad and said that she had been told in a dream to give us food. Although she knew that our family lived in the general area, she had no idea which road we lived on, much less in which house. She had gone from door to door asking people if they knew where she could find the Kallmans. Someone eventually told her.

My family praised God for His provision and thanked the woman before she left. I am almost sure she had a moment or two during her search for our house where she questioned whether she had really heard God's direction.

Crazy? Absolutely. But it was part of God's provision for my family. I know I'm glad that the woman listened and pushed through her own discomfort to obey God. Now she has more reason to trust in the voice of the Holy Spirit and have confidence in God's provision for her life because she saw the result of her obedience. Everyone is blessed, everyone is encouraged, and everyone is built up in his or her faith. And we ate chicken for a month.

This is the crux of listening prayer. If we pursue God and His voice to gain direction and guidance—and then ignore what He gives—we are at risk. His expectation is that, as servants, or more deeply as friends, we will obey. It is not even a question.

Living Stark Raving Obedience

Think about some of the things God said to people. He asked them to do some remarkably stupid things by human standards.

- “Build a huge boat in your yard. I know you don't know how to do it, but I'll show you” (Gen. 6).
- “Pick up everything you own and leave town. I will tell you where you're going when you get there” (Gen. 12).
- “Kill your son. Wow, you were really going to do that, huh? Well, don't kill him. I wanted to test your faithfulness” (Gen. 22).
- “Walk up this mountain during an earthquake” (Ex. 19).

And it was not limited to the Old Testament. Acts 8:26-40 tells the story of the Apostle Philip. God told him to walk down the Gaza road into the desert. Do you think Philip had a schedule that day, things to do, people to see, ministry to perform? I'll bet he did. But when the Holy Spirit told him to

go, he went.

Out on his stroll into the desert, the Holy Spirit directed Philip to stand next to a chariot. Philip heard an Ethiopian eunuch, the Queen's treasurer, reading a passage out of the book of Isaiah in the chariot. The eunuch said, "Who can explain this to me?"

And Philip said, "Oh, that would be me." Philip began to tell the man of how this passage spoke of One chosen by God to redeem the world. This promised One, the Messiah, had come, and His name was Jesus. Right then and there, the eunuch accepted Christ and Philip baptized him.

Let's put this story into a modern context. Imagine that you wake up one morning, and you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit tell you to go to stand on a busy street corner in your town. Does that sound like God? It sounds kind of strange, right? OK, imagine you've obeyed and now the Holy Spirit tells you, "Walk up to the stretch limo and knock on the window."

Philip's actions centuries ago might have seemed stupid or irresponsible when he obeyed the Spirit's direction. But he knew it was God, and his obedience caused widespread change, with the gospel going to nations outside of Philip's "comfort zone." We can see the ripple effect in our own day because he acted in stark raving obedience.

Isn't that what you want for your life, to have an impact that lasts hundreds of years? If you listen to God's voice and obey, the results are supernaturally powerful, even if you don't see them in your lifetime.

People like Abraham, Noah and Philip must have built a relationship with God beforehand, an established legacy of blessing and miracles through listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and obeying.

In Matthew 17:24-27, some tax collectors from the temple ask Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, if Jesus plans on paying the temple tax. This put Peter in an awkward situation. Jesus hasn't yet paid the tax. Jesus tells Peter, "Go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Doesn't that strike you as odd? I would have thought that Jesus had gone out of His mind. But what did Peter do? He obeyed. That is stark raving obedience.

'Do You Have Bibles?'

Clive Culver, former head of World Relief, was in Iran on a trip visiting some underground pastors and churches. A pastor shared with Clive what had recently happened to his church through God's direction. They had a few Bibles come in, and they wanted to deliver them to a house church in a mountain village outside of Tehran, Iran. So they boxed the Bibles up, put them in a car and asked a couple of young men to deliver them.

It's sort of dangerous to drive around Tehran in broad daylight with the back of your car loaded with Bibles, since the government there puts you in jail for that type of activity. So they left at 5 in the morning the next day to make the journey.

As they traveled through the city they came to a spot where the car seemed to brake. The steering wheel made a hard right turn, and they went slamming around a corner and hit a curb. They thought something major in the front end had snapped.

As they got out to inspect the car, a man approached them. He asked them if they had Bibles. They did not know him and were not about to share information regarding illegal material with a complete stranger. They talked a little about the car and kept on looking for the problem.

The man once again, this time more forcefully, asked them, "Where are the Bibles?" This time one of the young men carefully asked him why he would think that they had Bibles.

He said, "I am part of a small house church up the mountain on the other side of Tehran, and we do not have a Bible. It makes it very hard to learn more about Jesus. We asked God to give us a Bible. Last night I had a dream that an angel came and told me if I would come down to this corner at 5:00 this morning that the Lord would give me Bibles. It is 5:00; you have Bibles."

The young men said, "Yes we do."

Because that mountain villager listened and obeyed, the request of his house church was fulfilled supernaturally in a land where following Jesus can lead to death. And on top of that, it increased the faith of the young men transporting the Bibles.

When God calls you to do something, and then you do it, what does He do? He blesses you with provision, joy and peace. Most importantly, He fills your life in every corner with His presence, because now you're living the life He always intended for you.

Close, intimate, heart-to-heart, friend-to-friend. {eoa}

Isaiah Kallman is a worship leader and experienced speaker to young adults and high schoolers. His father, Ted Kallman, is a lay prayer leader and speaker at prayer and healing conferences (). This article is excerpted from their book *Stark Raving Obedience*, available at .

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