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## Godly Relationships, Healthy Churches

*From Lydia Nigh  
- June 2018*



### Where Has Obedience Gone?

When Meghan married Harry, did you notice she did not promise “to love and obey”? In our modern society, virtually no one does anymore. It’s old-fashioned. It flies in the face of self-determination and freedom.



Actually, obedience is an everyday part of our lives. We obey red lights. We take our medication. We pay our taxes. Right? We stick to the speed limits, right?

Obedience can be inconvenient and even painful. Yet, because we understand the consequences of not obeying and the benefits of compliance, we obey. Thank God! Because imagine if everyone did whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, wherever they wanted. The results of that behaviour are what splashes across our headlines every day.

But what are the worst consequences of disobedience?

Disobedience has been around since the Garden of Eden. Lately, I have been

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reading about King Saul. He was the first King of Israel, marked by God Himself. He turns out to be an egomaniac, making a bunch of useless rules just because he can. He's impatient and can't wait for Samuel the priest to come and carry out the sacred rites, so he steps in and break all of God's rules. He's supposed to represent God Himself, but instead, Saul is a disgrace.

Recently, I heard a fellow missionary with SIM speak about the challenge of sharing the Christian faith with First Nations people. You can [listen to the podcast here](#). Philip Lee has served First Nations people for many years. Then he moved onto the reserve, living with different families that will rent him a room. He describes the First Nations, not as an "unreached people" (people who have little chance to hear the story of Jesus), but as "mis-reached people", who suffered abuse and cultural persecution by those who carried the name of Jesus. Non-Christians (and Christians) are deeply offended by this. There is built-in disgust for people who say they stand for Jesus and God, but misuse His name and misrepresent Him. That wholesale distortion of the Christian faith was, and is, so damaging. But then I remember that this is still happening today.

I had a young friend who sat under my teaching for more than a decade. He was friendly and soft-spoken, came faithfully to church and to my classes. He volunteered at every opportunity and was kind to the younger kids. He began to preach and teach in church. But in secret, he was lying and stealing, and leading others into sin. My young friend, like King Saul, was disgracing the name of God. When I found out, I counselled him to confess and repent. When he died suddenly, I felt God was preventing him from bringing more judgement upon himself. It was as if God had said, "Enough!"

The third command of The Ten Commandments says, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." A Jewish commentator, Dennis Prager, says that this is not about using the name of God as a swearword. He points out that "God" is not really the name of God. (Though, "Jesus" IS the name of God.) Prager says that the third commandment should really be translated as, "Do not carry the name of the Lord in vain."

Christians carry the name of Christ. When we think, or act, or speak in a way that does not honour Christ, we disobey this command. There is grave danger to us when we carry God's name but do not live it out. The Book of Exodus adds, "the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." (NIV)

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Young people today hold up authenticity as one of their highest values and through this, they contribute greatly to our Christian faith. I recently described authenticity as being who you are in every situation, whether in public or in private, being the same person in every context. Do we behave the same, whether at church or at home, at school or driving our cars? Do we treat people with the same honour and respect? In the smallest ways that we fail in this, we who say we follow Jesus, are creating a resistance to Him, making people stumble in their faith journeys, and aiding and abetting atheism.

We all fail. I think about how I was with my kids when they were little. I would never have shouted at other people's kids or spanked them that hard or shown my angry face (I mean, my really angry face). So why are we like that and how then shall we live?

This is why we pray, "God have mercy." We need God's mercy because we find it so hard to be genuine Christ-name-bearers. Mercy is withholding judgement. We ask God to not "drop the hammer" though we are disobedient.

This is the precious thing about Jesus.

***His obedience pays for our disobedience.***

He steps in front and says, "No. Punish me instead. Bring judgement on me instead."

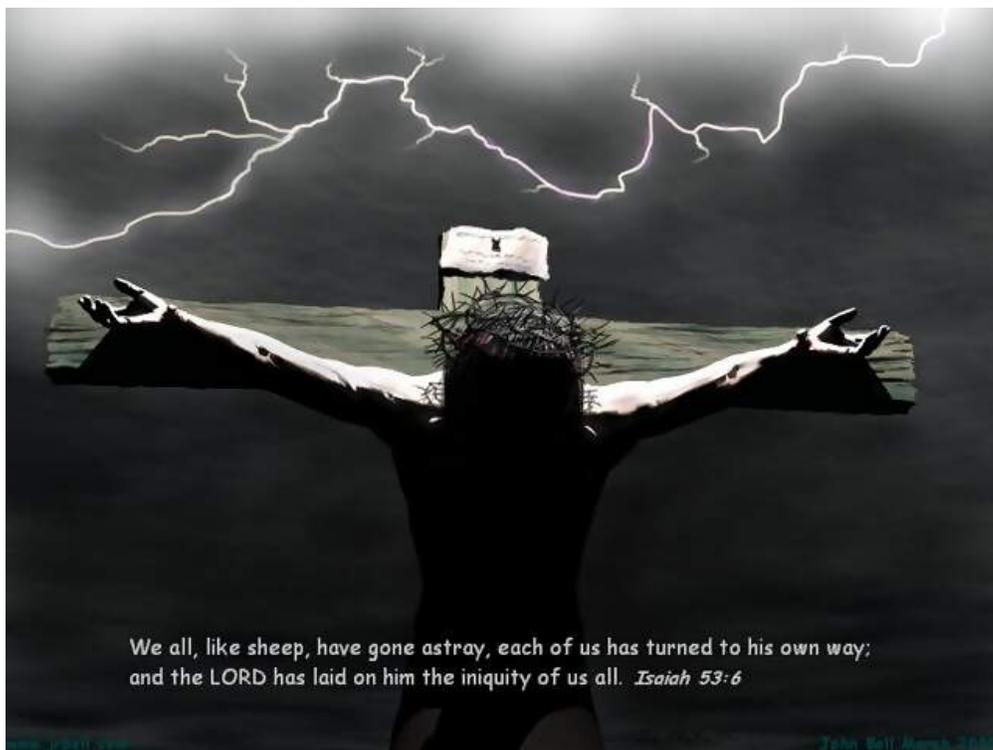
He is this God who does the impossible. Just doesn't make sense...

...until you require it and acquire it.

...until you confess it and profess it.

...until you believe it and receive it.

Everyday, as we wake up, we pray for God's help to love and obey Him. We do what we can to carry His name and represent Him well. Thank you Jesus for Your obedience.

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This is why... my eyes are fixed on Jesus,

*Lydia*

p.s. Re: parenting, Christopher (our 18 year old) says I have mellowed out a lot. Fact: they grew up and God changed me. I really appreciate Gilbert who scolds me and tells me it's simply not true that I was a bad mother. Still there are things that I regret and ask forgiveness from God and from my young adults. Thank You Jesus.

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How have we, as religious people, contributed to the decline of Western culture? What is the greatest sin of your religion?  
Start at 10:20 min.



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On a lighter note,  
this is what happens when the hammer drops.

## **Pray With Thanksgiving**

See what the Lord has done through our prayers. Thank you for your prayer partnership!

### **DISCIPLESHIP**

1. "Bringing God Into Our Conversations" is a class that I have been teaching for the past 11 weeks and will be wrapping up soon. My prayer is that other churches and groups will benefit from the development of this course. Please let me know if you are interested in the teaching notes and resources for your small group.

2. Thanking God for many open doors into the lives of not-yet-believers and also believers. After living in our building for three years, I have found other believers. Three of us are now meeting monthly to pray for our neighbours and encourage one another to find ways to interact with them. Gilbert and I recently organized a farewell for someone moving out. 20 neighbours shared a meal and fun time together. Building relationships and discipling people into the Kingdom needs intentionality, connecting time and boldness. I hope you spend some time this month with people around you, even if it's just for a cup of tea or a walk with a neighbour.

3. Please pray for a workshop I will be doing at our church in August called "Reclaiming the Next Generation For Christ." How do we address the exodus of young people from our churches and encourage them in their faith journeys even outside the Church through authentic, relational discipleship? My workshop will be based on a book called "**You Lost Me**" ([this link is for a youtube interview with the author David Kinneman](#)) and the study called "**Hemorrhaging Faith**" [by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.](#)

### **RELATIONSHIPS**

1. The BC Marriage and Family Conference last month attracted many pastors and church leaders. Dr. Doug Allen, Professor of Economics at

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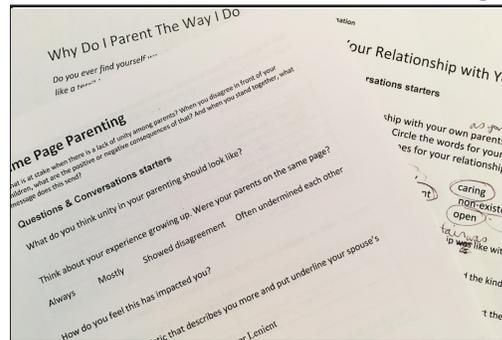
Simon Fraser University presented on "The Value of Marriage" from an economist's view point. You can take a look at [his presentation here.](#)



It was great to meet with people and help organizing. Gilbert and I led a three hour mentor training workshop with this group. If your church is

interested in marriage mentoring, there is [a kit available.](#) Please contact me for more info.

2. At Family Nest, a parenting group, I tested three new Parent Mentoring conversations. This is similar to Marriage Mentoring. We had a lot of fun going through the questions and taking turns leading the conversation. The topics were "Same Page Parenting", "Why Do I Parent The Way I Do?" and "Building A Relationship With My Child". Have you ever had a parenting or marriage mentor?



3. I have a deep concern for singles and am planning a five part workshop called, "Marriage for Singles". Pray with me for three key singles to give me input and for a partnering church in Vancouver to host it this fall. It's my prayer that single young adults would be equipped and made ready for godly dating relationships and for marriage.

## MISSIONS

1. We just wrapped up our fifth Monthly Missions Meeting and interviewed Nicole from our church who is serving at a First Nations reserve on Vancouver Island. We also prayed for Eugenia who is part of our group. She will be going on her first short term missions trip to work with refugees in Austria. I'm so thankful to God for the gathering we have and for a young couple taking a group to Urbana Missions [Conference](#) later this

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year.



*Nicole is on the computer screen and Eugenia and Mitzi going to Austria are at the bottom right of the picture.*

2. I'm thanking God for the new missionaries that God is raising up. Two young families in my region are building their support teams and preparing to leave in the next few months. Pray for me as I walk with them through tough issues such as family disapproval, financial worries and fears for their children's safety. It's a privilege to also be praying with missionaries around the world despite the challenges of busyness and different time zones. Thank you God for WhatsApp.

3. SIM Canada is developing new ways of engaging in missions including sharing physical space and resources with Wycliffe and OMF (previously China Inland Mission). It gives us a great opportunity to work together on strategic issues and encourage one another. This month, a Director of Mobilization will join our leadership team.

### **FAMILY**

God continues to bless our lives with three healthy young adults. Tim lives in Kitchener, Meredith in Vancouver and Christopher in our house.

Gilbert just reached his third anniversary of serving at Vancouver Chinese Baptist Church. This picture is of him preaching at the Mandarin congregation with a translator. It reminds us of the Lusaka Chinese Christian Fellowship in Zambia. Please pray for them as well. :)

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***"Prayer does not equip us for greater works - prayer is the greater work."***

**- Oswald Chambers**

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I am asking God for a few more people to join my team of ministry partners. Ministry partners pray and give and join me in discipling and mentoring people into godly relationships and healthy churches. Please contact me.



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