

Ep 201. Women's Conference Talk: Obedience



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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 201, Women's Conference Talk: Obedience.

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

201, let's do it. A few weeks ago, I had the privilege and honor of speaking at BYU Women's Conference. It was amazing. I was looking forward to it. I thought it would be amazing, but it was even more amazing that I had imagined it was going to be.

So, I had so many of you message me, Instagram me, email me, ping me in all kinds of ways saying, "Please, please, please share your women's conference talk on your podcast." And I wasn't planning to, but I decided, why not?

The reason I wasn't planning to is I don't know that it will translate onto a podcast the same way. I kind of – the way I write a talk in a situation like that, where I'm with a live audience, I can kind of read the audience and play off of the audience a little bit. Even if the audience isn't participating, it's still a little bit different dynamic and so I structure it a little differently than I do a podcast where it's just me on the mic and you're listening and I don't have that ability to read whether or not you're coming along with me. It's just a different experience, right?

But I decided, that's okay, I'm going to share this here on the podcast with you. I'll probably end up modifying it a little bit, just because the nature of it is a little bit different. But that's okay, you'll get the gist of it. And I was really excited about the way the talk came together and the way people responded to the message, so we're going to do that today.

And if you were there, I just want to thank you for coming. And I've got to say, there was such a sweet spirit there. There was a gentleman who spoke before me. We were assigned the same topic of obedience. And

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he's a stake president in Utah there. And he spoke first and it was, just, it was amazing.

He is pretty opposite of me in a lot of ways, which was perfect. I think that we complimented one another really well and I just really appreciated how he set the tone for that message and really brought the spirit to that room with all the things that he shared, so that was pretty fun.

So, here is my portion. First of all, I have a confession to make. For some time now, I have harbored a little bit of resentment towards Brigham Young University. So those of you listening to this podcast might know that. You might have heard me talk about this before. But for those of you who don't, you've got to hear me out.

I have a pretty good reason. And it was super fun to share this story at BYU. I started it this exact way, admitting that I've harbored a little bit of resentment towards BYU, but here's why. I grew up in Spokane, Washington, as many of you know, where there are just a handful of – or I should say, there were in my neighborhood – just a handful of kids who were members of the church.

And so, let's just say that fitting in was a bit of a challenge. So when I was about 14 years old or so, I created the perfect life plan. The first step of my life plan was to graduate from high school and attend BYU. And while at BYU, I would, of course, meet the perfect man. We would get married around my junior year or so, and then I would finish my degree, you know, just in case something tragic happened to my husband or something, I might need a degree. And after that, I would get pregnant.

Now, I could not wait to be pregnant. I thought, oh, I'm going to be glowing and I'm going to get to dress a baby bump and it's just going to be so magical and wonderful and I'm going to have lots of babies and be a stay-at-home mom. In my perfect life plan, my husband would have a very high-paying job because that would be necessary to support our lifestyle of date nights and family vacations. And we would live happily ever after.

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This is a brilliant plan, don't you think? So, imagine my surprise when, my senior year of high school, I received a letter in the mail from BYU that said, "Dear Jody, we are honored that you chose to apply to Brigham Young University. After a thorough review of your application, we regret that we are unable to offer you admission."

Well, the letter went on from there, but I won't bore you with it. I'll just say that I was at step one of my life plan and it was already in the toilet. And I dare say that nothing else on my life plan went according to plans after that.

Now, I did meet a great guy and got married, but I didn't get married until I was 30 years old. Let's just say that being pregnant did not feel anything like I imagined it would feel. And I love my husband and kids dearly, but they are not quite how my 14-year-old brain pictured they would be either. So you can see why this was all BYU's fault, right?

Now, I'm not one to hold a grudge, so I picked myself up off the high school floor where I was crying when I read that letter from BYU. I went to Utah State, go Aggies, which I loved. And most of my life, I've actually been a working mom and I've really enjoyed it.

I enjoyed my time in corporate. Later on, I went on to build my own coaching practice, which I've enjoyed. And again, as many of you know, that coaching practice has been, in my definition, very successful and I have this podcast now that's also very popular.

So here I am at this point in my life, nowhere near where I imagined I would be, but in some ways, life is even better than I thought. And I've been able to accomplish quite a bit, I'm happy to say. There's a lot of you who listen to this podcast. Sometimes it blows my mind how many of you listen to this podcast.

Well, needless to say, I hadn't heard from BYU since that letter in my senior year of high school until just a few months ago when a letter came in the mail from BYU and my husband said, "Hey, you got a letter from BYU."

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And I said, "I did? What does BYU want?" And he said, "They want you to come and speak." And I said, "I bet they do."

So, truthfully though, I am so honored and flattered and thrilled that BYU let me come and speak. Kind of view it as I finally am in BYU now, I'm finally accepted. And I was really humbled by the opportunity that they would even invite me to speak.

I'm also really grateful, honestly to the admissions committee in 1993 that listened to the spirit and did not admit me to BYU because I was never meant to go there. It was not the Lord's plan and the Lord's plan trumps my plan every time.

Alright, so what do you think of when you think of obedience? What comes to your mind? I've been thinking a lot about obedience over the last few months since BYU asked me to speak, and I'll tell you, what keeps coming to my mind is that I equate obedience with perfection.

I feel like I should be striving for perfection and that if I were doing that, I would be more obedient. But then I have this conflict that comes up because I know that perfectionism is fear-based and is not healthy. Perfectionism says you shouldn't let people see who you truly are because then they're going to know that you're really a mess.

It says you shouldn't bother trying that thing because you won't be good enough at it or you're never really finished because it will never be perfect. So perfectionism really limits our ability to truly show up in our lives and, most importantly, perfectionism discounts the importance and necessity of the atonement of Jesus Christ in our lives.

So as I planned what I would say to the sisters at Women's Conference, I thought I knew exactly how I was going to address this topic of obedience. But as it grew closer and I continued to prepare, I felt more and more prompted to talk about disobedience.

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Disobedience is inevitable for every one of us. And I want to talk about it today with regards to ourselves and our own choices, but also with regards to the people that we have some influence over in our lives. So I want to begin by talking about shame.

Shame is the enemy of spiritual growth. And shame is one of the main tools that Satan uses against us today. He uses it to keep us stuck in the trap of disobedience. Perhaps you are familiar, if you listen to this podcast, my guess is, you're familiar with the well-known shame researcher Brené Brown. If not, you must go watch her Netflix special, it's amazing.

Brené Brown has studied shame, vulnerability, courage, and joy for many years. And according to her studies, she says that, "At times, guilt can be useful. Guilt says, I'm sorry, I made a mistake, which allows us to correct course and get back on track. But shame, on the other hand, is toxic. Shame says, I'm sorry, I am a mistake."

Shame, according to Brené Brown, leads to behaviors like addiction, depression, infidelity, compulsive behaviors, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts and tendencies, and often a lot more disobedience. And shame thrives and grows in secrecy and hiding. It grows in the darkness. It festers in these quiet unspoken corners.

Now, we also know that shame is a lie because every single one of us is a spirit child of our Heavenly Father. We are 100% lovable and complete and whole. There's nothing wrong with any of us, even though our brains believe otherwise.

Now, sometimes when we disobey, it's what I call an obvious disobedience or an obvious sin. So in this category, I'm going to include things such as substance abuse, addiction, sexual sins, blatant dishonesty, theft, physical or emotional mistreatment of others, et cetera.

These are the types of behaviors that are not only violations of Heavenly Father's commandments, but oftentimes violate the laws of the land or

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would go against most people's morals and values, regardless of their religious beliefs.

So, to the person engaged in these types of behaviors, Satan will say, "You should be ashamed. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints don't do that. Make sure nobody finds out because, if they do, you'll destroy the people you love. They can't handle it and you also can't handle the repercussions. People will never understand. You're a lost cause."

But do you know what the truth is? When you choose to share it – and I don't mean that you need to share it with everyone, you don't need to post it to social media, you don't have to tell it to anyone you're not comfortable telling it to, but if you choose to share it at the right time and in the right place with the right person, then shame will begin to lose its power.

The shame bubble gets a little bit deflated and popped and shame begins to then deflate as a result. Here's what the truth is. The truth is that people do sin, even these types of sins. People break the law and they break marriage covenants and temple covenants and they make moral and legal poor choices, even members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And I'm not saying that we should make this an acceptable norm, but when you believe that something is wrong with you, you become trapped in the shame cycle and you fuel the problem even more. Now, other times, we participate in what I'm going to call more socially acceptable forms of disobedience. This might include things like gossip or jealousy, a sloppy observance of the Sabbath day, yelling at our kids, judging our husbands, not fulfilling our church calling or just having a bad attitude.

These are the types of things that we know we should be doing or think we shouldn't be doing and we even talk about them a little more openly, sometimes even at church. Now, in this scenario, Satan will say, "It's really hard to do better. Haven't you noticed? Everyone does this and you're not better than them. You're not strong or brave. You just keep doing what you're doing."

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Now, this is also a lie. We have been reserved to come to earth at this time when there is more courage and strength required than ever before. And that's why we're here now. Our prophet has told us this many times. You are capable of more. You are capable of doing better and you don't need to do better in order to make you a better person. You're already amazing and whole and complete as you are, but let's do better because we want to achieve a goal.

When I teach goal-setting to my clients, I teach them to set a goal and then make a list of all the possible obstacles to achieving that goal, and then we write a strategy for each one, and then we go after it. Now, when Heavenly Father sent us here to earth, the goal was for us to have experiences so we could become like him, and then to return to live with him.

But there are all sorts of obstacles that might get in the way of that goal, like temptations and our humanness and fear and many other things that exist in our world. So, Heavenly Father wrote a strategy for each one and that's what the commandments are.

When I'm tempted to do something such as watch a rated-R movie that I really want to see, I pause and think about this. I think, yeah, I could rationalize watching that movie and maybe I would be just fine. But I'm not following the strategy that way. And one thing that I'm pretty good at is achieving a goal. You give me a goal and a strategy and I'll go after it every time.

Several years ago, I found myself in a situation where I'd gotten my life pretty far off-track from where I wanted it to be. I was going through a difficult repentance process. I was working with my bishop. I was trying to make things right. And my bishop kept telling me that repentance feels so amazing. It feels like a weight being lifted. And I didn't feel that way.

So I thought, maybe I'm not doing this right, maybe I'm not sorry enough. I was really discouraged and I was really ashamed. One day, I was in Phoenix on a trip for work. So, if you've ever been to the Phoenix airport and rented a car, you know that the rental cars are kept in a basement

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parking garage. And when you pull in to drop off that rental car, then you get on the longest steepest escalator you've ever seen and you take it up to a shuttle bus which then takes you to the airport.

So, I was with about five coworkers. We pulled in and dropped off the rental car and then everyone proceeded to hop onto the escalator. I was the last one in line to get on and I noticed there was a sign right there by the escalator that said, "If carrying luggage, please use elevator."

So, for a moment, I paused and I considered using the elevator, but I rationalized that everyone else had done it and I didn't want to miss my flight home. And I was carrying two roller bags. In one had, I had a really large suitcase with all of my things in it, and in the other, I had a smaller roller bag with my laptop and my work materials.

So pulling these two bags behind me, I stepped onto the escalator and I was immediately pulled down onto my back. I was literally, like, with my legs up in the air, my head pointing towards the bottom of the escalator, and I was just struggling to try to get up for the longest time. I probably struggled and struggled for about 30 seconds, which felt like two hours. All the while, those escalator stairs just kept moving relentlessly beneath me.

Now, fortunately I wasn't hurt, but I was completely embarrassed and in a little bit of shock once I finally got up. At the top of the escalator, my coworkers checked to make sure that I was okay and then they tried not to make me feel worse, but it must have been quite a scene to watch. And I can't remember a time I've been more embarrassed on my life.

So I got onto the shuttle bus to head to the airport and started just replaying in my head what had just happened. I kept asking myself, what went wrong? And then suddenly, I saw it, like I was watching a scene in a movie.

Those two roller bags that I was pulling behind me were wider than the entrance to the escalator. So while I was able to step on and get on, those bags didn't fit through. And because I was holding tight to them, I got pulled down.

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And in all my struggles to get up, it hadn't occurred to me to let go of those bags. Every time I started to get up a little bit, the bags being still stuck in the entrance pulled me down again. So I was like a water-skier being dragged behind a boat that's still holding onto the rope and you're like, let go.

So once I saw this picture in my head of what had happened, sitting there on that bus, I suddenly felt the spirit pierce my heart. I thought about this repentance process that I was going through in my own life. I thought about, yes, I had been disobedient and yes, I had fallen. But in that moment, I knew that Heavenly Father had forgiven me the moment I decided to repent.

I was the one holding onto the baggage of what I'd done. I was replaying it in my mind. I was telling myself that good people don't do what I'd done. And if I wanted to get up and move on, I was going to have to let it go. I needed to get up and move up the stairs from the dark basement and head up to the top where there was light and the rest of my life waiting, and I did.

Now, I want to take a moment to talk about the people that we have influence over in our lives, namely our children and our other friends and family and ward members. So if and when someone chooses you as the person they confide in about their disobedience, the way that you respond to that matters.

And we have two choices for how we'll respond. We can respond with shock and worry and fear and offer them reinforcement for their shameful thoughts, or we can respond, as the savior did to the woman taken in adultery when he said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more."

Now, I think that our intentions are good with our loved ones, but I think that we have a lot of room to improve in this area. We have to be calm and understand that nothing has gone wrong. And if I thought that us freaking out and being worried and upset was useful for our children's spiritual development or our own, then I would say, let's keep doing that.

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But in my experience of working with thousands of individuals, it's not useful at all. It doesn't motivate our kids to stop sinning. It only motivates them to do a better job of hiding it from us.

And remember what we know about hiding; that's where shame thrives, which perpetuates the behavior. And in addition to perpetuating shame, according to the experts, what begins as a bad habit can become an addiction when there is secrecy and hiding around it.

Now, truthfully, I sometimes wish I could control my children's agency. I feel like I should be the one to decide what they do and how they turn out. Them having agency kind of seems like a terrible idea. But then I realize that that's what Satan wanted in the preexistence. That was not the Lord's plan and it was never Heavenly Father's plan. He sent us here to earth and he said, "Try to keep the commandments." But then under his breath he said, "They're going to mess it all up."

And then he gave us a savior to compensate for that. And our greatest opportunity right now is to be there for our loved ones who are struggling due to choices they have made. We can respond with, I love you, we will get through this, you are not broken.

Earlier this year, I received a letter from a woman who listens to my podcast. She told me of a childhood and later on a marriage filled with physical and verbal abuse. She told me of occasions from her childhood where she was terribly violated and never told anyone, believing that it was her fault for being too stupid.

She told me how, later in life, she engaged in a lot of drinking and promiscuity to numb the pain, followed by attempts to return to church and then back to drinking and promiscuity again. She said to me, "Jody, I have felt so worthless for so many years. You say that we can think about our lives in any way we want to, but how can I possibly make this a positive story? I am 68 years old and some of the things that happened to me I have never told a soul."

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I responded to her email and I invited her to the Ask Jody Anything call that I offer for free. I told her that she could come to this call and I would address her question, keeping her anonymous, and invited her.

On the call, here is what I told her. I said, "All of the things that have happened in your past are in your past, even the mistakes you have made are in the past. Nothing is wrong with you, my friend. Shame is a lie that you've been believing for far too long. I'm not suggesting that you want to believe you had an easy life or that you did everything right, but you're allowed to believe anything you want. You could believe, none of the abuse I experienced had anything to do with me. It's in the past and I give it back to those perpetrators. It was about them in the first place. It was never about me. I'm done carrying it now. I give it all back to them.

You could also believe, I'm a human being living a human life and I've done the best that I could. I love me. I love my past self who made many mistakes and I love myself today. I did the best I could, even though some days my best was nowhere near who I want to be. Heavenly Father loves me today and he never stopped loving me. I am worthy of the atonement and this story does not define me. I'm an amazing strong person because of the things I've endured and the mistakes I've made and I can handle this now any way I choose. I can develop a relationship with Heavenly Father and I can stop thinking about the past and instead focus on the future I want to create."

So that is what I told this woman and I didn't know if she was there on the call to hear that or not, so later that day, I emailed her a replay of the call and just let her know that I'd addressed her question and that she was welcome to listen if she'd like.

The following day, I received an email from her and it read, "Dear Jody, thank you so very much for the email letting me know that you addressed my questions. I listened, and must say, cried and cried, not really tears of hurt or anger. I'm not able to put into words exactly why the tears. I listened and listened again and then listened again and took many notes. All in all, I listened and cried and took notes for almost four hours."

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The reason that this woman was so affected by this is because she'd been growing a bubble of shame around herself for so many years. She'd been believing the lie that something is wrong with her, that she is damaged or that she is not good enough. When she shared her story with someone who didn't react with shock or judgment, it put a hole in that shame bubble and it began deflating, which was an overwhelming feeling to her.

I want to end by telling you something important. I want to tell you that Heavenly Father loves you. He loves you and he loves your loved ones. And the desire to control our loved ones is not of him. It's Satan's way of destroying marriages and families and individuals. But we can rise above.

We can up our faith in the Lord, even if the person we love is engaged in disobedience their entire earthly life. We know that this life is only a tiny blink in God's eternal plan. As we strive to be the women that we want to be and to treat others with love and respect and to just guide and teach and love them all, we have nothing to fear. I believe this with all my heart and I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Thanks for joining me on today's episode, you guys. I will be back next week with another episode. I'll see you then, take care, bye.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

Come to the call and ask me a question anonymously or just listen in. Go to jodymoore.com/askjody and register before you miss it. I'll see you there.