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### 3 Year Thoughts

I have experienced more worry, anxiety, stress, fear, elation, hope, joy, and exhilaration over the past 3 years than any other time in my life. It is a total privilege to lead Revolution.

Inspired by Gary Lamb's **21 Lessons From 2 Years of Church Planting**, I thought I'd capture a few thoughts of my own in light of our birthday. Since my learnings and perspectives are unique, I hesitate to share them as generalizations. They simply comprise my perspective on the passing of this wonderful marker.

#### **1. Church planting is not for the faint of heart or the lazy.**

I'm sure it is possible to plant a church and work less than 60 hours a week, but I haven't figured out how. Maybe I will sometime soon...

#### **2. I can't ask my church to do anything I'm not willing to do.**

I figured this out when I asked people to share their faith. I quickly asked myself, "Who am I sharing my faith with?" That's when we started meeting our neighbors and eventually introduced 3 of them to Jesus. I recognize that I have to be out in front - modeling whatever it is we're doing.

#### 3. God changed my target audience, and I didn't even realize it.

Over 3 years ago, I assumed that Revolution would reach people who were culturally-savvy/hip and a bit younger. We always said that our focus was on a younger mindset, but I honestly assumed those mindsets would come in younger bodies. Within the first year, I finally realized that God was using Revolution to reach a WIDE cross-section of ages, ethnicities, lifestyles, and socio-economic backgrounds. That was quite a shift from a more narrow perspective that I began with. Yeah - God really knows what He is doing. I have realized that God wants to use me and our church to reach a very diverse group of people, and culturally-savvy/hip people can often be a real pain in the butt with all their expectations.

#### 4. Staying outside my comfort zone has been the best thing for me.

My family and I moved into a neighborhood where we are the minority, and it has been awesome for me. I'm stretched by the Marcia music, pillow salesmen, ice cream trucks, chihuahuas, pit bulls, and gang bangers. What a privilege it is to be used by God to love, bless, and pray for people that are so different than me. I think I'm coming to the realization that they aren't really that different.

#### 5. Leading and managing a staff is harder than I imagined.

Every staff member comes with incredible gifts and talents as well as expectations and weaknesses. Negotiating all of that while trying to function as a team is difficult and rewarding - all at the same time.

#### 6. I never dreamed that I would enjoy teaching the Bible so much.

Before rallying our launch team, I was only given the opportunity to teach in front of a congregation a few times - 3 at **Rockharbor**, 2-3 at my Dad's church, and 1 at Saddleback (not **this one - another one**.) I never thought I'd enjoy crafting and presenting a weekly message, but I love it. Although the crafting part can be really weighty every week, it is completely worth the effort when I see and hear about the changed lives that result from our Sunday Celebration services. I want to be the best possible communicator, and I'm constantly working on it.

#### 7. I am completely focused on impacting the communities surrounding Long Beach.

You could easily call it tunnel vision. If it doesn't help us in our mission of impacting the communities surrounding Long Beach, I don't want to do it. Complete focus is required in order to see success. Nothing must be allowed to distract me from reaching and discipling people who don't know Jesus.

8. I have stopped chasing people who don't want to keep attending Revolution. During the first year or so, I would chase after people who would attend Revolution for a few months and then bail. I read a quote from Rick Warren that freed me up. I can't find the quote now, but basically he said, "Minister to the people who want to be with you. Don't run after the people who don't." That doesn't mean that I/we don't follow up on people. We are tenacious about that. But, when people communicate (most often with their feet and word through the grapevine) that they are dissatisfied with something, I now let them go. I'm disappointed, but I have to focus on the people who want to be part of the vision of Revolution.

9. Resting is not easy for me, but I'm trying. As long as I can think back over the course of my life, I can't remember being very good at resting. I sleep well - 8-9 hours every night without ever waking up once, but I don't rest well while I'm awake. I have too many ideas running through my head, and I've only got 67 more years left on this earth. (I plan to live until I'm 100...lol.)

10. Worry, anxiety, and insecurity are my enemies. I worry alot...about everything. I hate worry, but I just can't help it. I know, I know. It is a lack of trust in God's plan. I admit it. I bought a black book, and I write my worries inside it. When I feel swamped by my worries, I pull it out and fill a page - releasing it all to God. Insecurity isn't much fun either. Try standing in front of hundreds of people on a Sunday - wondering about how you look and sound. Somehow, God uses all of it for his glory.

11. Appropriately sharing my strengths and weaknesses is liberating (for me and our church). It is impossible to lead or speak without being appropriately honest about where I am at in life. I regularly share my shortcomings, embarrassing moments, and unmet expectations. I don't share "unprocessed" learnings, and I'm very deliberate in what I share. It is liberating for me, and it seems to allow our church to see me as a real person - or at least as much as they can.

12. Working hard and having fun are both required - oftentimes at the same time. I love to work hard, and I love to have fun. Both are contagious, and both are very needed in church planting.

13. High expectations have been my greatest gift...and curse. I have really high expectations of myself and others. This has driven us to do some pretty amazing things as a church, and it can be very stressful and painful. If you lower your expectations, you'll be more likely to reach them. Make sense?

14. Working at a church that exploded in the early years was priceless...and extremely detrimental. When Laura and I started at Rockharbor on the very first day in 1997, we had no clue what we were getting ourselves into. Within 2 years, we were running well over 1,000 people, and now they run over 5,000 on a weekend. Within 6 months of launching, I was hired as the Associate Pastor at 24 years of age - way over my head. I am very thankful for the priceless experiences I received by helping Keith Page navigate the process of developing systems for our church from day one. And, I have been forever ruined by actually believing that a church can grow this fast. When Revolution didn't grow this fast (or anywhere near it), my unmet expectations were crushing.

15. I'll never be satisfied, but I want to celebrate along the way. Things can always be bigger, better, more effective, and more efficient. More lives can always be impacted in a greater way. I always see what can be improved. But, I want to and need to celebrate what is happening along the way. Unfortunately, because I'm never satisfied, it can be hard to appreciate the progress or impact that is being made. Even yesterday, there were 390 adults in attendance with 75+ kids in children's ministry. I am bummed that we haven't pushed through the 400 barrier yet, but I have to stop and look back and thank God for all He has done

already - and trust Him with the results of the future. And, realize that our growth is pretty phenomenal in this demographically and spiritually stagnant area.

16. Having mentors to call on 24/7 has been a lifesaver.

I'm not sure what I would have done over the past 3 years without Rick Mysse (denominational exec) and Keith Page (founding pastor of Rockharbor). These two guys have answered countless questions, listened to my groanings, and encouraged me endlessly.

17. Vision is the fuel that ignites a movement of the heart.

I am continually blown away by how powerful vision can be. Whenever I remind our church why we exist and share our upcoming strategies to impact our communities, it ignites something so powerful in men and women. I love to share vision, and I love to share it big!

18. I like it big, but most people like it smaller and more intimate.

One of the things that people love about Revolution is how it feels like a smaller more intimate congregation - versus big megachurches in southern California. That's why we're heading toward becoming one church with many locations. Yesterday, we announced that we'll start a new campus every year for 7 years - Bellflower in 2007 and then North Long Beach, Downtown Long Beach, Belmont Shore, Compton, Carson, and San Pedro. Can you imagine?

19. Thank your leaders and volunteers constantly and once a year.

I feel like I'm thanking people constantly. So many people play such a big role in ministering at Revolution. I have to keep remembering to say "thank you" - day after day. And, I love thanking our volunteers through a once a year ministry appreciation dinner and appreciating our leaders through a yearly Christmas dinner. It is so fun to hear some of them say, "No church has ever thanked me like this."

20. Staff members are like gold - precious and in need of being shined.

Every staff member is extremely important and worth their weight in gold. That's why you have to choose them very carefully. They carry the ministries of the church and lead leaders like I will never be able to do. They need to be shined through constant encouragement, feedback, training, and coaching. That's something I'm really working on.

21. Spending time with my wife and family has become more important than ever.

I have the best wife in the entire world - willing to move way outside her comfort zone - literally and figuratively. She has been ultra-supportive over the past 12 years of our marriage and especially over the past 3 years. She understands all the phone calls, meetings, and stress that goes along with church planting. Spending time with her and our awesome kids is becoming more and more important. The balance of family and church planting is brutal and feels like a constant re-alignment issue in my life.

God has done amazing things in my life and in the life of our church over the past 3 years. I can't wait to see what he'll do over the next 3!