

## SUPERABOUNDING GRACE AND COMPLETE OBEDIENCE

We are committed to building a community that practices superabounding grace while calling our people to complete obedience to Christ.

In superabounding grace, we welcome people to come as they are and we will go to people where they are, and we are committed to building relationships with people as Jesus did, including with those who are often judged by others, just as Jesus welcomed sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors ([Luke 5:29-32](#)).

We also call our people to complete obedience to Jesus in all parts of our lives, conforming to His call to holiness and to sacrificial service ([Luke 5:27-28](#); [9:23-26](#)). And we recognize that this road to complete obedience is lifelong and requires grace, patience, perseverance, and mutual encouragement ([Hebrews 10:23-25](#); [12:7-13](#)).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF SUPERABOUNDING GRACE?

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- A warm and honoring welcome of all who come to join with us
- An eager invitation to all who might be open to come to learn more of Jesus
- Being slow to become angry and being willing to forgive those who repent “seven times a day” (see [Matthew 18](#) and [Luke 17](#))
- For each of us to consider: what makes us hesitate to provide a warm and honoring welcome, and what makes us hesitant to forgive?
  - The bumper sticker, the clothing, their political association, ...
  - If they’ve hurt me, their standards of cleanliness, they are arrogant, ...
  - These may lead me to avoid them completely, or to show “a cold reluctance of the handshake”
- Repeatedly Jesus shocked people by His willingness to associate (including eating meals together) with the people they and society judged
- “The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, **grace increased all the more**, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” [Romans 5:20-21](#)
  - From a prayer by George Herbert (1593-1633)  
“But thou Lord, art patience, and pity, and sweetness, and love;  
therefore we sons of men are not consumed.  
Thou hast exalted thy mercy above all things;  
and hast made our salvation, not our punishment, thy glory:  
so that then **where sin abounded**,  
not death, but **grace superabounded**; ...”

### ARE WE AT RISK OF IMPLYING OUR APPROVAL OF SIN?

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- Loving sinful people always has that risk (whether that sin relates to our money, or our anger, or our sexuality, or our power, or ...)
  - even for people who are not new
- We **all** join in the prayer of confession, and we choose to express that everyone is on a journey that includes uncovering new areas where we will need to change and grow
- “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” [Romans 5:8](#)

### WHO “ENFORCES” COMPLETE OBEDIENCE?

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- The short answer: the Holy Spirit, working among us
  - Conviction of the Spirit through the Word of God in community

- Conversations also come at different “milestones” in the life of the church
  - For example: when people explore Baptism, Membership, or Leadership roles

## WHEN DO WE TRANSITION FROM GRACE TO OBEDIENCE?

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- We never leave grace
- Increasing obedience comes over time
  - Through relationships and Life Groups and discipleship
  - As the Spirit works
  - Through the Bible, in preaching, teaching, Bible studies, personal reading, and more

## WHY ARE WORDS NEEDED IN FRONT OF GRACE AND OBEDIENCE?

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- People wanted to moderate Jesus’ gracious welcome
  - In Jesus’ day, people were shocked that He gave priority to the ones whom they considered to be worse sinners
- People also wanted to moderate Jesus’ call to obedience
  - Some left when His demands were too great
- We also have a tendency to soften grace and to soften obedience, and so we choose to include words that help guard us against that tendency

## WHAT WORDS SHOULD MODIFY “GRACE” AND “OBEDIENCE”?

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We choose...

- **“Superabounding grace”**
  - “in order that in the coming ages he might show **the incomparable riches** of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” [Ephesians 2:7](#)
- **“Complete obedience”**
  - “And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your **obedience is complete.**” [2 Corinthians 10:6](#)
  - “and teaching them to **obey everything** I have commanded you.” [Matthew 28:20](#)

## WHAT MAKES THIS NOT BE “BAIT AND SWITCH”?

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- That is, are we implying to people that we are affirming everything about them by warmly welcoming them, only later to say that we don’t affirm everything about them?
- We want to communicate that every one of us is on the journey of growing obedience. And for every one of us, God still has significant work yet to do in our head, hearts, and hands. We are not currently aware of all the areas where God needs to do His work.
- We look to the Holy Spirit to help guide when conviction will come in different areas in our lives for every one of us.
- We will also endeavor to answer honestly questions that arise

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN “TO GO TO PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE”?

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- It means that we don’t just wait for people to come to a worship service
- **First:** we take the initiative to build connections with the **people who are already in our social networks** (neighborhoods, school, work, hobbies, ...), including those we might be inclined to avoid, to welcome them and invite them to know more about Jesus
- **Second:** as the Spirit leads, it also means establishing new connections with people who are not a part of a Christians community and **who are not currently a part of our social networks**. This will look different for different people

## DOES THIS CORE VALUE REQUIRE OBEDIENCE TO THE PASTOR, THE BOARD, OR THE CHURCH?

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The complete obedience called for in this core value is obedience to Christ. His instructions and commands are always right and true, and He is the judge of all.

In addition, Christ's intention is that the Church, and each church, will play an important part in discerning and proclaiming the teachings and commands of God, and in admonishing people to obey them (for example, see [Titus 2](#) and [Acts 20:28-31](#)). People are called upon to submit to those who shepherd/oversee their local congregation (for example, see [1 Peter 5:1-5](#) and [1 Corinthians 16:15-16](#))

It is a reality that neither the Church nor any particular church is perfect in this role, and those who teach will be judged more strictly (see [James 3:1-2](#)). Because of that, God's people are called upon to examine Scripture to see if what the Church teaches is true (see [Acts 17:11](#)).

So complete obedience is to be given to Christ alone, while God's people are expected to submit to the human authorities He has put in place (for example, see [1 Peter 2:13-17](#)), especially in the household of God.