

Living Lent | March 17

## Obedience

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*Hear, O my people, and I will admonish you:  
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!  
There shall be no strange god among you;  
you shall not worship a foreign god.  
I am the Lord your God,  
who brought you out of the land of Egypt and said,  
“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”  
And yet my people did not hear my voice,  
and Israel would not obey me.  
So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts,  
to follow their own devices.  
Oh, that my people would listen to me!  
that Israel would walk in my ways!  
I should soon subdue their enemies  
and turn my hand against their foes.*

**Psalm 81: 8-14 (NRSV)**

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### Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

The word ‘obey’ can conjure up some fearsome images such as punishment, lack of freedom, and even imprisonment. Obey can truly be a four-letter word to stay away from! But it doesn’t have to be. At first, the Psalm looks like an admonishment for not obeying, but it is instead an invitation to obey God’s word and dream for us. With God, obedience is a doorway to freedom, transformation, purpose, and joy. The Hebrew root of the word obey is ‘shema’ which means to hear. Not only hearing words but also listening, taking heed, and responding with action to what one has heard. (Lois Tverberg). Jesus said to be not only hearers of the word but doers.

(James 1:22).

How do we respond to God's dream for us? What new actions do we take up to live into God's dream? Perhaps what we fear is that we must exhibit some superhuman, radical obedience to live into God's dream. What makes a teenage unwed girl say yes, thy will be done, when she hears the impossible, that she is to be the mother of the Messiah? What makes a stuttering man, with a warrant out for his arrest for murder say yes to a burning bush to return to the very people chasing him to free his people? Are these extraordinary people? Or ordinary people living extraordinary lives?

To be 'radically' Christian simply means to embrace the root of God's dream in us. The divine root is etched into our DNA. This is who we are. Obey, and we become more

authentically who we are meant to be. Are you ready to embrace God's dream for you? Pay attention. Listen for God's dream. Embrace God's dream. Live into God's dream. Obey God's dream! And if you don't think you know it, pray this simple prayer: God, may your dream for me become my life.

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### ***Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ***

Dr. Beth-Sarah Wright, is an Atlanta-based author, speaker and passionate advocate for authentic living. A former college professor at NYU and Spelman College, she currently serves as the Director of Enrollment Management at Holy Innocents' Episcopal School in Atlanta and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Emory School of Medicine. She is married to Robert C. Wright, the Episcopal Bishop of Atlanta and they are parents to 5 children. Dr. Wright is a member of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church, which is the oldest black Episcopal Church in the state of Georgia. In 1880, some fifteen years after the Civil War, a small group of Blacks organized a Sunday School in Atlanta. This small group later petitioned the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia for status as a Mission. The petition was granted, and the Mission became St. Paul's, which held services in an upstairs loft in the West End area of Atlanta. After moving to its present location, today, it continues its ministry with the mission 'to Proclaim God's love, justice, and hope through the witness of generations of resilient faith in Jesus Christ, and the worship and traditions of the Episcopal Church, seeking to make disciples and to draw our neighbors into a relationship of love, strength and hope.'

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