

VISION FORWARD



ONE YEAR AGO WE CLOSED: 11 THINGS I'VE LEARNED SINCE THEN

One year ago, March of 2020, Elim Grace went fully online as we encountered the pandemic. We returned to in-person services as soon as we could, which was in the beginning of June.

Reflecting on that week and the time in between, I wrote down 11 things I've learned (or am learning) since then related to ministry and life:

1. I'm a pastor, not a doctor, scientist, or politician. I'm a pastor and my task is to feed your soul, to bring you hope, and to call you to Jesus. To accomplish this I simply must give myself to prayer and to the word of God. I can do no other.
2. The Holy Spirit is alive and well! When things we depend on are stripped away from us, we are mercifully made more aware of Him. My

increased reliance on Him has made a difference in my life, my preaching, my praying, my feeding on God's Word, and my confidence in the prophetic.

3. Jesus is The King we need and desire. The best thing, in my opinion, for the church of Jesus Christ in the United States was, is, and always will be the stripping of any false god of political salvation. Our hope and our salvation is in Christ alone and the church is at her best when she trusts in Christ alone; she is at her most beautiful when she worships Christ alone; and he is at her most powerful when she bows to Christ alone.
4. I realized how busy my soul was when everything slowed down. And then my soul became busy with new things! The soul has a tendency to be hurried along by life. But I'm learning to rest both IN Jesus, receiving from Him only what I need, and ON Jesus, giving

all my worries and frustrations to Him.

5. I truly enjoy my family. I enjoy my wife and her company and coming home to her. I enjoy my children, every phase they're in, and the relationship I have with each of them. I even love my dogs!
6. I truly enjoy being home. Meetings at night are a season I'm not in right now. I need to be home, I want to be home. Home brings me joy and rest. And I hope I always look forward to home.
7. The things most important to me are things I have to choose every day. Just because something's important doesn't mean it's a priority. I have to make what's important a priority and that means I will have to sacrifice certain things. Nothing worth doing or keeping will come easy or free. Everything's an exchange.
8. Social media has a bigger control on me than I want to admit. It influences and shapes my thinking and desiring. No question, I must master it or it will master me.
9. I have never been more discouraged than I am now with the state and direction of our culture. Watershed moments have arrived at the speed of hundreds of years. But I have never been more hopeful of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for IT IS the power of God for salvation. The church has traversed centuries, none as critical, perhaps, as the Second Century. We are likely in a century such as that again. But Jesus is still the same yesterday, today, and forever and the Spirit of our sovereign Lord is still upon us to preach good news!
10. The church will never "shut down". God will always draw people TOGETHER. Digital and virtual are good and necessary, but they will never replace nor snuff out the desire in us to see others "face to face," which is in truth the heart of God since the beginning of creation. I think of the new friends God has brought into my life. They are people I WANT to see face to face, because virtual simply CANNOT make up that difference. I disagree with those who say the church as a place where people are drawn and gathered together by God is a

thing of the past.

11. I have always wondered why God brought me from the country of Mexico to the United States... And I think I'm beginning in part to see why. My heart is so moved within me every time I think of the truth that Jesus Christ alone is worthy to break the seal and open the scroll of mankind's history, God's kingdom, and our individual destiny. He alone is worthy of the authority to rule all things, in all places, and at all times, according to the will of God, in perfect goodness and righteousness, wisdom and love, patience and power. He alone can and will in the end do all things well and make all things new to the glory of God.

"And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." Revelation 5:2-4

Let me ask, what have you learned since then?
Write down the first five things that come to mind:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.