

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.

Thank you so much, President Crandall, for inviting the spirit into this room and I'm so humbled and honored to get to speak with you. President Crandall and I had not met until today, but I know that the Lord had a hand in us being able to speak together, as I was really touched personally by a lot of things that you had to say, so thank you for that.

I have a confession to make to begin with. For some time now, I've harbored just a little bit of resentment towards Brigham Young University. But let me tell you why – I think you'll see I have a good reason. So, I grew up in Spokane, Washington, where there aren't a whole lot of kids who are members of the church. So let's just say that fitting in was a bit of a challenge.

And so, at about age 14, I created the perfect life plan. It was going to start with me graduating from high school and then attending BYU. And at BYU, I was going to meet the perfect man and we would fall in love, we would get married about my junior year of college. He would, of course, finish school, and I would finish school, you know, just in case something tragic happened to him one day. And then I would start having babies.

I couldn't wait to be pregnant. I thought it would be so exciting just to dress a baby bump and I would just be glowing. And then, you know, I would just have a bunch of kids and be a stay-at-home mom. My husband would have a great job because that would be necessary to support our lifestyle of frequent date nights and family vacations. And we would live happily ever after.

This sounds like the perfect plan, yes? So imagine my surprise when, my senior year of high school, I got a letter from Brigham Young University in

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the mail 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, we're only on step one of my life plan and it was already in the toilet, so that was not good news. And I dare say that nothing else on that plan – it looked more like President Crandall's graph up here. I did meet a wonderful man, but not until – I didn't get married until I was 30. Let's just say, being pregnant felt very different than I expected. My children are amazing, but again, different than I expected.

You can see why this is BYU's fault, right? So I, though, am not one to hold a grudge. I picked myself up off the high school floor where I was balling when my mom called to give me the news, and I went to Utah State. Do we have any Aggies in the house? I thought so...

It was amazing. I loved Utah State and I love my husband and I love that I didn't get married until I was 30. And I've enjoyed being a working mom most of my life. I've enjoyed my experience in Corporate America and later went onto start my own coaching practice. And I have a podcast that, I don't know why, my dad's like, "Why do people want to hear what you have to say?" I'm like, "I don't know. There are a lot though, right?" So I feel like I've been pretty successful in my life, and I hadn't heard from BYU until just a few months ago.

My husband is an alumni of BYU, so when a letter came in the mail, he didn't look very closely, he assumed it was for him. He opened it, he said, "BYU sent you a letter." And I was like, "What? What does BYU want?" He said, "They'd like you to come and speak." And I said, "I bet they would."

But in all honesty, I am so grateful and humbled to be speaking here at BYU. I feel like I'm finally accepted. And I am also truly grateful, in all honesty, to the admissions committee at BYU back in 1993 for listening to the spirit because I was never supposed to go to BYU at that time and the Lord's plan really does trump our plan, as President Crandall said, every time.

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I want you to ask yourself, for just a moment, what you think about when you hear the word obedience. I have been thinking about this word ever since I got this assignment and thought, "Are you sure that's what you want me to talk about?"

When I hear the word obedience, I think about striving to be more obedient. As I pictured speaking to all of you, I thought, "I think the women who take time out of their schedule to come to Women's Conference are already pro-obedience." But when I think of obedience for myself and try to reflect on it, what I start thinking of is perfectionism, like I need to be more obedient, I need to be more perfect at being obedient.

And one of the things that I know as a coach who gets to work with a lot of people going through all different things in their lives is that perfectionism is not healthy. Perfectionism is fear-based. Perfectionism says, "I should hide," because none of us are perfect and we all know that. So it tells us to just hide because otherwise people might find out that we're really kind of a mess and we shouldn't bother trying things because we're not going to be good enough, and we never get to finish anything because it's not perfect.

And so, for a lot of reasons, perfectionism isn't healthy and, most importantly, it discounts the importance of the atonement of Jesus Christ in our lives. And so, as I got closer and closer to delivering this talk, I thought I knew exactly what I was going to say, but the closer it got, the more I felt prompted to talk a little bit about disobedience today, because disobedience is an inevitable part of our human experience and we can get stuck in the trap of disobedience, or we can get back on track and back to obedience when it does happen.

So I want to begin by talking about shame. Shame, in my experience in the work that I do with so many individuals today, shame is one of Satan's main tools that he uses against us today. It is the enemy of spiritual growth. Shame is the belief that something's wrong with me, and it's a belief that every healthy human on the planet has, and yet, we all know, logically, that it's not true at all. There is nothing wrong with us. We're all spirit children of

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our Heavenly Father. We're all amazing and 100% lovable and worthy of connection and goodness.

The scriptures tell us that the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. And while we know this intellectually, there's still that human part of our brains that questions, "Yeah, but I think something might be wrong with me." And Satan knows that and uses it against us.

I'm going to refer to really well-known shame researcher Brené Brown, who you may be familiar with. She talks about the difference between guilt and shame. Guilt, she says – and by the way, she is a shame researcher, so she has studied shame, vulnerability, courage, and joy for many, many years. And according to all of her research, guilt can be useful because guilt says, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake."

But shame is always toxic. Shame says, "I'm sorry, I am a mistake." And guilt propels us to get our life back on track, to repent, to start choosing the right again, whereas shame says, "You're no good." Shame, according to the research, contributes to all kinds of disorders, such as addictions, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual sins; all the kinds of traps that people get stuck in, in this lifetime, are fuelled by shame. And shame loves secrecy. Shame grows in hiding. It thrives off of secrecy.

So I want to talk for just a minute about disobedience in two different areas. I want to talk about how Satan tries to keep us stuck when we have disobeyed personally. And then I want to talk about it with regards to the people that you have influence over in your lives.

So, the first thing I want to touch on is what I call obvious disobedience, or obvious sin. This includes maybe things like substance abuse, sexual sins, blatant dishonesty or theft, physical and emotional mistreatment of others; the kinds of things that are not only violations of Heavenly Father's commandments, but they violate, many times, the laws of our land. They go against most people's moral values regardless of their religious beliefs.

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These kinds of sins, Satan will say to the sinner, "You should be ashamed. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints don't do that. You should make sure nobody finds out, because if you do, you'll destroy the people you love and you'll never be able to handle the repercussions. People will never understand. You're a lost cause."

Now, here's the truth; because shame thrives off of hiding, things like this need to be shared. And I don't mean they need to be shared with everybody. They don't need to be shared on Instagram or in a very public way, but to the right person at the right time in the right place, sharing something like this immediately bursts the shame bubble that's growing.

And maybe that's a Bishop, maybe that's a family member that you trust; someone who can respond with empathy and compassion. Because the truth is, sisters and brethren, that people do sin; even these types of obvious sins.

People break the law, they break marriage covenants, they break temple covenants. They make moral and legal poor choices, even members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. And I don't say that to suggest that it's an acceptable norm, but when you believe that something is wrong with you and nobody else has done anything as terrible as you have, you get yourself stuck in the toxic trap of shame, which is exactly what Satan wants, and not what Heavenly Father wants.

Other times, we have these little bit more socially acceptable forms of disobedience. This might include the things like gossiping, jealousy, sloppy observance of the Sabbath day, yelling at our kids, judging our husbands, not magnifying our callings, having a bad attitude; things like this that we all agree that we should do or we shouldn't be doing, and we even talk about it a little more openly, maybe even in a church setting.

So shame looks a little different in this situation. Satan's main tool in this one is to say, "Listen, it's really hard to keep that commandment. Notice how it's hard for everybody. And you're not that strong. You're not better

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than the rest of them. You can't do it. Don't worry, everyone does it. You're not really good enough, smart enough, to be better. It's just too hard."

So, I want to encourage us just to not for this lie. We are strong and amazing. Every single one of us was reserved to come to Earth at a time when we needed an incredible amount of courage and strength, and that is why we're here. Our prophet tells us that all the time. We have it within us to be better. And I don't mean that it will make you better - you're already amazing and worthy of love – but to be more obedient in order to access the blessings that are available to you.

I like to think about obedience because, if my worth is already set, then obedience – I need a compelling reason to be obedient because my mind likes to be like, "Well why?" But this is my compelling reason; I love the idea of setting a goal and going after it.

I teach my clients that the best way to achieve a goal is to set a goal and then to write a list of all the obstacles that might prevent you from achieving that goal, and then to write a strategy for each obstacle and then go get it. And I kind of wonder if, when we decided to come to Earth, when Heavenly Father created this plan for us and the goal was that we have experiences that will help us become more like him and then that we return to live with him.

And then there's all these obstacles that will get in the way of achieving that goal. There's temptations, there's our humanness, there's our desire for instant pleasure and all of the things that happen in this lifetime that make it challenging. Those are all obstacles. And the commandments are the strategies that address every obstacle.

So when I'm tempted to – I remember this happening recently; there was a movie that was rated R that I really wanted to see and I was like, "It's probably not that big of a deal if I just watch it." Satan started to tell me, "Come on." And I remember thinking, "Yeah, but this is the strategy. I don't have to follow it. I might be fine. And I could repent and maybe it wouldn't impact me negatively even."

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That's true, that's possible. But if this is the strategy to help me achieve my goal, do I want to go all in? And I was like, "Heck yeah." Because if you give me a goal, I will go get it. So we have to find a compelling reason.

Now, I, a few years ago – several years ago – was going through a pretty difficult repentance process. And I was working closely with my Bishop. I had gotten my life pretty off track. I was working closely with my Bishop. I was trying to do all the things that I've been taught to do and my Bishop kept telling me that I would know when I had truly repented because I would feel so good. I would feel this relief. I would feel this weight off my shoulders. And I wasn't feeling that.

So I thought, maybe I'm not sorry enough, maybe I'm not doing this right. And I just kept feeling worse and worse. And I went on a work trip to Phoenix. Anybody from Phoenix? Yeah, so in Phoenix – if you live in Phoenix, you'd probably never rent a car at the airport there, but the rental cars in Phoenix are in the basement, way below this building. And I had been in Phoenix for about a week with my coworkers at some meetings, so I had a giant suitcase because, of course, I had to take a lot of different shoes and makeup and things with me.

And I was carrying that in one hand on the rollers, and I had another roller bag with my computer and all my work gear in it. We were in a real hurry because we didn't want to miss our flights, we all wanted to get home. We pulled the rental car into the basement to drop it off, and then there's the biggest escalator you've ever seen that goes up to the shuttle bus that takes you to the airport.

And my coworkers were all ahead of me. They all jumped on the escalator and I was following behind. There's a sign that says, "If you're carrying luggage, please take the elevator." But I quickly was like, "Well, the rest of them got on and I'll be fine." So I disobeyed that sign.

I hopped on the escalator, and as soon as I stepped on, I was pulled down onto my back really quickly. My feet were up in the air. My head was down like this. All my coworkers were up there, like, not sure if they should laugh

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or be afraid. And the escalator was just moving with no mercy whatsoever, stair after stair, and I was trying to get up and I could not get up.

It was probably a good 30 seconds before I got up, which felt like two hours. And luckily, I was not injured, but so mortified and shaken up and in shock. And I go up the escalator and I try to avoid my coworkers and I get on the shuttle bus and I'm still kind of in shock. And I'm replaying in my head, what just happened?

And then I saw it in my head. I realized, I was carrying two suitcases. They were wider than the entrance to the escalator. So when I stepped on, those bags pulled me back and I, in that state, wasn't thinking to let go of the bags. I kept holding on, so I was like a water-skier getting dragged behind the boat and you're like, "Let go." I just kept holding onto those bags.

Finally, the bags shimmied their way into the escalator and that's when I was finally able to get up and move on. And I realized this in my head, I'm like, "How stupid, why didn't I just let go? Why didn't I just let go?" And then, in that moment, I thought about the repentance process I was going through and I felt the spirit say to me, "Why don't you just let go of that baggage? You know, you could just let it go."

And I realized that Heavenly Father had forgiven me already the moment that I decided to repent. But I was listening to that voice in my head telling me that I'm not enough. And I realized, you know, I could let go and stop being in that dark basement, I could just look up and go up to the light at the top of the stairs. And I did.

Now, as sisters, we have a unique opportunity to really influence people in our lives, and I want to talk about that for a moment. If your child or somebody you love comes to you and shares with you that they have sinned in some way, the way you respond matters.

And we have a couple of options. We can respond with shock and worry and fear and we will reinforce the shameful thoughts that they're already having. Or we can respond with compassion and love and trust, like the

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Savior did when he says to the woman who was brought to him taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more."

And I know this is challenging to do because we love these people so much, we want to see them choose the right all of the time. But I think we have room to improve, sisters, on our ability to understand that they are going to make mistakes. Disobedience is part of the deal. Heavenly Father sent us here and he said, "Please try to keep the commandments and be obedient." And then he was like, "They're going to mess it all up. That's why I'm going to send a savior, to atone for them."

And that's true for the people that we love. And listen to me, if thought that you freaking out was going to help your child's spiritual development, I would say, "Let's keep doing that." But, in my experience, it doesn't help at all. It just tells our children, "Don't tell her that again. Just hide it. She can't handle it. We don't want to hurt her. We don't want to upset her." And it fuels the shame. Remember, shame loves hiding.

The other thing we know, according to experts who are much smarter than me, is that what starts as just a bad habit can turn into a full-on addiction when it's hidden. It's the shaming and the hiding and the secrecy that turns something from a bad habit into an addiction. So we want to be careful about how we react and we want to encourage our children to come to us.

My sister and friend and I were talking about this this morning, how challenging it is to teach your children, "Choose the right, don't go out drinking and partying with your friends, don't be promiscuous. But if you do, come tell me about it." I know it's not an easy thing to balance. We need the spirit. We need to rely on Heavenly Father to help us know how to send that message, but it's such an important message to send because the alternative isn't that they're perfect. The alternative is that they'll get better at hiding it when they do mess up.

I wish I could control my children's agency. I really sometimes think, "Why do they have to make their own choices? Why can't I make all their choices for them? Why can't I just tell them the way, it would be so much better if

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they didn't have agency." And then I realize, I sound a lot like Satan in the Pre-Existence when we think that, right? That was Satan's plan, that was not the Lord's plan and it was never Heavenly Father's plan.

Create a safe environment for them to share by responding, when they come to you, with I love you, we will get through this, and you are not broken. Earlier this year, I received an email from a woman who says she listens to my podcast. She wrote me. I won't read you her letter because it's pretty long, but she told me about her life.

She's had a life full of a lot of challenging things. She told me about a childhood and later a marriage where she was a victim of physical and verbal abuse. She told me about a particular occasion 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 drinking and promiscuity to try to numb the pain. She would try to go back to church and she would find herself later returning to drinking and promiscuity. She said this, "Jody, I have felt so worthless for so many years. You say that we can think about our lives any way we want to, but how can I possibly make this a positive story? I am 78 years old, and some of the things that have happened to me, I have never told a soul."

And so I wrote back to her and I told her, "Hey listen, I have a free Q&A call where I answer questions and help people and I would love to have you join me on that call. I'd love to speak to your question."

So, this is what I said. It's all anonymous. I didn't know if she was there or not. But on the call, I said, "Hey, if you're the person that sent me that email, this is what I want to tell you. Everything that's happened in your past is in your past, even the mistakes that you've made are in the past, and nothing is wrong with you. And shame is a lie that you've been believing for far too long. I'm not suggesting that you want to look back and think that your life has been easy or that you did everything right, but you're allowed to believe whatever you want to now.

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And if you want to, you could just believe, none of that abuse I experienced had anything to do with me. It's in the past and I give it back to my perpetrators. It was about them in the first place. It was never about me, and now I'm done carrying it. I give it all back to them.

And you also could believe, I'm a human being living a human life and I've done the best that I could. And I love me. I love my past self who made all of those mistakes and I love myself today. Heavenly Father loves me. He never stopped loving me. I did the best I could, even though my best, at times, was nowhere near who I want to be. I'm an amazing strong person because of the things I've endured and the mistakes I've made and I can take care of this anytime I choose, thanks to Christ's atoning sacrifice.

I can work with my Bishop and others who love me and develop a relationship with Heavenly Father. I can stop thinking of the past and instead move forward to create the future I want to create."

So, I wasn't sure if she was on that call. I can't really tell who attends. So I emailed her later that day and said, "Hey, I spoke to your question today on the call, here's the replay, in case you weren't there, and best of luck to you."

And the next day, I got this email from her, "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."

The reason that that impacted this woman so significantly is because, for so many years, that shame bubble had been growing inside of her and she just told one person who happened to respond without shock or judgment, and it just popped that bubble. And that is what we have the opportunity to do, sisters. And I want to invite each of us to get better at doing that.

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I want to finish with my testimony; two things. Yesterday, we had a prayer meeting before Women's Conference that was a really beautiful meeting that really invited the spirit. And I was sitting next to another Stake President who was going to be speaking. He was a little bit nervous.

He asked me what my topic was, and I said, obedience. And he said, "I wish I would have got that topic." And I was like, "Really? What was your topic?" And he said, "How to be happier." And I literally tried to talk him into trading these topics right there yesterday. He wasn't up for it.

But I think it was such a – I think the Lord was trying to send me a message that me studying this topic was more for me than for any of you, is always the case. And maybe my friend needed to study happiness a little bit. But I'm truly, truly grateful for this opportunity and for just how the Lord's hand works in things like this that are so well-coordinated.

I also want to close by reminding you that Heavenly Father loves you and he loves your loved ones. And the desire that we have to control our loved ones feels righteous, but it's really not of him. It's Satan's way of destroying our marriages and our families and individuals. But we can rise above that and we can put our faith in the Lord.

And 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. And as we strive to be the women that we want to be and to treat others with love and respect and just continue to guide and teach and love them, that we truly have nothing to fear.

I believe this with all of my heart and I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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.

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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.