
GRACE NEWS



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editorial

Before we know it, we have stumbled into the second half of 2014! Some of us have undergone difficult times in the earlier part of the year; others have faced discouragement and are growing tired and weary. Jesus said, "Come to me ... I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28) As disciples of Christ imitating him, how may we provide rest for our brothers and sisters who need it today?

Continuing on from discipleship, this issue we delve into the need to both encourage and edify others. On this same page, Pastor Arnold describes its powerful positive effect in the lives of believers. This is followed by personal experiences of six church members who overcame discouragement by God's grace (pages 2-3).

We asked GBC-ers what cheers their spirits, and their heartwarming responses fill page 4. **Lim Nee Kiah's** edification of a young lady on page 5 leads to an encouraging reflection on marriage. On pages 6-7, feast your eyes on pictures of the latest GBC events, including the long-awaited **Church Camp!** Rounding it off, **Soh Swee Kiat** describes how your life can be used and improved by God, through a review of a book by John Ortberg on page 8.

Read on and be encouraged; be edified.

Blessings.

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Have you heard of the 3 "E"s?

*Clearly emphasised in God's word is the call to build one another up in Christ, and **Ps Arnold Wong** reminds us of how we can do that.*

The Bible is filled with precious words. Three of them are encouragement, exhortation, and edification. They overlap, but are still different and important to our spiritual life.

All three are indispensable to believers. First, trouble of all kinds happen to believers (Jn 15:18-21). Second, every believer is engaged in spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10-18). And lastly, believers are not vaccinated against discouragement as demonstrated by the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:3-10). The lives of believers are trying, hence, encouragement, exhortation, and edification are necessities, not nice accessories.

The word "encourage" means to "call to one's side". It is often translated as to "exhort", "urge", "encourage", or to "comfort". Encouragement focuses on the practical application of the Word as the encourager understands and empathises with others. Encouragement can move a person from pessimism to optimism.

"Exhortation" is defined as "an urging done by someone close beside". It usually carries the idea of, "to call to one's side; summon, encourage, admonish, or entreat" – to help achieve spiritual health. It happens by teaching and applying scriptures to specific situations. This can require encouraging the weak and if needed, confronting them.

This brings us to "edification" which is translated as "building up". It is more than just encouragement; it includes an activity

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which results in more Christlikeness. In the New Testament, it has the sense of mutual edification – believers helping other believers grow into a Christ-like body (Eph 2:20-22). Ministries like care groups and being accountable to one another come to mind. Every believer is to build up other believers resulting in spiritual health for each member (Eph 4:16, 29). The corporate nature of edification is clearly emphasised in God's Word.

God has gifted members of the body of Christ to do the 3 "E" words. When each believer uses his or her spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:12), bodies of believers will be able to love as Jesus loved (Jn 13:34-35), and to be hopeful in hopeless situations (Rom 15:4). Barnabas was an encourager and look at what he did for Paul, Mark, and the whole church (Acts 9:27; 13:13; 15:39).

Now isn't that encouraging! **Ω**

STRENGTHENING THE HEARTS OF THE DISHEARTENED

compiled by Rachel Wong

Being faced with discouragement in ministry and life brings us to the great and mighty God we have, as church members from various ministries share from their own experiences.

Pastors Also Need Your Encouragement



Youths and Young Adults (YYA) Pua Missions Trip 2013
— Pastor Ollie is the fourth person from the left.

Ps Oliver Chia

Discouragement will come to all of us in life and ministry, so in a sense discouragement is to be expected in full-time Christian service. I have faced it and expect to continue to face it. The key way in which I deal with it is to continue to remember the gospel – that Jesus Christ has done it all for me. This means that if I'm in Christ, I've nothing to lose, nothing to prove. I do not need the 'fruit' of my effort to justify myself before God; neither do I need the approval and affirmation of people for my self-worth. **Jesus Christ is enough and I can rest in that.** I'm free to live as a beloved son of God. And this continual remembering of the gospel is the means of grace to overcome and face further attacks of discouragement.

To better prepare myself to receive grace to face discouragement, I've tried to practise two habits. The first habit is to escape to Gardens by the Bay once a month. I spend two to three hours alone reading my Bible, listening to sermons, walking and praying. I also take a week's break twice a year to travel alone to spend time in reading, praying, listening to God and to rest. The second habit is to ensure I have sufficient sleep and to exercise two to three times a week. We are spiritual beings in a physical body. And I've noticed that when I'm better rested and fitter, I tend to have more resources to respond to discouragement better. Neither of these habits help me overcome discouragement – but remembering the gospel does, and these habits put me in a better condition to do the remembering. So I try to keep to them. Besides, I enjoy them!

What really encourages me is when church members progress in Christ-likeness, partner with me in ministry and commit to pray with and for me. **The ministry is about people and not programmes – it is about lives and not a check-list of programmes completed.** When I see people grow spiritually and flourish as God intended; when church members come and offer to work with me in ministry; when friends tell me they commit to pray with and for me, I am encouraged. If you drop me a card to tell me how you have grown and how God has worked in your life it really encourages me. I still keep Sam Beh's note to me at his wedding thanking me for my ministry in his life. I refer to that often, especially when I'm discouraged, to remind me that ministry is worth it.

The Ups and the Downs of Junior Church



(From left) Grace, Effie and Patsy

Effie Wong

I have really enjoyed being part of a team of wonderful people teaching in Junior Church. It encourages me as we serve together. The children encourage me when they are attentive and respond to the word of God. The difficulty is the wide age range of the children we teach – P1 to P6. It is hard to keep all of them active and participating. While it is generally easier to keep the attention of the younger ones, it is a challenge to keep the older children engaged. To keep from being discouraged, I pray a lot for the children and try to prepare lessons that are relevant and interesting. The verse that keeps me going is Galatians 6:9, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." [NASB]

Patsy Low

As a new teacher some years ago I was really encouraged by the passion, love and creativity of fellow teachers to make the lesson interesting. They even set the memory verses to music to make them easier to learn. It is encouraging when the children are paying attention, but discouraging when a child is engaged in his/her own world of reading or day-dreaming. How to re-engage the child is a challenge which really draws me to pray for the child and for the teachers.

Grace Ang

I have always enjoyed working with children and am encouraged when the children use their gifts for the Lord. Recently the children started presenting the offertory during offering time and I am very encouraged by those who diligently prepare for this by practising at home.

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We all lose heart from time to time. Even, or perhaps especially, in our service for the Lord, and despite claiming to seek God's approval rather than man's, sometimes circumstances or people rob us of our joy. At other times we are called to be encouragers to those who need lifting up: we can be God's instruments of love and care when there is discouragement or crisis. We can confidently say that discouragement can be overcome, and God uses discouragement to draw us closer to him, as these three examples show.

Encouragement in a Crisis



Ding and Daisy found encouragement and edification from God and GBC during Ding's recent hospitalisation for H1N1.

Ding

It all happened rather quickly, starting out with a fever and a general feeling of being unwell. The situation quickly degenerated into a fairly serious one with my admission to the ICU. The doctors then informed me that they had to intubate me as my lungs were failing and my oxygen level was low. As I reached out to sign the consent form with wobbly hands, I told the young doctor in attendance that I am a Christian and that my God would heal me. I praise God for the peace that filled my heart before I lost consciousness.


When I regained consciousness some two weeks later, Daisy told me of the tremendous love and care shown by our family and friends and especially our care group. The care group started a prayer chain and showered Daisy with much care and love, seeing to all her needs and daily comfort. A dear sister even stayed over with Daisy to make sure she was alright. It was the personification of Christ's love in action.

As it turned out, the young doctor and a nursing officer in charge of my ward were also believers and they dropped by to share a prayer with me. They too praised the Lord for the healing and encouraged me to testify to His goodness. Later on, my speech therapist shared that her family are also believers and she was much encouraged by my faith. I took the opportunity to share with her a little of what Daisy and I had been through in our journey in life on a road less travelled. Without God, our journey thus far would have been much more difficult to endure.

My entire Chinese New Year 2014 was spent in recuperation at the hospital. Though I had to breathe through tubes and was also fed through tubes there was no short supply of CNY goodies in my room. My 'gang' of creative and loving brothers and sisters in Christ made sure of that, though sometimes I suspect they rather 'enjoyed' it more than me. My wife and I would like to thank each and every one in the GBC family for their prayers, encouragement and support as we continue our journey in this life of faith and hope.

Daisy

It was trying for me when Ding was hospitalised, but there was much to give thanks for. My dear family members, friends from other churches, and CG members all rallied around to pray for me, comfort and encourage me. They were all just there, giving their time and seeing to all my needs. We felt truly loved and were deeply touched. Thank you all.

I was encouraged by the doctor whom Ding shared his faith with: she encouraged me to play Christian songs for Ding and to bring a pastor to pray for him. We were blessed that many of the nursing staff were believers and they were singing along and worshipping in Ding's ward. Ding's condition improved remarkably from then on. 

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SNIPPETS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Often, the Bible teaches us to encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11), be it through word (Acts 20:2) or action (Rom 12:8), in both corporate and intimate settings. Daniel Cheong approached eight brothers and sisters in Christ to share about being encouraged, and giving encouragement.

"The Church has encouraged me through the ministry of care group. As a community of God's people, we can come together to grow spiritually with one another. Within CGs, besides Bible study sessions that point us to the Word of God, we can also draw life lessons from each other in our walk with the Lord. This allows Christ to reveal himself not just through the Gospel but in the lives of each other."
- Samuel Ngo

"To see the congregation faithfully worshipping in church every Sunday is in itself spiritually uplifting for me. God must have left such indelible marks on their lives that this feels like the closest thing to having angels worship with me in the pews. Despite the frailty of men, and shortness of life, there is always space and time within our own lives to prepare for Eternity with our Lord (Ps 90:4-6)."
- Ngiam Siew Kim

"One thing that has particularly encouraged my walk is my care group. A special shout-out to my brothers and sisters in Christ who have been steadfast in faith and love through ups and downs! They are a real testimony of Jesus' commandment to love one another (Jn 13:34-35)."
- Kwang Yew

"Sometimes, mid-worship, I pause and marvel at the diversity of the Church. Despite our different backgrounds, nationalities, ages, we gather on a Sunday morning, joining a long history of saints, to proclaim timeless truths. This is a humbling reminder that the Gospel has the power to save anyone who believes."
- Bibiana Yeo

"It is easy to dwell on the past or be complacent, so I am encouraged that God calls us to keep reaching forward for a greater prize – for Christ (Phil 3:13-14). This verse also encourages me to press on through past disappointments or glories. Let us press on together in Christ!"
- Esther Wong

"I'm holding on to Deut 31:8 as encouragement as I head back to China anticipating many challenges and difficulties to come but having faith that God will see me through it all."
- Hannah Yeo

"Whenever some members show love and concern to me, it makes me appreciate the church as my family. Encouraging one another can be as simple as showing appreciation to those serving faithfully (for example, through Heb 6:10), to let them know that they are a blessing to others."
- Maggie Ho

"One thing the Church has encouraged me to do – the Church (especially the older members such as the Aunties who serve in the children's ministry) has encouraged me to serve with the knowledge that serving is a great way of practising Christ-like love for others."
- Kong Chuan Wei

Look out for the complete quotes on our church blog in the coming weeks!

Encouraging and Building



Through a book recommendation, **Lim Nee Kiah** ignites a revelation on marital encouragement and edification in a lady involved in a dating relationship.

*The Lord has commanded us to love one another with a view to building one another up in Christ. Opportunities abound to encourage and edify others, so long as our eyes are deliberately open and our hearts intentionally loving and giving. It has been my privilege to get to know a lady in church who was just embarking on a dating relationship. I was concerned that she first understand God's purposes for a Christian marriage before even starting to date seriously, so I approached someone else in church to recommend me a good book for her. To my great delight, she not only read the book (*Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace* by Gary and Betsy Ricucci), but also penned the reflections of her reading, which she has graciously consented to share here.*

Marriage is created by God, for His glory – first – and this goes against all secular notions that marriage is meant first for the enjoyment of the couple. This fills me with joy and excitement: should God allow marriage to be a portion of my life, then there is so much more grace to look forward to as I learn of Christ and imitate Him more and more through the journey, and as I also receive His love and grace ever more abundantly through my husband.

The argument laid out in the book has challenged my perspective of a wife's calling to submit, which previously I was reluctant to accept. I cannot run away from the command to submit to my husband, but I can understand the wisdom behind God's call for me to submit, and so deliberately learn to be a submissive wife. Biblical submission springs from an understanding that God has given the heavier responsibility of leadership to the husband, and thereby coming to be aware of, appreciate and support the efforts put in by him to fulfil his biblical calling. Submission can be seen as God's call for me to learn and show self-sacrificial love.

It is my personal prayer that I learn not to take for granted my boyfriend's efforts to love me and provide for me, and to give thanks for any godly virtue I see in him. With this growing awareness comes the desire to

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pray for him according to the Lord's desires for him – to flourish in his God-given roles and responsibilities so that he can be a good testimony to those around him.

'The Lord has been gracious – and daring enough – to put us through some of our present experiences together. I am very sure that God will put our relationship to the test, and I pray that we will have teachable hearts, that He will use this period of time to train us in righteousness, holiness, and purity.'

Marriage is ultimately to reflect Christ and the church. Husband and wife are uniquely positioned and privileged to help each other grow in holiness, in the image of Christ. As a church, members are likewise to passionately pursue this same goal in one another's lives. This, I believe, is what mutual encouragement and edification is all about. **Ω**

18 & 20 Apr Good Friday & Easter Celebration

1. Candles were lit and the lights were dimmed as we remember how Jesus took on our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

2. On Easter Sunday, the choir welcomed the congregation with a joyous singing of "Happy Day" – we are no longer scared because He lives!

3. 4. 5. After the Easter service, GBC members and visitors mingled downstairs over a time of fellowship.



31 May Nehemiah War Games



6. 7. 8. The youths and young adults got to know one another better as they played the Nehemiah War Games where they had to work in teams to build the walls of their "city", defend it from attackers and bring the "temple" to their completed "city".

22 to 26 May Pua Mission Trip

9. The team had the privilege of having dinner with the principal and English head teacher of Baan Prang School (both seated on the right) where quite a number of the children at Kathy's Home attend. We are grateful for the strong relationship built up over the years between the school, Kathy's Home and GBC.

10. There is no greater joy than to see the children growing up into responsible young adults and maturing in their walk with God. Here is Karen with some of the boys who have been with the home since they were young.

11. 12. The children looking forward to the roast chicken lunch on Sunday which the team contributes for each visit.



11 to 14 June Church Camp

13. "It was double joy to be part of the kids' zone children's programme. The joy of remembering God's great love and saving grace; and the joy of closer bonds between the teachers and children. It is our hope that they grow to hail Jesus as King and glorify Him." **Teng Soh Choo** (1st from the right)

14. "We have learnt to wait and trust in dependence on our loving, caring God in our lives." **Billy and Luana Chan**

15. "Had a great time of intimacy with God during the camp. Before that, I was far away from Him – I give thanks that He has put me back on track. Our patient and loving God is my Creator; I commit to following Him and spending time with Him each day to know His will." **Sachie Hori** (back row, 2nd from the left)

16. "Two words – 'simplicity' and 'mystery'. A simple camp that managed to pack in it a spiritual punch. It brought to the front both the mystery that is our salvation and yet made simple how we needed to live our lives. Good camp with lots of time to reflect and mingle around." **Alvin and Lus Lim** (1st and 2nd from the right)

17. "I learnt how to pray publicly among others through the speaker and fellow campers as they encouraged me with their testimonies and experiences. I am really glad that I attended the camp; there was so much to learn! I also made many friends as we spent time together." **Margaret Nah** (4th from the right)

18, 19, 20. Our camp speakers, **Tony Wong, David Chang and Desmond Soh**.

21, 22, 23, 24. Bonding over the combined games session with the Chinese Congregation.





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If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat.

Soh Swee Kiat encourages us to move faith forward and walk on water, as he reviews this book on faith by Dr John Ortberg.

Do you wish to see your faith in God grow? Do you wish to see yourself in God's will? If you have answered "Yes", then you are in for a treat!

This book by Dr John Ortberg is about faith; faith in the living, loving, almighty, all-knowing and all-present God. It opens up a new horizon of blessings and benefits when we begin to step out of our comfort zone (the boat), onto the murky waters of uncertainty and fear, knowing for sure He is there to rescue us when we need it.

Dr Ortberg, who is the Senior Pastor of Menlo Presbyterian Church in California, expounds and explains Matthew 14:25–33 on the walking of water by Jesus in the midst of a storm towards the boat of frightened followers or disciples. In 2002, this book clinched Christianity Today's Book Award winner. Each chapter ends with some questions for personal or group Bible study.

"There is always a call, always fear, always reassurance, always a decision and always a changed life."

In the preface, the author says that there is a consistent pattern in Scripture when God wants to use and improve a life. There is always a call, always fear, always reassurance, always a decision and always a changed life.

Dr Ortberg believes that God has entrusted to us everything we need to fulfil the purpose for which we are created, but fear made us bury the treasure. To experience God's power, we need to take the first step, to get our feet wet; and this is usually at the point of our fear.

But He gives His most frequent repeated instruction: "Fear not. Do not be afraid. Be strong and courageous. You can trust Me. Fear not." Fear, he says, is the biggest obstacle to trusting and obeying God and when a person does it habitually, the person becomes a worrier and suffers losses in five areas: 1) The Loss of Self-Esteem; 2) The Loss of Destiny; 3) The Loss of Joy; 4) The Loss of Authentic Intimacy; and 5) The Loss of Availability to God.

The writer says that **waiting on God may be the single hardest thing we are called to do, but the ability to wait is a test of maturity.**

Mentioned above are some gems from the book, but far more are waiting for you to discover when you read through this eye-opener to trust God more. It will surely spur you on to step out of your cosy and comfortable boat, and to start walking on the water. When you do so, your faith will be seen as pleasing to Him. Ω