

To attempt to summarize my 52 year life journey of what God is shaping and leading me into a tiny box of a few pages without losing clarity, sincerity and simplicity is huge challenge for me (and perhaps USPS). I pray with the enabling of the Holy Spirit that we will find the centrality of God's will upon me and you. Whatever I am incapable of communicating to you directly and clearly, it is my insufficiency that needs a remedy over a cup of coffee at Starbucks or over a delicious Chinese meal.

1. What are your ambitions? Why might God be calling you to leave your current position and church?

I live to serve Him and there is nothing more honoring than to take heed to His voice as I prepare myself in the seasons of life for eternal inheritance in Jesus Christ.

I hope to make it short and sweet but I am not that successful on this question. Ever since I was tasked to seek out discipleship materials for my current church in 2008, my journey has never been the same. I drove to Georgia, flew to CA and lived a few days in Seoul. I began mobilizing the household for 5:30am early prayer meetings and rigidly making every day solid through QT(Quiet Time). God has been revealing to me 4 times in the last 8 months to move out to the ministry of mentorship and discipleship making in a parish/missions setting. In March during a casual devotional reading, God revealed His heart to me through a testimony by Rev. Ben Torrey, a MK (missionary kid), of how God had turned his heart to move him out from his current ministry in preparation for the kingdom work. His testimony just spoke to my heart: "Many like me use different means to serve God. But I often neglect the vision that God has given me." He moved out at age 52. I was in tears and showed it to Linda. She was not impressed and thought that I was crazy! Then I forgot all about this until May when God used a district conference speaker Dwight Smith to speak to me again. As a seasoned pastor of a big church, he shared from his heart how God had called him out to glorify His church by revitalizing local churches in Ukraine, India and now in China. I was so impressed by his journey and his dedication that I quizzed him during lunch with this question: "How do you know if God has called you to move out of your pastoral ministries?" In short, his answer was: "If you exegete life and the Bible well and if you exegete the timing well, He will show His path to you." He said the time he received God's call was in his early 50s. Now he is in the mid 60s. Again, I was touched but not moved. In June as our family watched a TV documentary about a world-class performance artist Yang Liping, God had spoken yet again. The interview tracked her decision to move away from the glamorous Beijing to Yunnan where she would devote her time to train 50-60 dancers so they can inherit the rich skills she had perfected through the years.

Toward the end of the interview, the host asked her what she would like to do in the future. She recalled that she had been mentoring the young dancers for 14 years and now at age 52, she will continue to do so. Again, it struck a chord with me. The burden of growing the next generation of lay leaders and young pastors is increasingly heavy on my heart. Once again, without a sense of urgency, I contemplated but never ventured out to act on it. In September while arranging for a CPA named Clem Hooper to come and share kingdom investments at my church from the CMA headquarters, Clem shared his life and his journey of caring for his wife who had lupus. Through the long and hard journey of caring for his heavily medicated wife for 26 years, he saw God restore his wife's health through a Christian doctor. He emerged from the valleys of his life to see a way of living far more significant than being a CFO of a major bank in PA. I asked him casually when he moved out of his career and started serving God full time. He said 3.5 years ago when he was 52. I fell flat on my face and was totally convinced that God had spoken to me again and again. It is more than the number 52. From almost 23 years of weekly prayer and fasting, I heard Him loud and clear.

God directed the stage and the life of Paul and during the time of soul searching, God has also moved Linda with the same conviction in several occasions. Devotion time with God has been peppered with reminders that He calls and He will lead in His season.

God coordinated far more than I anticipated. I received a Macedonian call when a Malaysian pastor in April bid me farewell after a preaching seminar with tears in his eyes. He begged that I would return to help mentor the younger pastors. It was shocking to know that I have conducted the same seminar in different places but never did I hear a plea like that. In fact, it stirred my heart deeply. Ever since, I could not shake off the idea of mentoring the Lord's younger disciples.

In the same month when I had a chance to return to HK to intern my mother's ashes, God spoke to me again on how precious He sees each life and treasures every season of my life. Seeing life reduced to 6-8 pound worth of urn and ashes is a sobering reflection of how I should serve Him for the remaining balance of my life.

When I struggled through the process, God used a summer conference speaker to speak again. "When is the right timing to move out to serve?" I had asked. "The time comes when you submit to Him" was the answer.

I shared my burdens twice with the District superintendent (my boss) in October and I received affirmation from him that I was listening to God but rebelling. He further talked with the church leadership and affirmed what God has done. "If God deems it good to him to serve Him in a special way, it has to be good to the church." By the time I shared with the core leaders on Nov 30th, it was exactly my 52th birthday!

My aspiration is to live for Jesus Christ and to make Him smile by pouring out what I gained by pain and joy in order to glorify Him by building the church and their leadership through mentorship and discipleship making.

2. How do you know that God is calling you to Chinese Grace Bible Church (CGBC)? What attracts you to CGBC?

My casual conversations with the church started almost 2 years in the area of multi-congregational ministries. The ministry challenges that Grace church have resembled much of my experiences as a senior pastor in my current multi-congregational church and as a lead pastor in a multi-ethnic and multi-congregational church in NY. I have been passive and "in process". God has led me to see some recommendations from church consultation reports that leadership training and discipleship are part of the core values of Grace church. I believe in divine providence and I believe God ordains the seasons of our lives and our ministries. After several conversations with the search committee and prayers, I feel that God has opened me a path to actively participate in the search of His will upon Grace church and me.

CGBC has grown in the past decades to be strategic. There are teams ready to launch out to do His work. Trials and endurance bring maturity and because of that, I see mature leaders ready to be on assignment again just because of their love to Jesus Christ. We grow to exalt Christ and I believe, after talking with some of you, that there are elements of anticipation and excitement to see some great things happen in Grace church. What God has done for Grace can be an example for other local churches in Sacramento (1 Thess 1:7). I am excited to see that God will mobilize your church through rigorous preparation for an era of growth, impact and global mission.

3. Why do you think this church is a good "fit" for you? What does CGBC offer you that your current situation does not?

Every good farmer has callous hands and a true church is a church ready to receive both the great commission, boldness to proclaim and the power through grace to live

out the call by endurance, faith and hope. I have to allow God to make the fitting (1 Cor 3:6-7) tight.

By mere experiences of being in pastoral ministries for 23 years and exposures with good leadership in mission agencies and teaching environments, my past in multi-congregational and multi-ethnic congregations in NY may serve to share, to encourage and perhaps to lead Grace church. Experiences do not mathematically eliminate challenges. But I believe in divine providence that God will lead and make all things work for His glory. By that I seek your prayer that we will receive the same message of affirmation from Him.

Every church has its DNA and so does the denomination. My current church is an extremely caring and loving church, a church planting model that is further perfected by my two predecessors. The founder has the wonderful gift of hanging out in the post office to greet strangers and the predecessor has the ability to wait at the ER even before the ambulance arrived. I walked in their shoes and in one year reached a record of visiting 325 family units. Our denomination triumphed in small church model and worked to keep the denominational needs before a local church. My current church has given attentions to ministries that related to the district and the headquarters. We at times need to be bifocal and spend less time on strengthening the church by leadership development. The DNAs are what caused the church to grow to a certain size. I praise God for His growth.

Grace church is a teaching church by nature and the church has been grounded in good solid Biblical teaching. I see the contribution of pastors and teaching staff who have given much to lay a foundation strong with His word and the people are ready to be equipped for greater work. My aspiration will be made simple by serving along leaders to further grow the people of God into solid, committed and life-transforming disciples in preparation for greater ministry impacts that await Grace church.

I believe in “glocal” community as a superior model for reaching out to the world. It means that local church needs to be global in perspective and her impact has to be rooted in a local church community in order for the church to fulfill the great commission. When a church dialogues much with the mission fields, it will give a stronger church to church impact through an intentional modeling of disciples in local church matching up with the specific needs of a mission field. A local church is a sending church. What had happened in the first century church can happen today. A denomination can deliver more but I believe local church can receive its privilege

with greater sensitivity towards missionaries and intentionality. With a strong pastoral leadership team, Grace church has the ingredients to impact the world-wide church for Christ by having a good mission team rotation. Global exposures can inspire Grace church to reach out to the world beyond Sacramento for our Lord.

4. Describe the ideal relationship that you would want to have with the congregation, the governing board, and the staff.

It is a bit easier to be father than to be a pastor. A pastor-in-charge has to wear many hats: He has to be a negotiator ("Would you share your lunch with that little girl?"), a consensus builder ("Who wants to eat at McDonald's and how many opt out?"), a cheerleader ("It does not look that bad. It does not need to look that bad!"), a pastor (" Pastor, you have a funeral in the morning and a marriage reception in the afternoon on Saturday."), a teacher ("I do not want to hurt your feelings but we cannot interpret this passage this way."), a visionary leader ("After so many days in the desert, we finally discover that the water source just 5 miles away! We will be there in 2 hours!"), a good role model ("Did I forget to bring the prayer journal for this prayer retreat?") and much more.

There is a matrix of complex variables a leader has to deal with. Realistically, I jot down the following guidelines:

I wish to be a brother in Christ among you in the congregation. See me as a real human being with a real family living in a 24 hour time zone. Your prayer and your support are essential for me to keep things in perspective. I am not a superman. I need you every bit, like any ordinary being. Jesus thirsts and I thirst too. I seek to be one among you. We are all faith sojourners.

At the board level, I pray that I will be treated with sincerity and acceptance. I appreciate diversity in views and work for you in different ways of implementing church ministry. We need a spirit of coming together and staying on and through what God has given us as the outcome of leadership discussions. I pray for humility to accept my weakness and courage to share His burden without the fear of rejection. I seek by all means to stay united in heart and in action. I need wisdom to be fair to all and at the same time treat one another with grace. At times when I have to stay lonely on certain views, I step out not of animosity but true reflections. I seek to be an integral part of the leadership board. As He leads, I seek to be "one or first among equals" to coordinate, to help and to lead the Grace church in its ministry.

To the staff, I want to inspire the staff to be what they are burdened to do for His glory. I believe in division of labor but never division of vision. Church staff lives

through hope and grows through failures and weaknesses. I would like to receive accountability and at the same extent reciprocate accountability from that staff, which crystallizes what true teamwork means. I look less for authority to lead but pray for a true Christian life model to gain trust and respect from the staff. I seek to be a model leader among the staff.

5. What do you do to grow and develop areas of your character, knowledge, skills, and emotions?

Here is my path of growth I kept for the past several years and I pray for its continuation every year whether in season or out of season.

I keep a few closed individuals as mentors so I can continue to seek counsels and wisdom from them. My life mentor keeps me in perspective of the totality of life and the emotional aspects of life in ministry. Retired CMA president has conversed with me for several years to keep me in the fervency to serve Him. I keep the discipleship training group on Fridays as a place for accountability, reflections, repentance and mutual encouragement. I keep my skills and knowledge in place by attending seminars (2 times a year) and to enrich my ministry perspective by receiving invitations to lead and teach in other places. My yearly preaching seminar with Haddon Robinson has kept me humble for the past 9 years. I seek out people of God to tap into ministry insights. Most of all, I try to keep a close mentoring relationship with my District Superintendent.

One thing I need to keep accountability is my exercise habit.

6. How are you uniquely gifted to lead this church? What are your natural gifts? What are your spiritual gifts?

In the past, I believe gifts are abilities and as I count, I believe several are in my pocket. I am a natural communicator and strategic thinker, personal and sincere in my social relationships. God has given me some uncommon gifts in counseling and perhaps preaching. Being a senior pastor and a congregational pastor for many years, I know the need to shepherd the flock and the need to guide the ministry through teaching, modeling and board ministries. My previous exposures in various ministry assignments have provided me a broader perspective to work with people of different orientations, ethnic groups and personalities. I frequently speak to English, Mandarin and Cantonese congregations and gatherings. Board duties require me to communicate to different groups in different languages. Thank God I do not have an identity crisis (being a Cantonese serving in Mandarin congregations while leading in

English speaking context with a wife who is largely an ABC). Cultural diversities require a distinctive ear, for a single gesture of welcome in one culture can become an insult to another culture. My traveling experiences eliminate some cultural blind spots and build some bridges. I sound like a salesman but my intent is to be honest to myself and to you.

Later in life, I discover in its true sense that gifts are “gracelets”. When Jesus Christ shares more of His life in me, I begin to understand how sharing His very nature is to become the true “gifts” and “graces” to others (1 Cor. 13:1; 2 Pet 1:4). I feel more so now as I receive more of the gift of endurance, humility and grace that minister to a spectrum of people who are lost, hurting, sin-stricken and desperate.

7. What are you currently reading that has influenced you?

Philip Teng’s recent book “All is Grace—Memoir of Philip Teng” becomes a personal spiritual reflection for me. As he travels through many ministry journeys in the past 50 years as a pastor, teacher, church leader and a father, he reflects on how godly character was shaped despite challenges and difficulties. His snapshots of ministry challenges in different places encourage me as he refuses to be cynical, negative and critical. Poverty, sickness, death and immaturity often lead him to the throne of grace. I admire his honesty, sincerity and openness to share where God works out His glory over and beyond our weaknesses and failures.

Kenneth E Bailey’s “The Cross and the Prodigal” traces Luke 15 from Middle Eastern perspective to the centrality of the Christian message of the Cross and His forgiveness. Reminding of the work-based legalism of today’s world, this book helps me to redefine how the richness of the Jewish perspective of forgiveness reveals the deeper longing of the Father willing to shame himself to reach out to His lost people.

I start to read John Oak’s book on “Called to Awaken the Laity”. It truly inspires me to look at discipleship making as a must have for a 21st century church. Doctrine of the church dictates the ministry philosophy and not vice versa. Deep in reformed tradition and successful in leading his 40,000 strong church toward discipleship making, the author provides the insights and methods of discipleship making at his own church. His church sends out more missionaries than my own denomination. His reflections provide me some alternatives as I seek to understand the proper role of a local pastor in 21st century world. He disciples others to shepherd and by such,

the people of God is equipped to shepherd others, reaching from the inside to move out to the church members and beyond.