


## Praise Reports

- ❑ Praise God for His faithfulness in innumerable ways during this season of equipping. Tim learned quickly that this equipping season as a student, a researcher, a graduate assistant, a friend, and the stepped-up role of being a father and spouse in his family can be much more tiring than the heavy ministry responsibilities as a pastor or a para-church leader. Sharlene is beginning to have a taste of the infuriating, irritating and impossible aspects of motherhood and in spite of these, the simple pleasures of motherhood continue to warm her heart. God has been gracious and kind to us and we are deeply thankful for the sufficient grace so far.
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- A family photograph showing a man and a woman smiling, with three children. They are standing in front of a fountain with water spraying upwards. The man is on the right, wearing a white shirt and glasses. The woman is on the left, wearing a black top and glasses. There are three children: a toddler in a green and brown shirt in the center, a young boy in a red shirt in the foreground, and another child partially visible behind him.
- ❑ Praise God for our children's growth and development. Matthew is now in Primary One, moving into Primary Two in September 2010 and Owen will progress to Kindergarten. Zachary is imitating his brothers and has developed a unique style on his own for terrorizing Matthew and Owen... LOL
  - ❑ Praise God for allowing us to experience the different seasons and the snow as a family. It is one thing to have experienced snow during my past travels in the ministry. The opportunity to play in falling snow with my family members and loved ones is unforgettable. Of course, the trade-off is the hard and painful work of having to shovel the snow from the driveway. That means also that we are finally getting adjusted to the cold weather (well, not really lah), and the rapid change of weather. Looking back, we are thankful that we did not matriculate at the University of Toronto: if we find it cold in Virginia, we will not have enjoyed the bitter winter in Toronto.
  - ❑ Praise God for friends and loved ones. Our family members and friends have occasionally sent us some 'Singapore and Hong Kong Chinese local food pastes and items that we cannot get here in Virginia Beach, and it has served us well. The last year, Tim's in-laws, a few of Sharlene's close friends, and Tim's junior college economics tutor visited us, and we were refreshed with their visits. Friendships have come a long way when you received their love in practical ways such as sending us items from home, and/or when they will take a long journey just to spend time together. And of course, it reminded us of all our friends back at home who love us, and who we love. Two years down, and a few more years and before long, we will be done and on our way home! A friend said to us, "Tim, when you graduate and return home, we will take you to Indian 'gun-power' chilli and curry!"

## Reflection on Theological Studies at the End of Second Year

The second year of my studies has been a remarkable experience in several ways.

- ❑ First, I was able to delve deep into the writings of select early and medieval Christian thinkers, and scholarly writings about their works. Particularly, I read a large number of Augustine's pertinent works, John Cassian's *Spiritual Conferences*, Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule*, Bonaventure's collection of mystical and theological writings, Thomas Aquinas's select writings, Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, Jean Gerson's collection of mystical and ecclesial writings, St John of the Cross' mystical writings, and Jonathan Edward's *Religious Affections*. These historic Church Fathers, Church Doctors, and Christian mystics lived between two horizons – an active life, and a contemplative life – in the church, and in society. Their quests for theological and union with God amidst active service during disturbing eras are inspiring. In a nutshell, these thinkers have shaped my theological acumen and spirituality.
- ❑ Second, I was able to examine various philosophical, theological, and contextual methods of doing theology, in the church, in the academy, and in secular political spheres. The list is simply too many to include herein. I continue to be amazed by how the theological trajectories have developed from Scholastic thinkers like William of Ockham and into the twentieth century thinkers like Hans-Georg Gadamer, Bernard Lonergan, Stanley Grenz, and Kevin Vanhoozer. This is a significant aspect of thinking through methodological issues for doing theology in our era, the transition between modernity and postmodernity, and as the center of Christianity shifts from the western hemisphere to the Global South.
- ❑ Third, I was able to trace the development of the doctrine of the Church, its divisions and quests for unity in a number of Christian traditions. This is a substantial background work for my intended dissertation area. Among the traditions I have studied during these two years include Baptist ecclesiology, Roman Catholic ecclesiologies, Evangelical ecclesiology, Ecumenical ecclesiologies, and Reformed ecclesiology. I shall research into Early & Patristic ecclesiologies, Orthodox ecclesiology, and Lutheran ecclesiology during the third year of my program. Notwithstanding there is still much work required, I am pleased that I am growing into becoming an evangelical ecclesiologist familiar with the ecumenical trajectories.
- ❑ Fourth, besides all of the above, I had also spent an enormous amount of time preparing for proficiency in Theological German, presenting papers at academic conferences like The British New Testament Society, The American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, and The Evangelical Theological Society Regional, and also Annual Meetings, and writing book reviews for publications at academic journals like *Religious Studies Review*, *Blackwell Reviews in Religion & Theology*, *Evangelical Review of Society & Politics*, and *Pneuma Review*.
- ❑ Fifth, I have gained much experience working as graduate assistant with my mentor in his constructive theological research, in writing proposals, in proofreading, in indexing his many published and forthcoming books and articles.

On the whole, I have been very enriched even though I am also physically tired.

## Spiritual & Ministerial Formation

On spiritual formation, we kept ourselves active in the following ways:

- ❑ We continue to learn about the rigors of keeping a delicate balance of active studying, friendship, service, and family life.
- ❑ We participate in Sunday School and I have also facilitated a Sunday School class on 'Spiritual Discernment' between January to May 2010. Sharlene assists in children's Sunday School every fortnight.
- ❑ We continue to actively participate in community life by seeking out select friends whom we feel that we could either connect, or because we sense God leading us to develop rich relationships with them, socially, and/or pastorally.



## Prayer Request – Thank you so much for praying and journeying with us!

1. Preparation for Comprehensive Exam – written and oral – tentatively scheduled for either March or May 2011. This is the qualifying exam that determines if I am able to proceed to the dissertation phase of my studies. At the present moment, there are 30 areas and a total of 80 sub-areas I would have to be deeply proficient for the exam (exam is not in an open-book format). Students are allowed only two tries.
2. This semester's readings, reports, papers, and work for my professor. My coursework this semester are Logic, Yves Congar & the Catholic Tradition, John Zizioulas & the Orthodox Tradition, and Renewal in Christian history, biblical studies, and theology.
3. Pre-ABD shaping of my dissertation proposal, and the methodological chapter.
4. Revisions of papers for publications to various journals and publishers, and drafting of a conference paper for the upcoming Evangelical Theological Society Annual Meeting in Atlanta scheduled for November 2010.
5. For God's healings on Shar's wrist, and my backbone problems, and His provision of divine energies, wisdom, grace, and faithfulness to run, with patience and perseverance, this chapter of our lives.
6. For our children's growth and development, and adjustment to their new teachers in the upcoming academic year, and for their readiness to return to Singapore's vigorous education system in due time.
7. For suitable job and ministry for Tim and Shar when we return home/Singapore.

