



The Fishline

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In this issue: faith and Techer life.

What I've Learned at Tech

reflections on four years of life as a Techer...

by Po-Ling Loh

Wow, four years of Tech are over. It's been an incredible blessing serving with all of you. Our relationships are eternal, and though we may never again be in the same place at the same time, we have an eternity to spend together. :)

Before leaving Tech, I want to leave you guys with some final words. I don't pretend to be any wiser than the rest of you, though I may be a year or two older. But we can learn a lot from each other's experiences, and I have a few things I'd like to share. Here are ten parting words of "wisdom," in the order they've come to me.

1) Never feel unqualified or afraid.

When I came to Tech four years ago, I had very little confidence in "spiritual" things. CCF was my first fellowship/youth group/Bible study/whatever, and I had almost never talked to anyone about faith. Soon after I joined CCF, I was sharing about God's work on a regular basis and leading my first Bible study.

But as I became more involved in campus ministry, I always had a tiny voice in the back of my mind, asking, "how are you qualified to do these things?" Everyone else had so much more experience with small groups and fellowships, so how was I qualified to lead?

At the end of frosh year, an older friend nominated me and two frosh friends for a leadership position in CCF. I remember asking him, "why me??" Even though we eventually declined the nominations, they gave us a tremendous confidence boost and fostered a few exciting conversations about what we might do as leaders in CCF.

God has brought me a long way since then, and I've come to realize that we should never allow feelings of fear or inadequacy prevent us from engaging in ministry. Even if you are a relatively new Christian, God has called you in His own timing, and you are no less qualified to serve Him than anyone else. It brings to mind the parable of the "workers in the vineyard" in Matthew 20. And even if you're "just a frosh," you've been given unique gifts to share with those around you. As in 1 Timothy 4:12, "don't let anyone look down on you because you are young." If God is calling you, get up and go! And encourage younger Christians to do the same.

2) Always use your influence to do good.

Transitioning from sophomore year to junior year was a scary experience. I suddenly found myself in a situation where I had a number of new frosh and sophomores looking up to me. Even if I lacked wisdom, it didn't matter – they were going to watch what I did, and I needed to be careful of the example I set for them.

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FAITH

Where does faith come from?

"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the world of Christ."
(Rom 10:17)

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2)

"Yet [Abraham] did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'" (Rom 10:9-11)

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Heb 11:1)

"And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God...and hope *makes not ashamed*." (Rom 5:2, *alternative translation*)

"'Everything is possible for him who believes,' said Jesus. Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'" (Mark 9:23-24)

Faith comes from God. He is the author of our faith. Faith comes when we trust in his word, being fully persuaded. Faith comes from hearing his word, and our response to hearing and trusting in his word is being obedient to it. Through that obedience, God's name is glorified and our faith is strengthened. Faith is not trusting in all of his word all at once. Faith grows as we become more trusting, as God gives us more words, and as we become obedient to those words.

His word comes through Jesus Christ. We have hope in the glory of God, and we are not ashamed because we trust in him and hold onto that hope.

How does someone "get faith?" They hear the word. They trust the word. They pray. By living out that word, they lay hold of the faith that God has given them. Note that it is not us who initiate faith by our own trusting. It comes from God's word. And when we are having trouble trusting, God helps us out with that too.

by Stephen Wilke

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Later that year, two precious friends organized a big birthday party for me. I was overwhelmed by the number of people who showed up and the notes people wrote to me. I thought to myself, “I don’t deserve any of this!!” and “how do I keep pointing to God, rather than basking in my own praise?” I resolved that if God had placed me in a position to influence many younger brothers and sisters, I would try my best to use it for good. I hope that in spite of my failings, I have continued to hold myself to that standard.

3) God has given you just enough time to do *everything* He wants you to do.

When I got to Tech, I quickly identified many needs around me, but I also realized it was simply impossible to do everything. Baking cookies, writing words of encouragement to a friend, meeting someone for lunch, visiting a person who was hurting – they were all good things to do, but agggghh!! I couldn’t do all of them.

While reading Rick Warren’s *Purpose-Driven Life* a few months later, I came across the following passage:

“It is impossible to do everything people want you to do. You have just enough time to do God’s will. If you can’t get it all done, it means you’re trying to do more than God intended for you to do.”

I’ve kept this wisdom in my heart ever since. At the times when I feel most frazzled trying to make ends meet, it isn’t time to panic. It’s time to quiet my heart in prayer and discern what exactly God wants me to do.

4) Recognize and embrace your spiritual gifts.

At one of the first small-group Bible studies I led – 1 Corinthians 12 – we did an activity about identifying spiritual gifts in each other. Each of us had seven cards labeled with the “gifts of the Spirit”: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder/awe. We were supposed to write the person’s name on each card who best exemplified the gift.

I found myself with a few votes for “wisdom,” a few for “right judgment,” and one for “knowledge” and “wonder/awe.” I still wonder whether this is an accurate portrayal of my gifts, but at the time, I stubbornly denied the fact that I had any particularly special spiritual gifts.

Two years later, I finally admitted that I had a real gift for encouragement. I had always known myself as an encourager, but I had shrugged it off as an ability that everyone possessed. However, I had come to realize that God had given me an ability to identify people needing encouragement and minister to them. It allowed me to pray more about how to develop this (and other) gifts and be watchful of ways I could use them to build up the Body of Christ. Humility is certainly a precious gift, but it should not prevent us from acknowledging and embracing the other gifts God which has given us.

5) Every ministry is *God’s* ministry.

The end of the year is always a time of transition in the Christian community. People need to figure out where God is calling them to serve; ministries change and are restructured; leaders step down in some areas and step up in others. It can be a stressful time, especially when one has been involved in certain ministries that may be in danger of disappearing.

But in the end, I have come to realize that everything is *God’s* ministry. Whether it be frosh prayer, homeless ministry, a small group, the future of a fellowship ... it’s all God’s ministry, and we are but His humble servants. God will lead some ministries to prosper and others to fade away, all in His own timing; and if He wants a ministry to continue, He will raise up leaders to lead it.

6) The Christian life is like a waterfall.

A few years ago, a fellow Techer shared the following analogy with me, from a Sunday school teacher in 6th grade:

“One day, when we were studying the fourth chapter of James, Mr. Jason taught us about mercy. Let’s suppose when I start the day, fresh and new, I have a hatful of mercy.... But as I get to school, someone bumps into me, someone else starts an argument with me, someone else takes advantage of me – and I forgive them and move on, drawing from my hatful of mercy.

“But eventually the hat runs out, and I snap, I become angry and bitter, and I no longer feel merciful or loved. Mr. Jason said that God had much more than a hatful of mercy, and that when we ran out, God was still able to refill and recharge us. The secret to being more merciful, more gracious, more loving, was to not rely on our own limited supply of mercy or love, but to let it come from the infinite riches of Christ.”

I really liked this analogy. Rely on God’s grace, and that hat will never run out. We need to rely on God’s providence, so that even when our hat is running on empty, we don’t slow down. Instead, we trust that God will replenish our supply the moment we hit the bottom.

Over time, the “hat analogy” developed into a “waterfall.” I realized that we’re not just individual hats – we’re all part of a gigantic waterfall. Sometimes we’re at the top of the waterfall, refilling others’ hats of love and mercy. Other times, we’re at the bottom, being filled from the hats of others. And everything comes from the Source, which is Jesus, pouring out so much love in abundance that it cascades down and fills all of us.

7) Point to Jesus.

This is a phrase I got from a Bible study not too long ago. In everything we do – every word and action – we should ask ourselves: Are we pointing to Jesus? Are our lives really bringing glory to God? When I sit down and talk to a friend who is searching for wisdom, am I giving her the “wisdom that comes from above” (James 3:17) and encouraging her to be more like Jesus, or am I speaking from my own sense of “what should be done”? When I perform acts of love or kindness, am I performing them out of a sense of duty, or because I am humbly following the model that Jesus gave to us?

Here’s a prayer from Mother Teresa that really touches my heart, and encapsulates the idea of pointing to Jesus:

Dear Jesus,

*Help me to spread Your fragrance wherever I go.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly
That my life may only be a radiance of Yours.
Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with
May feel Your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!
Stay with me and then I will begin to shine as You shine
So to shine as to be a light to others
The light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be mine.*

8) The best way to understand God’s heart is to serve.

This piece of wisdom is credited to Peter. As some of you may remember, last summer’s “Summer Study” topic was “growing in heart knowledge of God.” One day, Peter told me that “the best way to understand God’s heart is to serve.” This was pre-Skid Row ministry, and I hadn’t done much serving outside of our

community at Caltech.

As the summer unfolded, I realized that Peter was right. I had never felt closer to God's heart than when I first started serving the poor. As we drove into Skid Row every Sunday morning, and I saw the lines of people waiting to be served outside the missions, I would always say to myself, "These are God's people. These are God's children. God loves them, and He wants us to learn to love them, as well."

Although I pray to see the world through God's eyes, I have realized that when God opens my eyes to the world, it really breaks my heart. When we're at Skid Row and someone comes crying – when I comprehend the depth of pain that a fellow brother or sister is enduring – I catch a glimpse of what God sees and feels for each one of us.

9) God is God over your academic life as well as your spiritual and relational life.

This might seem like one of those "well, duh..." statements, but it's something that took me a few years to learn. It was always natural for me to pray about spiritual or relational things, but when it came to academics, my prayers seemed to have less meaning. I would pray that I would finish my work quickly and do okay on exams, but I knew that my homework wasn't going to get done magically if I didn't spend time on it.

I don't recommend replacing all of your studying with praying, but I want to remind you of 1 Corinthians 1:25, which took on new meaning to me after a particularly intense term during sophomore year:

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."

10) Listen to the nudging of the Holy Spirit.

Last summer, I was reading the book *You Were Made for Love* by Dr. Philip Carlson. I came across a chapter in about the Spirit, which really sank in. Here is an excerpt:

"Each of us has moments when we sense that we must act. We read something – perhaps we're reading Scripture or we hear a sermon or something happens in a movie – and all of a sudden, the Holy Spirit places in our hearts a small vision of what could be: an impulse to good. We say to ourselves, 'You know, I could do something about that. I could respond to that need – to seek forgiveness from a family member, to speak a word of encouragement, to visit a nursing home, to share the best and most important news I have ever heard with someone who needs to hear it.' ...

"What do you do with that impulse to do good, which the Holy Spirit is birthing in your heart? We have several choices. We can ignore it, we can wait, or we can act on it. The choice to wait is the most common and usually leads to the same outcome as ignoring God's voice. The sin-damaged human soul is like a leaky tire. We may experience that impulse to do good, but it loses its urgency if we let it sit there long enough.... The pressure in our souls is gone. We don't say that word; we don't write that note; we don't do what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives.... If we want to facilitate the flow of grace, we need to listen carefully to the Holy Spirit, and we need to do what he calls us to do."

Wow, that chapter really cut to my heart. And I knew what the Holy Spirit had been "birthing in my heart" – I just needed to act on it. That's how homeless ministry was born.

"All things work for good for those who love God" (Romans 8:28). I'll miss you guys, but I'll never stop praying for you!! :)

Here is our prayer for the Christians at Tech:

May God allow us safe travels over the summer. May we be refreshed in our vacation. May we use the time this summer to draw closer to the Lord, allowing him to work miracles in our lives. May we be good stewards of the time, talents, and passions he's given us. May we come to know our place in the body. May we serve with our whole hearts. May we speak of our faith boldly. May we care for those around us well. May we be sustained in our faith, ever hoping for the glory of God. May we pursue wisdom. May we be hungry for the word and constantly be in prayer. May we learn to discern the voice of God from the words of the world. May God prepare each of us for welcoming the new frosh and summer students. May we be ready to receive, come alongside, and serve them. May we passionately seek after God's will in our lives.

Amen.

-the fishline

What's going on with Christians on campus?

For events and meeting times check out the calendar on the CCF website:

<http://ccf.caltech.edu/>

Check out of the list of churches on the website for Sunday morning adventures!

EXTRA DBAL?

You could spend it on nonperishable food for Hill Lutheran's food bank. Stephen usually walks over with food at the end of term.