
VISION FORWARD



A CAPACITY TO ENDURE

“Frankly, my dear, I enjoyed every moment of it.” So replied Winston Churchill when a woman at the dinner table asked, “Now that it is all over, what was your worst moment in the war—the fall of France, the threat of invasion, the Blitz?”

What did Churchill mean by “enjoyed”? Certainly not that he was glad the war had come or that he and his people had suffered so much. Rather, that he was glad to have served a small part in such a great cause as the fight and victory over evil. He had a sense and an assurance that he had “walked with Destiny”.

Winston Churchill didn’t become Prime Minister of England until the age of 65. Yet he knew before then that he had been born for such a time as this. Though he couldn’t have predicted it entirely, all his previous decades of service were preparing him for the coming of the Second World War. He had insight and intuition into Hitler’s intentions long before they were revealed.

While many mocked or disbelieved him, Churchill held firm to the conviction that the enemy was real, the threat was growing, and that he would one day need to stand firm against it. And stand firm he did, under immense scrutiny, criticism, hardship, testing, and pain. He carried the weight of conviction that England would not surrender and could be victorious.

Each step is a triumph



It is one thing for us, as individuals and as Elim Grace, to have a picture, a vision, a dream of a better future—of what God has called us to accomplish. We may have a growing conviction that we are here for a purpose, that there's a worthy cause we're called to fight for. Even so, it's another thing to see that vision through to

completion. From a distance of sometimes years or decades, we can grow weary and discouraged from an apparent lack of progress or get lost in the whirlwind of what is pressing in on us daily. And a vision can be lost.

A vision, though, is not only a destination. It is also a direction.

To walk *towards and along* a vision will require steadfastness of heart.

James says that “the testing of your faith produces

steadfastness.” (James 1:3) The goal of the testing is not to prove whether or not your faith exists, but to refine your faith as you would purify gold in a fire. Being refined in one trial will produce the steadfastness needed for the next.

What is steadfastness? To be steadfast is to bear up under something heavy. Picture someone carrying a heavy load for a long time. Steadfastness, then, is a *capacity to endure*. Some have the capacity to endure a short 200 meter burst, while others have the capacity to endure a marathon. The capacity must be according to the challenge we face. If you keep facing the same challenge over and over, your capacity to endure will likely not grow. But if you overcome one challenge, then your capacity will grow, equipping and empowering you to face challenges greater than the last.

Challenges, then, are necessary, if we want to grow our capacity. Facing trials is essential, working hard is critical, if we want to see God's vision, his mission, his purpose for our life fulfilled. We cannot walk or run away from the testing we face, if we are to “walk with destiny”. We must walk forward, toward, upward. We will have the ability not to cover large distances over short periods of time, but short distances over a long periods of time. And by God's grace each step will be a triumph.

What challenges will we face along the way? We cannot say exactly nor predict entirely. The fight we know will be long. The race hard. The enemy relentless. The obstacles intimidating. But Christ in us, Christ being *formed* in us, will produce in us the capacity to endure, a holy steadfastness. By his strength, through every trial, we will desire and work to carry the heavy load as long and as far as it takes.

We have been called to serve a small part in a great cause: the Gospel of Jesus Christ

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.” (2 Corinthians 4:8-10)



We are not those who give up, who shirk back, who have no hope in this world. We have a living hope in Jesus Christ! We have a future, a reason to endure and give thanks, rejoice, live, move, breathe, serve, give—to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength (Mark 12:30).

So as we look to 2019 we will embrace new challenges and new trials. We will enjoy every moment, for we have been called to serve a small part in a great cause: the gospel of Jesus Christ. It continues to spread, to reach, to influence, to impact, to transform, and to make all things new. For God has many people in this city (Acts 18:10) and many good works for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Forward, toward, upward we march. He who called us is faithful. A vision isn't faithful to us. A mission isn't faithful to us. A dream isn't faithful to us. A destiny isn't faithful to us. Jesus Christ is faithful to us. He will finish what he has begun.

A THEOLOGICALLY INFORMED MID-LIFE CRISIS

This month I will turn 40. So, I've decided to have a mid-life crisis. A theologically informed mid-life crisis that is! I will be taking some time to think back and reflect on the *sovereign* themes in my life. For example, what are some of the unique experiences God has given me throughout my life? What are some divine patterns I see emerging? What are the gifts I consistently use with a deep sense of contentment and joy? What are the things I do that when I accomplish them I feel God's pleasure, a sense or conviction that I was made for this? What are the topics and the people that consistently move my heart?

These question and more will, I pray, lead me to better discover and understand who I am in Christ, what he has called me to do, and who he has called me to serve.

What about you? If you were to take a few weeks or months, what sovereign themes in your life would you discover?

THANK OUR LEADERS

We are blessed with a great leadership team! We might be tempted when praising and affirming people to start from the top down. But let's not think vertical. Let's think *horizontal*.

Jesus said something about being the greatest, whether among many or few: "let the leader be as one who serves...I am among you as one who serves." (Luke 22:14)

Let there be ever only one kind of leader within Elim Grace: the servant leader. As we approach Christmas, I ask you to be thankful to God for the gift of the servant leaders he's given among us. Here they are. Make sure you thank them for their leading/serving:

Associate Pastor - Bill King

Elders - Chris Clark, Phil Ryan, Mike Dahar, and Bob Kester (Local Church Leader)

Deacons - Frank Carbone, Sharon Carr, Diana Desens, Dominick Farella, Dan Ignacio, Korisa Pritchard, Ben Ryan, Esther Rogers, Tim Stahl, Chad Summer, Mike Conway, Candy Conway, Bill Whittaker, Steve Davis, Christine Tupe.

Elim Kids and Elim Nursery - Alissa Evans

Elim Youth - Chad Summer (assisted by Dari Summer and Malcolm and Heather Huggins)

Elim Worship - Shelly King and Steve Davis

Elim Sound and Media: Mike Conway

Elim Hospitality - Ann Monroe and Charmaine LaLiveres

Elim Service Hosts - Dan Ignacio and Vikki Woods

Elim Women - Ann-marie King

Elim Men - Cas Usiatynski (assisted by Chris Burritt, Chris Clark, Frank Carbone, Pete Mahan, and Bob Kester)

This is, I am certain, not an exhaustive list. There are many among us who serve and lead without much or any attention. They are unseen but not unknown. They give as much they can or the little that they have "in secret". But their heavenly Father who sees in secret will openly reward them. If that is you, and your name and contribution is not mentioned here nor perhaps anywhere, we thank you and we thank God for you. It is *our* honor to have you be among us.