

# Obedience

Pastor Arnold Wong

Grace  
News

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## EDITORIAL

You do not have to look very far to discover the theme of this issue of Grace News: obedience. It is a difficult topic: challenging to write about, hard to read about, and certainly tough to put into practice. Yet it is one of the keystones of our faith. Do read the articles we have lined up to help and inspire you in your journey of obedience.

On page 1 Pastor Arnold reminds us of our motivations for obeying God, while on page 2 you can read about Regina Chung's personal struggle with obedience, as well as understand from Li Shi Wei how to inspire children to obey God. On page 3 don't miss Pastor Oliver's interesting article about the seemingly contradictory idea of joyful obedience.

Other articles in this issue include a write-up by Pastor Bobby on the Tuition Ministry, and an explanation by Cheong Hee Kiat of how the missions budget is prepared. You can also read a letter from David and Gladys, our missionaries in Thailand. There are many photos of recent church activities, plus a book review by Gina Heng, and our usual Children's Corner.

There is something for everyone in Grace News this quarter!

In His name,

The Editorial Team

## "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

In both the Old and New Testaments, there are many examples of God's people obeying the Lord to extraordinary lengths. For example, there was Abraham, who obeyed the Lord and left his home in Haran and later offered up his son Isaac as an offering (Gen 12:1-4; 22:15-18). When Peter and the other Apostles were brought before the authorities and ordered not to teach about Christ, they boldly declared, "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29) What possible motivations could there be for these mere mortals to obey God so wholeheartedly?

The Bible gives us many motivations to obey God. Perhaps we ought to obey God out of a strong sense of gratitude for the grace and mercy received from Him (Rom 12:1). Or perhaps out of a sense of duty that comes from the realisation that as a child of God we ought to live holy lives (Eph 4:20-24). Or maybe it is that insatiable desire to please and glorify God that overflows from a transformed heart when we accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour (Rom 7:22; Phil 1:20). We might be obeying God because of one, or any combination, of these possible motivations. All of these would be good motivations for obeying God.

But there is one particular motivation for obeying God that I would like to highlight – one's love for the Lord. As we come to know the Lord more we cannot help but fall in love with Him more. Knowing His attributes, perfections and love for us, increases our love for Him. The psalmist says it this way, "When I consider your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained (appointed, fixed); what is man that you take thought of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" The wonder of our great and awesome God is that He takes notice of each one of us. Knowing who He is and what He has done for us motivates us to love Him more.

But we need to understand that our love for Him is not some sentimental on and off, up and down kind of feeling. Rather, it reveals itself in concrete acts of devotion, fidelity and loyalty – obedience to His commandments. In 1 John 2:3-5,

(continued on page 2)



# Just Do It!

*A personal struggle with obedience*

*Regina Chung*

Obedience, hmmm. Often a scary word to a Christian, unless we are willing to trust God and see Him come true.

My husband and I had just facilitated a training course, when we heard that a participant had a differing view on a doctrinal point. Unfortunately, this led to a situation tantamount to slander on our personal morality. Even the apology which followed and attempt at reconciliation left me bruised, and feeling that my personal interest was of the least priority.

Next came a process of negotiation with God. I went from, "It's no big deal, there is no need to forgive," to "Why should I?" and finally to, "Okay, God. I give you face. I will try because of you."

I began by praying for the person's family, asking God to bless them. Initially sparingly, later more frequently and regularly. Ignoring the negative emotions, I took on a 'Just Do It!' attitude. Then one fine day, POOF! Literally overnight, God had removed the bad feelings. No more wincing in the presence of the offender, and no more need to forget. In time, I was able to sincerely bless the person and even serve together in ministry. Our two families were able to fellowship together in the community. Certainly, God was glorified.

It was a miracle, made possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit and not by human effort. It was one of those must-have events in a Christian's life that shows that the God we serve is indeed mighty and real. **Ω**

*(continued from page 1)*

NLT, the Bible says, "And how can we be sure that we belong to him? By obeying his commandments. If someone says, 'I belong to God,' but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and does not live in the truth. But those who obey God's word really do love him." Obedience to God's commands becomes a visible outward sign of our love for God.

So how is your relationship with God today? Do you love Him and is that love growing? You can take a reading by examining how much you are obeying and living God's word in your life daily. **Ω**

## Helping Children Learn Obedience

*Li Shi Wei*

Jonan is a young churchgoer whose upbringing is characteristic of the typical primary school-level Singaporean: much of his time is split between school and home. As well as being in the company of his peers, the bubbly 11-year-old also enjoys time at the computer: a preoccupation which he – somewhat sheepishly – concedes is a source of mild annoyance to his parents.

They wouldn't realise this of course, but the challenges that children face, if rather more straightforward than the pressures of work, expenses and relationships which adults find themselves constantly grappling with, are often no less bewildering or difficult to handle, when one frames them in the context of the limited experience accumulated from within their social environments. Yet, across a child's daily routine a prevalent theme emerges which largely sets the tone for what is deemed acceptable in his/her conduct: obedience. In school we are taught to obey our teachers, while at home we are expected to behave likewise towards our parents.

From Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his child Isaac, to Jonah's reluctance to heed God's calling, the Bible abounds with examples of obedience – and disobedience. As these stories form the basis of the Sunday School syllabus, teachers perform a valuable role in crafting a practical approach out of these lessons, and in doing so, lay foundations in these young minds towards forging a lifelong walk with God.

Their youthfulness notwithstanding, for Jonan and his Sunday School classmates there is additional impetus in their continued development: the opportunity to meet together, through weekly lessons for instance, allows for their friendships to develop further. Says Caleb, a classmate of Jonan's, "We learn to follow His ways, and when you ask for forgiveness after you sin, we must put in the effort to repent, and not take things for granted." **Ω**



# Joyful' Obedience?

Pastor Oliver Chia

**"[Jesus] who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2b, ESV)**

Joy and obedience? These are two words that most people rarely associate together. Obedience evokes a picture of dreary duty and submissive behaviour; joy, on the other hand, to many people means doing what pleases them. To obey means at best to stoically press on or at worst to do so resentfully – a reluctant compliance. So how can obedience be joyful? What motivates joyful obedience?

While obedience is the distinguishing mark of all God's servants, the best example is the obedience of God's flawless son, Jesus Christ, as he lived on earth some 2000 years ago. As J I Packer writes, "Jesus' obedience on earth meant positively a purpose and practice of always pleasing his Father by doing his will, obeying his commands, faithfully relaying all he was told to say, and always seeking his glory and honour, that is, that [God's] name would be hallowed and praised." The gift of righteousness of God, that is forgiveness of sins and 'rightness' with God, comes to us through Jesus' perfect obedience learned – that is perfected by practice – in the midst of suffering. By faith when we trust and believe in Christ Jesus, his faultless obedience is attributed to us believers and we are looked upon by God as 'right' in his sight.

**Jesus obeyed  
and endured the  
suffering on the cross  
for the joy that was  
set before him**

This aspect of Christ's obedience also sets for us the standards for Christian behaviour. Obedience for Christians means to imitate God in holiness and Christ in love and humility, subjecting oneself to God's Lordship and His revelation (words). What motivated Christ's obedience? Jesus obeyed and endured the suffering on the cross 'for the joy that was set before him'.

Christ obeyed because of the promise of a future reward! Jesus obeyed to the end, despite the lashing, the abuse, the humiliation, and the pain of taking on God's wrath for the sins of the world, for the sake of the joy of what God had already declared that He would do. The assurance being that God said He was saving a people for Himself through the cross, creating a community of His people, making all things right, and restoring the world to blessedness as it was meant to be – where God Himself will be our God and we His people.

What then should motivate our joyful obedience? It is gratitude for the grace already received through Christ and the wondrous promise of this future reward. This delighting in the promises of God would move us to obedience. May we as Christians demonstrate 'joyful' obedience in our lives. **Ω**



# The Tuition Ministry

Pastor Bobby Lee



Paul joyfully teaches all ages.

I consider myself blessed to be in the company of this group of volunteers who patiently and quietly teach English and Mathematics to the neighbourhood children every Wednesday night.

Many volunteers past and present have been used by God to impact the community, dating back to the 1980s when GBC moved to Mattar Road. These volunteers are driven by a desire to make a difference both in academic matters as well as in the overall well-being of the children who come through our gates.

We thank God for allowing us to live out our love for Him and for humanity for the past many years by availing ourselves to serve the less privileged in this neighbourhood, and we trust that we will continue to do so for many years to come.

The children and their parents have touched every volunteer who teaches or who serves in



We have a growing number of students to teach.



David holds a class teaching English to adults.



Tiffany teaching Maths to the P4 class while Paul and Susan assist.



The Tuition Ministry volunteers: seated L-R: Lydia Lee, Carol Leong, Susan Tan, Cheryl Chan, Jacqueline Chua, Tiffany Tan; standing L-R: Pastor Bobby Lee, Low Lai Sai, George Yeo, Huang Weiquan, David Chan, Paul Wu, Mark Chan. Absent: Paul Chuan & Gideon Yap (both NS men).

an administrative capacity. The gratitude of the parents is more felt than spoken, more often than not through hints and sign language; the genuine smiles and acknowledgement they accord to us makes the setting aside of our individual interests and time worthwhile indeed.

**To all those who have volunteered in the Tuition Ministry, let us press on: service for the Lord costs something but that cost is nothing compared to what we have gained through Christ Jesus. Ω**

*The Tuition Ministry needs more teachers to volunteer for this important outreach work. If you are interested please contact Pastor Bobby to find out more.*



## MISSIONS : ON THE BUDGET TRAIL

*Cheong Hee Kiat*

How is the missions budget prepared? It may seem simple to some but is little known to others. Here's how.

The current budget is used as the starting point. Our missionaries are asked about their plans and needs for 2012 – these may influence 2012's support level. Designated giving tends to distort the picture of support, and is difficult to account for. New cases for support are surfaced for consideration. Current congregational missions giving suggests how much we should modify the budget. The Missions Committee (MC) is mindful of being a responsible steward of God's provisions and GBC's overall budgetary needs even as it relies on Him to provide. It is challenging to strike the right balance between needs and allocation.

The proposed budget must be approved by the congregational leaderships and GBC's Board of Directors, and finally the church membership.

What are some considerations in making up the budget? It should be people-focused, hence, a large part of the budget goes towards supporting missionaries. There should be continuity to assure our missionaries of funding stability. There should be focus, eg, on certain countries, without limiting God's direction, with a practical outcome and opportunities for members to participate in prayer or action. Thus, some funds go to specific projects rather than organisations, such as building water wells in villages being served by OM missionaries. It should be educational (talks, conferences) and should encourage our pastors and members to go on missions exposure trips. It should encourage new entrants into missions. Finally, we must be accountable to our body of believers.

Pray for the MC as it considers all the varied opportunities and constraints in formulating the missions budget. If God leads you, volunteer to serve in the MC or its activities. **Ω**



Back row (L-R): Tan Kim Cheng, Cheong Hee Kiat, Peter Yeo. Front row (L-R): Tan Chong Tien, Charles Chan, Michael Chee, Gideon Ooi.

## *Letter from David and Gladys*



We thank God every time we think of you and your concern for us.

Our lives have been full lately - Jesus did promise that we would have life and have it to the full (John 10:10)! Life is never boring or predictable with five kids and a full-time ministry. How many families do you know that use 20 pampers a day?!

Daniel is doing well in the local Thai school (third grade). He enjoys sports and piano lessons. Six-year-old Faith is home-schooling with Gladys, and recently learned to read after months of hard work. Jubilee, Jeremiah and Hope will be two this September. They are extremely active, but they love books and can sit still for ages while we read to them. As we see our children grow, we are filled with wonder at God's love for us!

David regularly preaches and mentors younger missionaries and Thai pastors. The Khannayao Church Plant in our neighbourhood has its ups and downs. Partly due to the lack of manpower, the progress is slower than we desired, though we do have a team of committed missionaries doing outreach. Gladys still visits her Thai contacts in the market, finding ways to encourage young believers.

We are in the 11th year of our marriage. God has been good to us as we continue to cherish one another. The recent thought in our hearts is 'the joy of the Lord is my strength'. **Ω**

### ANNOUNCEMENT

Seng Chuan and Lee Huang wish to inform GBC that in view of their family's need to be based in Singapore for the next few years, they will step down from their official positions as 'missionaries', with effect from October 2011. Lee Huang will be working as a school counsellor while in Singapore. We thank GBC for the many years of loving support, encouragement and partnership in the ministry. We deeply appreciate all of you.



# GBC 52nd Anniversary Thanksgiving Service

14 August 2011



The GBC family celebrated its 52nd anniversary with a hall overflowing with worshippers.



The celebration is never complete without a fellowship lunch!



The choir giving wonderful praise to God.

**“We have not walked this way before...”**

**“When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.” (Joshua 3:3-4, NIV)**

**“He (Jesus) is the one who will guide us this year as we move into new territory in our journey for Him, and so we must make ourselves well acquainted with Him by keeping our eyes on Him...He makes it possible for us to walk in a way we have not walked before.” Rev (Dr) E N Poulson**



Dr Poulson, who gave an inspiring sermon, with Mrs Poulson. Both continue to be pillars of strength to GBC.



Above: Jeffrey Teong with the Principal, staff and students of MacPherson Primary School.

Cecilia Kang (Right) and Angel Lee (Far Right) were baptised on that day.







## GBC Family Day 2011 30 July 2011



## Children's Day & Baby Dedication Service

2 October 2011

Right:

A song offering from the children to celebrate Children's Day!

Below:

Dedicating Babies (L-R) Baby Joash Tan, Marc Geraldizo, Timothy Mok, Sarah Soh and Luke Lauw to the Lord.





# BOOK REVIEW

Gina Heng

## Rescuing Ambition by Dave Harvey

I was given this book at the Young Adults' Retreat this year, for working the hardest during the week prior to camp. Indeed, I am a workaholic, spend 110 hours a week at work, and have an ambition that needs to be saved.

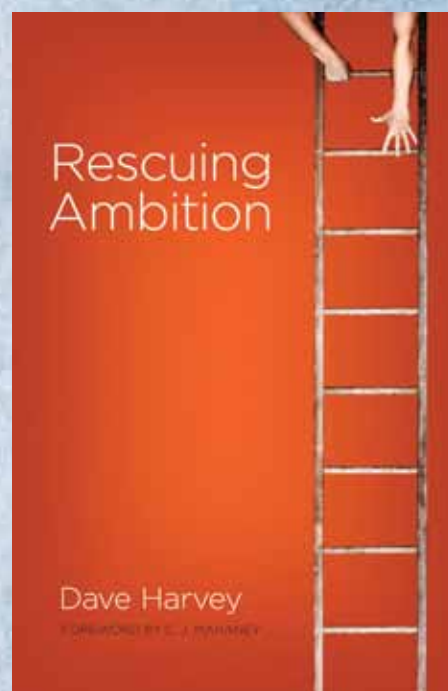
We are all pursuers of things we value. Think about where you spend most of your time, effort and money. It could be the sleepless nights spent clearing emails; endless hours brooding over your child's education; or even days dedicated to church ministry, hoping to be the best church member you could ever be.

Yet Harvey reminds us that it is God who has made us ambitious people. We have an instinct for glory: we were created to look for glory and love it when we find it. The Bible presents us with a God who is glorious in Himself, and who created the cosmos to display His glory, His worth, His value. However, it also offers us an amazing insight into the

way we tick. John 12 tells the story of how God's people 'loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God' (v 43). Our ambition needs rescuing when it diverts us from the Son of God Himself.

God isn't against ambition and the pursuit of greatness. But we're to hunger, crave and be ambitious for a certain type of glory – the glory that comes from God. Harvey brings us back to the cross, where the Lord of glory was crucified and God was most glorified.

What does Godly ambition mean therefore? It means moving high by reaching low – for 'everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted' (Luke 14:11). It could also mean failure, because there are certain kinds of entrenched pride that only failure can uproot, yet the Gospel also shows us how Jesus chooses those who are failures to display His glory.



To be ambitious for God also means being much more ambitious than we currently are – no more being 'one of the folks' at church, but actively loving and committing yourself to the community of people whom God loves.

I do encourage all to pick up Harvey's *Rescuing Ambition*. It is an easy, humorous read, but could also be a timely wake-up alarm for many. Ω

## CHILDREN'S CORNER

## Follow God's Rules!

Rachel Wong

Can you imagine what would happen if drivers decided not to obey the traffic laws? There would be chaos on the roads! What if you are playing a game and someone doesn't follow the rules – it's not fair so the game is spoiled.

The rules and commands God gives us in the Bible are there for a good reason, which is to help us live in a way that pleases God and keeps us safe. Even Jesus had to be obedient. When Jesus was young he had to obey his parents Mary and Joseph, as well as obey God. Later, Jesus was obedient even to die on the cross so that people could be saved from sin.

Supposing you say you love your mother, but you do not listen to her instructions. Your mother will think

that you do not really love her because you are not showing it by your actions. But the Bible says,

**"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." (Col 3:20)**

Jesus also likes to hear us say we love Him, but He likes it even more when our actions show that we love Him. How do we know that? Look at this verse:

**"If you love me, keep my commands." (John 14:15)**

Should we only obey when we agree with the command and don't mind doing it? No, the Bible says,

**"Do everything without grumbling or arguing," (Phil 2:14)** even those things that we find painful and unpleasant.

So follow God's rules... they're good for you! Ω