

Transform Practices: Obedience and submission (Self-denial)

Here is a selection of practices to that you may find helpful as you seek to walk in obedience and submission to Jesus. These are just examples, invitations to 'have a go'. Some may resonate more with you, others may not. Make any changes you want! The key is to find what works for you; a practice of obedience and submission that helps you to deny yourself in the pursuit of true life.

PRACTICE 1 – 'SUBMIT YOURSELVES THEREFORE TO GOD' (JAMES 4:7)	
	Here is a list of some practical steps you can take to walk in a posture of submission to God throughout your day.
1	<p>Begin the day by submitting yourself to God in prayer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a moment when you first wake up to sit and be still and submit your day to God. • You could pray the Lord's prayer, pausing at 'your kingdom come, your will be done' and asking for his will to be done in the specific things in your day ahead. • Pray a quick simple prayer like 'this day is Yours.' • Or pray the longer 'Prayer of abandonment' (See Practice 2)
2	<p>Get to know God's word and submit to it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You cannot say yes to Christ's way if you don't know what it is • When we read the word, we are making a statement of intent – to bring ourselves under God's authority. • As you read the word, pray 'Lord, I submit myself to this word and to your way today.'
3	<p>Get to know yourself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To say no to ourselves and yes to Christ we need to be able to discern between his will and ours, our flesh and the Spirit. • Take a look at the characteristics of the old self and those of the new self that Paul lists in Colossians 3:1-17. • Be honest (with yourself and/or with someone you trust) about what you need to 'put off' and what you need to 'put on.'
4	<p>Hold your plans lightly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not wrong to plan but it is unhealthy to be set upon the fulfilment of your plans at all cost. • Approach each job or task of the day with an attitude of 'if the Lord wills, I will do this or that.' (James 4:15) • Seek to see every interruption to your day or your plans as an opportunity to die to yourself.
5	<p>Adopt a posture and attitude of service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you set about making your plans for the day, spend a moment asking the Father if there is anyone he wants you to contact and encourage today or seek to bless and serve in some way. • Create enough space in your daily schedule to have time to meet a need, should you come across one.
6	<p>Return to God at each moment of transition in your day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As you finish one task or meeting or piece of work, take a moment to pause before you head into the next thing. • Give thanks for what has gone before, even (or especially!) if it didn't go according to your plan. • Submit the next thing you are going to do to God and ask him to have his way.
7	<p>Reflect back at the end of the day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the Holy Spirit to show you (if it isn't obvious) any area of your day, either in action or attitude, where you allowed your desires to be paramount over Christ's or other people's. Also celebrate those decisions you made to deny yourself. • Bring your failures and fleshly desires to the cross and find mercy

PRACTICE 2 – A PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

Pray the following prayer at the start of each day:

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands, do with me what you will.
 Whatever you may do, I thank you: I am ready for all, I accept all.
 Let only your will be done in me and in all your creatures.
 I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands, I commend my soul;
 I offer it to you with all the love of my heart;
 For I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself:
 To surrender myself into your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence.
 For you are my Father.'*

PRACTICE 3 – SUBMISSION TO SELF AND SUBMISSION TO CHRIST

The table below shows a list of attitudes / fruit of the 'self' and what submission to those desires look like in the reality of our lives. The corresponding column shows us what denial of self and submission to Christ looks like in each area. Go through the list and identify the ones most relevant to you, then each day take one and pray through it, asking God to change you.

Area of 'self' I need to deny	What 'submission to self' looks like	What 'submission to Christ' looks like
Self-glory	I am doing things for my own ends	I am doing things for the love of God
Control / Pride	I fight against the Lord's discipline	I welcome the Lord's discipline
Control	I want to go my own way	I am submitted to God's way
Self-gratification	My actions are motivated by what profit I may gain	My actions are motivated by what may be useful or helpful to others
Recognition / approval	I am eager to receive promotion, recognition, and reward	I am content to be overlooked and unrecognised
Approval / Fear	I fear shame and contempt	I am willing to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus
Self-indulgence	I love luxury and leisure	I cheerfully welcome work
Comfort	I focus on temporal things	I focus on eternal things
Approval	I am angered by criticism	I am at peace when criticised
Covetousness	I grieve the loss of material possession	The loss of material possessions does not move me
Selfish desire	I am greedy and grasp more readily than I give	I am kind and generous and shun private interest
Worldly desire	My heart inclines towards worldly things and is restless	My heart is drawn towards God and at rest
Worldly comfort	I seek comfort in outward satisfaction that will gratify the flesh	I seek comfort in God and pleasure in His supreme Good
Reputation	I act for my own gain and interest, praise and favour.	I seek no worldly return
Approval	I flatter those whose approval I seek and praise only those who are like me	I favour the poor rather than the rich and seek relationship with the honourable rather than the powerful
Recognition	I grieve success and fruitfulness in others	I celebrate success and fruitfulness in others
Self-indulgence	I am quick to complain of need and hardship	I bear poverty and loss with courage
Self-sufficiency	I struggle and strive on my own behalf	I refer all things to God
Self-promotion	I am arrogant and presumptuous	I do not exalt my own opinions before and above others
Self-validation	I am curious to know secrets and hear news	I do not care for gossip
Self-promotion	I love to be seen in public	I love to be alone with God
Anger	I am quick and rash with my words	I am slow to speak and quick to listen