

David Young

DMIN 747: Distilling a Dream for Leadership in the Emerging Culture

George Fox Evangelical Seminary

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Personal Leadership Development Plan  
with updates

October 16, 2014 – Original Pg. 2

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## Who am I?

Maybe you've seen one of those on-line tests that people like to post on Facebook. I recently came across "Which U.S. President are you most like?"<sup>1</sup> Immediately I thought to myself – Jimmy Carter. I thought I'd be a lousy politician but a far better human, and maybe even humanitarian. President Carter is not well thought of from a political-historical perspective, but he is highly regarded for his work with Habitat for Humanity and some of his forays into peacemaking. When I looked up some psychometric tests that I had participated in in recent years, interestingly enough, they indicated that I have a similar profile to President Carter. Let me offer the profile results before I venture into further reflective description.

Based on a simple human-metrics Jung typology test I'm a fairly rare profile INFJ (Introvert 22%; iNtuitive 62%; Feeling 12%; and Judging 67%).

- You have slight preference of Introversion over Extraversion (22%);
- You have distinctive preference of Intuition over Sensing (62%);
- You have slight preference of Feeling over Thinking (12%);<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- You have distinctive preference of Judging over Perceiving (67%)<sup>2</sup>

So what does that really tell me about myself? Below is a sampling of what another online profile<sup>3</sup> revealed:

Regarding intuition:

- clarity of perception of inner unconscious processes;
- grasp hidden psychological stimuli;
- deduce the inner workings of the mind.

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<sup>1</sup> "Which US President Are You Most Like?," accessed October 16, 2014, <http://www.playbuzz.com/clairea11/which-u-s-president-are-you-most-like>.

<sup>2</sup> "Human Metrics, Jung Typology Test," accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.humanmetrics.com/#Jung%20Briggs%20Myers%20Types>.

<sup>3</sup> "Typelogic," accessed October 14, 2014, <http://typelogic.com/>.

Regarding extroverted feelings:

- the desire to express their wealth of feelings and moral conclusions about others, and the awareness of the consequences of unbridled candor;
- will vent with trusted allies;
- have the raw material from which perceptive counselors are shaped.

Regarding introverted thinking:

- when thinking seems aloof;
- distancing is merely an indication that the seer is focusing energy.

Regarding extroverted sensing:

- blessed with clarity of vision;
- may be so absorbed in intuitive perceiving that they become oblivious to physical reality.

A copy of the profile is appended to this plan, but there is a paradoxical quality that I would like to highlight. "...INFJs tend to be idealists, and because of their "J" preference for closure and completion, they are generally "doers" as well as dreamers." I personally find this a bit frustrating because the doing often falls short of the dream. Finally, regarding INFJ, the profile seemed very insightful to my personality; it even indicated that INFJs are "... generally well-suited to the 'inspirational' professions such as teaching and religious leadership."

A few years ago I completed another profile, a DISC Biblical personality profile. With my high regard for scripture it initially seemed a bit arrogant to be compared to a Bible character. However, it was a counselor's assignment, so I obliged. My personality came out as a "creative pattern" and it aligned exactly with that of the apostle Paul. Of Paul it says:

- a desire for tangible results counter-balanced by an equally strong drive for perfection;
- set the pace for developing new and unusual ideas, usually seeking power and challenges;
- his new and untried mission took him to distant lands and people that were at times hostile;

- confronts issues that others avoid, such as frank discussions of problems among his young churches.

It also surfaced some very uncomfortable observations regarding this personality pattern:

- **Overuses:** bluntness, critical or condescending attitude;
- **Under pressure:** becomes bored with routine work, sulks when restrained, acts independently;
- **Fears:** lack of influence, failure to achieve their standards;
- **Would increase effectiveness with:** warmth, tactful communication, team cooperation, recognition of existing sanctions.

So who am I? It appears that I am a fairly dysfunctional cross between Jimmy Carter and the apostle Paul. Now that is sobering! I could also add that any spiritual gifts test usually resulted in “prophet”—not typically warm or fun to hang out with.

### **Where Am I Going? (Vision and Mission)**

My vision has been filled with God’s calling on my life since I was fourteen, when I first sensed His call to serve internationally. While preparing for a career in missions ministry, at Columbia Bible College and Seminary, I married at the age of twenty. My wife Maryanne and I agreed that we weren’t mature enough for full-time overseas missions ministry immediately following Bible College. Instead we pursued a short business career with the largest telecommunications company at the time, AT&T. After seven years of working as consultants in business process analysis and design, Maryanne and I both felt convicted about making changes; this led towards my pursuit of a Masters degree in Christian Counseling and eventually a position as a senior pastor of a C&MA Church.

After about eleven years of working as a senior pastor in redevelopment churches, which involved taking unhealthy churches through significant changes in vision and systems, I was reminded of my calling at fourteen to serve internationally. I had put this calling aside because working in a traditional missionary role didn't seem to fit and working as a lead pastor fit my personality, skills, and was personally rewarding. Early in the summer of 2006 the two callings—pastorate and international—collided and I accepted a call to serve as the senior pastor of an international church on the north side of Bangkok, Thailand. My work at AT&T as a management consultant also factored into this calling; it helped considerably in my relating to the business and diplomatic professionals attending the church.

Experience, training, and calling seemed to coalesce in the role of lead pastor of an international church. While returning to this type work is my ultimate goal, I am currently blessed to pastor a small, but diverse, church through significant change in Baytown, Texas. This stateside ministry will allow my daughters to complete their education, and will afford me the time and margin to grow professionally, something that has refreshed my ministry passion and enhanced my pastoral ministry. This Doctor of Ministry program has focused and strengthened my ministry today and will prepare me to eventually return to a ministry with professional, global nomads in the context of an international church in a global city.

Although I have not yet defined my own personal mission statement, I would want it to include the following passions:

- Spiritual direction and formation for leaders;
- Creating community and connection among global nomads;
- Offering a contrarian leadership example of weakness, humility and service.

## **How Am I Going To Get There? (Personal Strategic Plan)**

Asked to imagine my future, about seven years from now I can imagine Maryanne and myself serving together closely in an Asian or Middle-Eastern city among highly influential people from dozens of countries and cultures. We would provide spiritual direction and friendship while creating a sense of family and experience of home away from home. “Getting there” does not include relocation for the next five to seven years; we are committed to staying stateside to see our daughters through most of their education. However, “getting there” does mean growth that enables greater ministry for both today and into the future. Four areas for growth will include:

### Expanding Leadership Goals:

My burden is for professional, global nomads who are world leaders and significant influencers in their areas, whether business, government or NGO. These individuals respect and more easily connect with other leaders. My own capacity for leadership, my ease with their acumen and ability to offer practical teaching for leaders, will be highly valued. Four goals:

1. Participate in John Maxwell leadership conference in 2014
2. Read “Good Leaders Ask Great Questions” by John Maxwell
3. In 2015 teach a sermon series especially attractive to leaders
4. With my wife, offer a one- to two-year mentoring relationship to one couple.

### Celebrating Diversity Goals:

The church I serve in Texas recently adopted the mission statement “A Christ-centered, Acts 1:8 family.” Acts 1:8 is interpreted as more than reaching the unreached who are at greater and greater distances from us geographically, it also speaks to reaching those who differ from the overall community; people who are ethnically different, generationally different, and socio-

economically different. We want to literally create an environment where people who are different “sit around the table” and connect with each other, listen to each other, and learn from each other.

1. Attend Rice University event: Religious Diversity in a Secular Era; featuring Jose’ Casanova, professor of Sociology and Senior Fellow at Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University, where he heads the program on Religion, Globalization and the Secular.
2. Participate in or facilitate groups where people who hold significantly different views freely share their beliefs and values.
3. Encourage ethnic minority members of the congregation to step up into deacon or elder positions, where qualifications are met.

#### Practice Hospitality Goals:

Together with Maryanne, we want to practice the gift of hospitality by inviting a wide range of people into our home to share a meal together. It is our hope that hospitality will open the heart to sharing life stories, and would open the door to encourage faith.

1. Monthly invite a wide variety of church members;
2. Invite a variety of non-church friends from the community.

#### Volunteer In Public/Community Service:

I am currently serving at a local Christian school as their spiritual life director, which affords me an opportunity to influence the faculty and staff spiritually and provide for a spiritual emphasis week for the students. I’d like to migrate into a different, community- based, public service role.

1. Investigate needs at local crisis pregnancy center

## **Who Is Going To Help Me? (Coaching)**

Henry Bernshausen. Henry is a member of the church I pastor; he serves as our youth pastor and as an elder. Henry has served in several ministry positions in the Houston area such as youth minister, worship leader, church planter, pastor, and evangelist. He's passionate about sharing the gospel in culturally insightful and engaging ways, and he's well versed in Christian apologetics. He is currently employed by Lexmark International where he manages Lexmark's resellers in Texas.

- I would ask Henry to hold me accountable to the above goals of the strategic plan;
- I would also ask him to ensure the church's leadership annually evaluates my leadership and overall ministry.

Sherri Thomas. Sherri is a certified and licensed Leadership Coach and Trainer with the John Maxwell team and works with corporate and ministry leaders. Sherri has worked in Human Resources and Safety for twenty years and has spent twelve years with the HealthySoul™ Ministry as a board member and trainer; helping individuals and groups understand who they are in Christ and why they do what they do. Her passion lies in enabling individuals and organizations to identify and overcome obstacles that keep them from maximizing growth potential. Sherri is dedicated to serving individuals and organizations seeking the pursuit of excellence and the development of leadership capabilities.

- I would ask Sherri to coach me in more clearly articulating my own personal vision and mission and partner with her to identify ways to move the church's vision and mission forward.
- I would ask Sherri to evaluate into my leadership skills quarterly.



### **How Am I Doing?** (Spiritual direction, health and wellbeing)

Regarding spiritual direction and personal well being, Larry Crabb would certainly be considered an authority in this area. I've been privileged to go through some advanced training with Larry in the area of soul care, along with some of my spiritual friends. Bruce Wray is one of those friends. Bruce is a marketing professional who is also accredited to serve as a pastor in the C&MA. His passion is "conversations that matter," and he's involved in several spiritual friendships intentionally focused on spiritual formation, both in the context of one-on-one relationships as well as in small groups.

- I would Skype with Bruce monthly for soul care and spiritual direction.
- I would share the psychometric profile with Bruce and encourage him to address the weaknesses regularly.
- Annually I'd schedule a retreat with Bruce, and when possible, with our spouses for mutual spiritual edification and soul talk.

## Update Addendum – April 21, 2015:

### Who am I?

Sherri Thomas, my leadership coach encouraged me to take the Enneagram personality test earlier this spring term. My profile is that of *The Reformer – Type One*; which is in keeping with both my Biblical – DISC profile and Jung Typology Test.

As a reformer I am “conscientious and ethical, with a strong sense of right and wrong.” Reformers are teachers, crusaders, and advocates for change; always striving to improve things, but afraid of making a mistake. Well-organized, orderly, and fastidious, they try to maintain high standards, but can slip into being critical and perfectionistic. They typically have problems with resentment and impatience. At their best: wise, discerning, realistic, and noble.”<sup>4</sup> It’s a bit shocking how close and nuanced these profiles can be. In addition, the Enneagram recognized that I lean into my intuitive nature. For me this means I operate more on ‘gut reactions’ and rest heavily on feeling, sometimes at the expense of careful or well-researched thinking. With perfectionistic tendencies I can be opinionated, impatient, irritable and overly critical of others and myself.

The profile makes it clear that my sweet spot is seeing an ideal state and being positioned to coach or influence toward that reality. But most helpful to me personally is how it identifies where I go under stress (an average four), and what growth looks like for me (a healthy seven). Under stress I get alienated and moody, especially if I feel like I’m not taken seriously or valued.

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<sup>4</sup> Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: the Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality Types* (New York: Bantam, 1999), 1

Stress also grows when progress toward the desired state is too slow in coming. Under stress I can lose my joy, I come across like Winnie the Pooh's friend Eeyore. "Under prolonged stress [type Ones] can become disillusioned with themselves and their lot in life. Over time, they can become depressed and isolated, and turn toward self-indulgent behavior to attempt to feel better."<sup>5</sup> For example, towards the end of my five years in Thailand I became heavy-hearted and isolated, spending too much time by myself, seeing little help, and movement forward seemed to stall so I found stress relief in Thai massages, vacations and imagining moving on.

This Enneagram gives indicators of what *growth* would look like, or what are the signs that a 'type One' has worked through some of the basic issues of their type. "They become less strict with themselves and begin to enjoy a greater freedom, lightness, and spontaneity... Instead of feeling that everything is a personal obligation, they begin to experience choice, freedom, abundance, and joy."<sup>6</sup> Again I find this profile interesting and telling, I've often heard people describe me as 'intense', it wasn't intended as a criticism, but neither was it complimentary. This profile shows that type Ones will become healthier as they learn to 'lighten up'. A lighter approach to others will help people hear their views and help them feel closer to others.<sup>7</sup> For me I've seen this in staff meetings with co-workers and in the social times connecting with church friends, be it at a restaurant, a back yard or some social event – it's a real joy to joke around, laugh, be yourself, and not take yourself too seriously.

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<sup>5</sup> The Enneagram Institute, "Enneagram Type One Description," accessed April 21, 2015, [http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/TypeOne.asp#.VTazixPF\\_AE](http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/TypeOne.asp#.VTazixPF_AE).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.,

## Where am I Going?

‘Where am I going’ hasn’t changed from the original (I’m planning on ministry as an international church pastor in a global city) although I may have identified a narrower focus. About a month ago I applied to be senior pastor of a large IC in Abu Dhabi. Three things make this decision interesting. First, I’ve never been attracted to larger churches – they intimidate me and they are beyond my experience. Second my preferred global city would be Asian not Arabian and third, I’ve been telling myself to not to even consider anything until my daughters’ secondary education is finished and college is underway. But under the Spirit’s conviction I sent off my application.

As I look more closely at my personality, my strengths and weaknesses and goals, then a larger church environment *might* make for a good fit. I’m at my best when I can share vision, collaborate with others, make plans and make progress on change. In a larger IC the staff and ministry leaders create a team from which change and movement is more manageable. In smaller ICs there is less collaboration, coaching of volunteer leaders is needed but the transitory nature of the congregation means they will likely change quickly. Isolation is a significant issue in smaller ICs. Larger ICs can have greater longevity in their leadership and staff teams.

Moving on to greater health, as a leader this requires me to know and accept myself, and this doctoral program is helping me in that regard. For example, I recently posted on Max De Pree’s “Leadership is an Art”. In this great little book I see a leadership ideology that would be fitting pastoring any size assembly but is essential if I’m going to expand my influence. I called it ‘other-centered leadership’ with three qualities: *service* as seen in humility, *participative*

*management* as seen in promoting the gifts of others, and *creating covenant relationships* that value the person more than the product or ministry they're charged with.

I think the conviction to apply to the large IC was a prompting to have greater faith in Him, and a desire to have greater influence. That increased faith has also helped me to see the Spirit's work where I am. Regarding the church in Abu Dhabi, they are looking at hundreds of candidates but regardless of how that turns out I'm more open to the possibilities.

### **How Am I Going to Get There?**

In consideration of my Oct. 2014 plan the following goals have been **completed**:

1. Participate in John Maxwell leadership conference in 2014
2. Attend Rice University event: Religious Diversity in a Secular Era; featuring Jose' Casanova, professor of Sociology and Senior Fellow at Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University, where he heads the program on Religion, Globalization and the Secular.
3. Participate in or facilitate groups where people who hold significantly different views freely share their beliefs and values
4. In 2015 teach a sermon series especially attractive to leaders (in progress)

The following still needs to be completed:

1. Read "Good Leaders Ask Great Questions" by John Maxwell
2. With my wife, offer a one- to two-year mentoring relationship to one couple.
3. Monthly invite a wide variety of church members;
4. Invite a variety of non-church friends from the community.

5. Investigate needs at local crisis pregnancy center

**Who is Going to Help Me?**

No change from previous plan.

**How am I Doing?**

For my own well being I continue to connect with Bruce Wray, a dear spiritual friend who isn't afraid to ask me questions that go beneath the surface (soul talk). We connect with each other via email and via Skype calls. While we live in different states we both prioritized getting together when we can, a couple of months ago we went on a weekend conference with our wives at the Billy Graham Training Center in Asheville, North Carolina. We spent the weekend being led spiritually by our favorite author and mentor Dr. Larry Crabb. We enjoyed a beautiful location, extended free time with our wives and some great food - it was refreshing.

## Update Addendum – November 24, 2015:

### Who am I?

This past summer the elders at Alliance Bible Church (ABC) and I read two books by Alan Hirsh: On the Verge<sup>8</sup> and The Permanent Revolution,<sup>9</sup> both of which are influencing my research. The Permanent Revolution is a rethinking of biblical roles as seen in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers (APEST). The authors (Hirsch and Catchim) lean not only on the biblical theology but also on organizational and leadership theories. They offer an understanding of these functions as more than gifts but as vocational ministry. The orientation of this work is toward reimagining the church as a missional movement and the reprioritizing the more generative functions (Apostolic, Prophetic and Evangelistic) over the gifts that have traditionally been the focus of church leadership: shepherding (pastor) and teaching. Their approach ultimately seeks church leadership that values and practices the full range of APEST.

Reading these books and talking with my elders about these leadership functions has been helpful in understanding my leadership capacities and passions. In addition, Hirsh has developed a website that provides an online assessment to determine your APEST score.<sup>10</sup>

I'm going to share my scores, and elder feedback, but first I'll offer a brief description of Apostles and Prophets according to Hirsch:

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, *On the Verge: a Journey Into the Apostolic Future of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 1.

<sup>10</sup> "The Forgotten Ways: Developing Apostolic Imagination and Practice in Western Contexts," accessed November 23, 2015, <http://theforgottenways.org/apest/>.

**APOSTLES** extend the gospel. As the “sent ones,” they ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. They are always thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, networking trans-locally. Yes, if you focus solely on initiating new ideas and rapid expansion, you can leave people and organizations wounded. The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure people are cared for rather than simply used.

**PROPHETS** know God's will. They are particularly attuned to God and his truth for today. They bring correction and challenge the dominant assumptions we inherit from the culture. They insist that the community obey what God has commanded. They question the status quo. Without the other types of leaders in place, prophets can become belligerent activists or, paradoxically, disengage from the imperfection of reality and become other-worldly.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding the web-based test to assess your APEST role, it's important to note that the two highest scores make your primary capacities, and the lower three your secondary. The authors also talk about your having a ‘base’ role and phasing into the other roles as needed but always returning to your base. Here is my assessment.

#### **APEST**

Apostolic	38
Prophetic	30
Evangelistic	22
Shepherding	18
Teaching	16

Before I did the online test, I would have identified “prophetic” to be the highest score, but the test showed otherwise, as did the review with my elders. During our ABC elder retreat we discussed each role, understanding its strengths and weaknesses and how they are designed to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.,



work with one another. They all assessed me as apostolic first, and prophetic second; the other three roles come out in different orders. Not only do I find the clarity of Apostle-Prophet interesting but also the evaluation that show that the traditional pastoral roles of shepherd and teacher score on the weaker side of my capacity. This was not a problem for the ABC leadership team, as their strengths are in shepherding, teaching and evangelism.

While this isn't one of the traditional psychometric profiles, it does provide a quantified understanding of one's place of greatest influence in their ministry; for me that is clearly apostolic and prophetic. Hirsch gives the following description of that combination:

The Apostle Prophet is motivated to engage in great causes - no matter where it may take them. The AP is one who knows what needs to be done, and will mobilize others to engage in mission. The AP is not the most politically sensitive type and can put people off. Their sense of urgency and vision makes up for their lack of political savvy. The nature of the AP is to see the world through a relative black and white mentality. The motivation of the Apostle Prophet is to further the message of God's kingdom through an urgency of the immediate tasks and large strategies.<sup>12</sup>

As I consider the results of former psychometric profiles, this APEST assessment seems to fit in with my personality; both my Jung typology of INFJ and especially the biblical DISC where the character I'm closest to personality wise is the Apostle Paul (see the original PLDP dated October 16, 2014 for further details), seem to confirm the assessment.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.,

## **Where am I going? (Vision and mission)**

I'm circling in a holding pattern. In my previous two PLDP documents I shared my desire for going back to International ministry as an IC pastor; it is so strong that I threw my hat in the ring for a position in Abu Dhabi, despite knowing the opportunity wasn't a great match.

During our time in Hong Kong I had the opportunity to meet with the Senior Pastor of Evangelical Community Church (ECC), Island ECC's mother church. In our conversation he mentioned his departure at the end of this year. Probing further, I've discerned a history of leadership dysfunction and unaddressed issues that go back several years. I've referred the lead pastor to CRM reTurn ministry – a ministry for churches in transition or crisis.<sup>13</sup> This ministry typically includes the role of an intentional interim pastor during the transition process.

Both the ECC senior pastor, Randy Young, and CRM's reTurn's ministry director Dave Miles, asked me if I'd be interested in such a role. In responding to Randy, I shared my belief that they need the depth of experience and the transformation process that the CRM reTurn team could bring. In talking to Dave Miles, I likewise indicated that I believed CRM to be ECC's best chance for a complete transformation back to a place of health and strong missional ministry.

I'm sharing this because it's an indicator of my current holding pattern; it creates tension in my life. With a passion for Asia and IC ministry and the gifting to bring a church through a transition, it's frustrating to not pursue the opening at ECC. With my "*apostolic*" focus, I'm comfortable crossing boundaries – social or cultural; I find starting something new energizing.

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<sup>13</sup> "CRM Empowering Leaders," reTurn | CRM Empowering Leaders, accessed November 23, 2015, <http://www.crmleaders.org/teams/return>.

With the “*prophetic*” aspect, I question what has become normative, disturb common thinking and practices, and thoughtfully bring churches through change. This is my passion, my gifting, and my experience.

*Yet I punted because I’m in a holding pattern.*

It’s easy to see the some of the tangible reasons for the hold:

1. We want our daughters to get through high school and into college in America.
2. Pastoring a small church affords me the time I need for my Doctor of Ministry studies.
3. Our current jobs afford us means to significantly support our daughters’ education.
4. ABC has been a declining church and is undergoing redevelopment and needs greater health.

The intangible reason, however, is at the heart of the holding. I believe God is spiritually forming me through the waiting, having me practice denial of a good and godly thing, my overseas IC calling. This spiritual discipline of waiting and denying is where the tension and at times frustration comes from—and yet waiting with denial is an opportunity to know God better.

### **How am I going to get there? (Personal Strategic Planning)**

Whereas my former PLDPs have some strategic thoughts for growth and goals for returning to IC ministry, this update adds the need to practice patience by waiting upon the Lord, and the need to count the cost of a future in IC ministry.

Our lives with God, especially as Christian leaders, require endurance, self-discipline and tenacity. The apostle Paul uses analogies of a marathon and of a boxing match to discuss the

need for self control and discipline (1 Cor. 9:24-27). No athlete prepares for a marathon or a prizefight without exercising self-control and discipline over a long period of time.

Waiting for something you believe is God's plan for you, but isn't for now, feels like a liminal time, which helps explain my frustration. It's worth noting that expatriate life in general is a liminal experience, so this waiting is both spiritually formative and experientially significant. Here are a few thoughts on my self-control, discipline and need to count the cost:

1. Maintain a pattern of physical exercise which can diminishes stress;
2. Maintain a practice of accountability regarding spiritual and emotional health with trusted friends;
3. Maintain self control when it comes to television (both quantity and quality);
4. Count the cost regarding bringing a DMin program to completion – it requires sacrifice and discipline to complete (Luke 14:25-33);
5. Count the cost regarding a future overseas:
  - a. Regarding distance from family, especially daughters
  - b. Regarding distance from dear friends
  - c. Regarding ministry in the environment of high mobility

**Who is going to help me? (Coaching)**

No change from previous plans.

**How am I doing? (Spiritual direction, health and wellbeing)**

For my own well-being and spiritual direction I continue to connect with Bruce Wray; our time is usually via video chat on Google Hangouts every other month and we email in-between. With Bruce I practice accountability, some soul talk and the confession of sin. It's our desire to maintain a high level of transparency with each other.

I'm also meeting weekly with Wally Whitley at Starbucks; he is a friend and one of my elders at Alliance Bible church. We've been meeting like this for a few years, but lately we've tightened the focus of our coffee time for discussion of our personal devotional time, to pray for our own well being, and especially to discuss and pray for our families.

Finally, while it might seem like a small thing, periodically Wally, Henry and I (either with our wives or on our own) will just kick back and hangout. These informal times with food and drinks – at times at a sporting event – are really refreshing to my soul. Just having fun isn't something I'm good, at and I love having friends who make this a priority.

### **Who am I?**

In the three previous editions I shared human-metrics typology, DISC, Enneagram, and spiritual gifts results. I looked for commonalities and I've certainly seen in these tests an accurate reflection of who I am. But in this edition I want to focus on a theological reflection. This reflection in no way nullifies or minimizes the previous perspective, but I recognize that without it those profiles are lacking full perspective, or lacking a whole dimension that is essential to my leadership growth: my identity as a child of God.

Concisely stated I am set free from sin and death through Christ. Unburdened by condemnation and given a righteousness that is not my own, but Christ's. I have God's Spirit living in me, influencing and enabling me to glorify God. I am volitionally free from the power of sin, or the flesh. I am adopted into God's family and my identity is child of God. My spirit and the indwelling Holy Spirit confirm my identity: adopted, co-heir, in communion with God (Ro. 8:1-17). As such, like Christ, I'm surrendered to the Father's will and purposes for my life.

This statement of my identity in Christ and Spirit enabling is who I am and it significantly influences my leadership and vision for ministry. Another way to consider this is a reflection of the good news of the gospel, this life change and power is what we offer to others on God's behalf. Like Timothy, I'm called to be an example for believers in what I say, do, and feel – and live out the gospel visibly for others to see what's truly different about me (1 Tim. 4:12-13).

### **Where am I going? (Vision and mission)**

It is easy for me to forget, or minimize, the transformation God has brought and is bringing in my life. The gospel can become cool and dispassionate when I forget the beauty of my own transformation, and powerless when I ignore the indwelling Spirit. Alternatively, keeping the transformation that Christ has brought, and is bringing through the Spirit's power and presence, central can energize a gospel-centered ministry in my church. In other words, the good news of being God's child and the power of spirit-to-Spirit communion is who I am and where I'm leading my congregation.

This Christ-centered, Spirit empowered transformation can be a personal experience, as already indicated, but it can also be a corporate purpose. I could write copious amounts about church being Christ-centered and Spirit empowered – life changing, but my intent here is simply to say that there is a link between where the church is going and the pastor's own passion regarding their own transformed identity and on-going communion with God. Leading the church towards life change, towards Spirit-to-spirit communion can be dry orthodoxy or it can have a spark of authenticity and abundant life. Serving people (inwardly and outwardly) can build unity and foster community, which is great, but differs little from a service organization like Kiwanis. However, it's also possible that the Spirit of God brings both unity and divine power seen in service. One looks to our own sense of life and purpose, the other looks to and expects God to work what only He can do. And so the difference in how ministry unfolds can be hindered or accelerated based on the leader's communion with and love for God.

### **How am I going to get there? (Personal Strategic Planning)**

My personal calling, as mentioned in previous editions, is to pastor an International Church outside the western culture; that is still my plan but getting back there has required a

season of isolation. Leaders going through a season of isolation experience a fourfold process: stripping, wrestling with God, increased intimacy, and release to look toward the future. I'd like to reflect briefly on this process, specifically the first dynamic - stripping. Shelly Trebesch writes: "*The Lord removes the various identities that ministry places upon a leader and stripes the leader down to the core of who he/she has been created to be (the identity that the Lord places in him/her).*"<sup>14</sup> So God is working to dismantle, remove deeply held convictions, paradigms, or possibly a hidden idol, so that our identity can become uniquely whom God calls us to be. Since leaving Thailand I've experienced isolation and quasi-isolation and God has used this painful process to help me expose and turn from my own hidden idol.

My pastor dad believed being a pastor meant prioritizing the church over the family, something that wounded me growing up. So I made a commitment going towards ministry that I'd be different - I've always been keenly aware of prioritizing family. So my dad's idol was work. My idol is *calling*, "same-same but different" as they say in Thailand. Starved for attention growing up, "calling" set me apart from my siblings and was a way to be accepted or loved by my dad. Dad unfortunately died before he saw it play out fully. But the energy in my soul towards ministry was to receive the recognition (love) I always longed for. Interestingly, when ministry went sideways leaving the work wasn't all that difficult. What bothered me deeply was what would this mean regarding my "calling". Would I ever return to this apostle-shepherd role of International Church pastor? That is what has haunted me for a long time.

Well this haunts me no more. To move forward in ministry my false identity needed to be shed, "my calling" "Int'l church pastor" may be true but it is not who I am. I am an adopted, Spirit-filled son – end of identity. Everything else is a lightly held gift.

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<sup>14</sup> Dr Shelley G. Trebesch, *Isolation--a Place of Transformation in the Life of a Leader* (Altadena, California: Barnabas Publishers, 1997), 37.



### **Who is going to help me? (Coaching)**

In some ways this PLDP edition doesn't change regarding the coaches in my life, how I interact with them and what they contribute to my life and ministry. However, when I focus on my true identity, different influencers are needed and different urgency is discerned. It would be significant to have in my life a pastor who has gone through a season(s) of isolation, who has identified and dropped their false identity, one who would define their own true identity in a similar way. Such broken, healed and then continuing to serve God "with a limp" pastors are a wonderful find. Doug Welbourn had that role in my life when I started in ministry. I would love to have another such pastor/mentor in my life again.

Bruce Wray (not a pastor but close) and I have had a close friendship for many years, he's dear to me because of the authenticity we can have with one another. We have done soul talk together on video chat; and a commitment to make that more disciplined, more regular would likely benefit both of us. So while I'd love a pastor/mentor in my life – Bruce is the next best thing. ☺ FYI – Bruce edits all my writing!

### **How am I doing? (Spiritual direction, health and wellbeing)**

It is well with my soul. In Trebesch's discussion on the process of transformation for leaders who've been taken into isolation, the fourth and final dynamic is *release to look toward the future*. I believe that God might have me towards the end of my isolation, I genuinely don't want to cut it short, lose out on all that God purposes to show me, on the other hand, there are indicators that He's moving me forward. Trebesch writes, "There comes an intuitive point in which leaders begin to look toward the future" she continues "the leader entering this phase will

have a quiet peace when looking toward the future, rather than a restless desire to escape the pain of isolation.”<sup>15</sup> That generally describes my spirit. I am established in my identity. Whatever God does with me, I’m good - I’m at peace. The rotten drive that at times was behind my calling has lost its energy.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 42-43