



To Accomplish in My Remaining Years

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[The following was compiled from various of Ted's documents dating from 2003, and from a more recent, incomplete essay where he had begun to reflect on what it means to grow old. LC]

"The most important thing to remember is that your task is to discover, not find ways to prove something that merely supports your expectations!" From this thought, written to doctoral student, an idea emerged: perhaps *To Discover, Not to Prove* might be a responsible title for a book. The subtitle would represent an elaboration of the title, perhaps these words: *The Reasonable Purpose for Doing Research*. I think discovery, the quest for truth, has been a hallmark of my life and career.

When my teaching career began, Education, as a scholarly field, was in the last stages of its infancy. Already it was known as the disadvantaged child among the academic fields. Most of its roots were in tradition and history. Its principles were highly pragmatic, but attempts were being made to discover underlying theory.

In those years, the scholars of Education were mostly of two sorts: the quantitative positivists and, on the warmer side, the dreamers. The first of these—those who first claimed the distinction of "scientific," were the apostles of Thorndike and his mathematically-grounded disciples, convinced as they were that from *measurement* would emerge a theoretical framework for a science of education. Their counterparts were regarded as fuzzy and largely unscientific. Their roots were older—perhaps deeper—in the actual experiences of teaching children. Their theories seemed somewhat like fables, nourished in the functional classrooms of Pestalozzi, Frobel, Steiner, and Peabody.

The clash is persistent. The claim to excellence passes back and forth. The major point of agreement is that education is now a legitimate field of intellectual inquiry. John Dewey perhaps is most responsible for the emergence of a field that is philosophically grounded and at the same time scientifically regulated. But the most substantial changes in educational practice have emerged in recent years, not from academic philosophy, nor from academic science. The surprising new source of educational practice is technology. Technology has made it possible to take educational practice completely out of the classroom; and in more recent years, increasing technological sophistication and the more enlightened efforts to facilitate learning at a distance, have created the possibility—if not the probability—that a teacher's non-classroom experience will actually enrich formal classroom-based education.

Invitation to a New Role for My Remaining Years

In 2001, I was asked to describe how I would like to use some of my remaining years. My reflections and my imagination once again came rushing together to sketch a dream. For a person who struggled for several years to come to terms with retirement, and found it almost maddening to *invent* a new role, this new challenge came as a reprieve.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." My life, as did the Apostle Paul's, draws its worth from this contentment. Even as I

contemplate the invitation to consider, what will be my last professional role, this early childhood memory from Philippians 4:11, stands as an assurance that God is sovereign in this matter as throughout my life.

As this vision has taken shape, I see its origins in that period of my professional career that Margaret and I have come to see as the Golden Years. During the tumultuous time of international transformations known as the “post-colonial era,” I was one of about 70 faculty members at Michigan State University to become a sort of “flying squad” of internationalists, specialists from virtually all the needed disciplines who were committed to accept team assignments to appear anywhere in the world on 72 hours notice. Our purpose was to provide advice and counsel to government units preparing to launch projects on any of the many different national development tasks that were rampant in the developing nations. Although in some cases the receiving nations were to pay part of the costs, typically we were a contributed resource of the United States through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Thus we served our university, our nation, and the cause of worldwide stability and cooperation by offering our presence, experience, and insights in a prompt and efficient manner. We served well and learned much. Experiences of this sort in well over 30 nations constituted the core of my international career.

And now the memory comes to life again. Today the pressing problem for many of us in church leadership is the severe shortage of training experiences and learning resources for the dramatically growing church in the world. Many efforts are being mounted; some adept and appropriately fitted to their contexts; some painfully inept and wasteful. Few have been down this road before—providing culturally appropriate education and training for church leadership in cultures other than one’s own. Well-intentioned funding sources are being called upon to support a wide variety of strategies. How can we advise toward wisdom based on Scriptural definitions and purposes, culturally sensitive understanding of the uniqueness of people-groups, and effective modes of teaching and learning? Is it time for another “flying squad?”

Could a foundation play a role somewhat like that played by USAID? Making available to agencies, organizations, consortia, and institutions in a timely manner one or more experienced consulting specialists who can listen well, help define the issues, propose appropriate choices, and help design strategies. Such help could be provided in the form of advisory consultations or conferences of national leaders. Could my experience and expertise be made available to assist in this way? And, at the same time, could a team of two or three carefully selected younger consultants be included? One could imagine this team of part-timers, on loan from their regular positions in institutions or organizations, selected for a given assignment on the basis of particular competencies and experiences, actively learning the arts and crafts of intercultural consultation in this practical manner. If it honors my Lord and promises its worth for his kingdom, once again, I stand ready.

The days of the MSU International Flying Squad cannot be recreated. Certainly not by one person working alone. Those experiences simply constitute the basis for a vision. What clearly can and should be done is to set aside the years that may be added to my life *to provide counsel, encouragement, guidance, and wisdom for those who endeavor to develop new and more effective forms of ministry training and pastoral development for the emerging leaders of the expanding church.*

Important Influences from My Early Years

Growing up in a small town in rural south Florida, I came early to discover the ways that people can work together and support one another. Those days of the depression were hard for almost everyone,

but the importance of a Christ-like compassionate personality was easy enough to recognize. The value of friends and the support of fellow-Christians was important to my mother and father and thus it became a central feature of life for my brother and me.

The defining characteristics of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, though explainable in biblical terms, were far more than verbal profession of faith. From childhood it was made clear to us that what defined our salvation was the actions of faith—doing those things that glorified God and attracted others to Jesus Christ.

For me, becoming a teacher was inevitable. Since childhood, my habit has been to tell people whatever I thought they would find interesting. Whether or not they asked me questions, I offered information. I liked to talk. I especially liked people who listened. Thankfully, my view of teaching changed as I matured. I learned about the importance of listening. Much later I learned that teaching-as-telling is a seriously faulty model of teaching.

My mother was a teacher. She had begun her career as a school-teacher, a home economics graduate of the University of Illinois. I loved her very much and spent hours on end exchanging thoughts and hearing suggestions from this person who gave of herself so warmly and graciously. Doubtless, her influence was substantial, although she made very few stipulations about what I should choose to do in life. She respected my space and allowed me to make my own choices. But so very often and in so many situations, I asked myself, “What would Mom think?” This habit was a stronger influence in situation after situation than fear itself could ever be.

Music filled our home. Mom had begun college as a music major. She was a competent soprano soloist, often on stage at the “winter guest club” in our small Florida town, and every Sunday, without fail, in the church choir. You never had to ask her twice to sing; she was ready. Dad was a small-town merchant back in the “5 & 10” days before Sam Walton ruined it. His musical talents were either dormant or totally deprived of nurture. He couldn’t carry a tune. But he never said or did anything that would discourage Mom’s singing or my development as a flutist and choral conductor. He was an ultimately supportive enthusiast of all of us. My brother, was the first-baseman in our state-championship high-school team. Dad was at every game and every performance. Baseball or music—different, yes, but Dad and Mom would always be there for “our boys.” I am quite sure that this had a profound effect on the sort of teacher I would become.

My years as a formal teacher began in a small private high school near Chicago. As any specialized teacher in a small school is aware, each teacher does several jobs. One year I was the arts-and-crafts teacher, the “second-year French teacher,” and the bandmaster (the assignment for which I had been hired). I taught percussion, trumpet, saxophone, trombone, and of course, flute. But after two years of this, I was eager to go to graduate school. The experiences “at the front of the room” had raised some new and troubling questions.

As a musician, I could easily see that our young people’s most pressing need was for a leader. A new thought? Yes, in many ways it was a surprise. My assumption had been that they needed a *director* (in music, we call it a “conductor.” I was well trained as a conductor; my hands, arms, body, and face did all the right things, but until I threw my heart into it, nothing worked. Over and over again, I realized that though the music that resulted was rarely “beautiful,” it was far better when I put lots of encouragement and patience into the mix. I seriously wondered why all the instruction, reading, and guidance on *conducting* that I had received in my training, I could recall so little attention to the

ultimately human arts of compassion, comradeship, side-by-side coaching, and collective loyalty. So my wife and I headed off to graduate school, not for further studies in music, but to a college of education in order to study the gap between the “director” and the “conductor.” (I had not yet faced up to the face that the real issue was to become a leader. I had only the most rudimentary grasp of that difference, but I soon came to understand that it was real.)

My experiences at the University of Florida were a five-year series of thrills. My previous experiences in a small town school where most of the teachers had come to Florida from their teacher education in North Carolina and Virginia universities, small-school teaching of several content fields in Illinois—had resulted in enough confidence that I was ready to tackle whatever might come. One of my first courses, educational philosophy—conducted seminar-style by a brilliant retired gentleman who had been John Dewey’s dean—was a revelation. My previous awareness of John Dewey was meager, and as a provincial bumpkin, I was alert to Dewey only as “one of the problems in American education.” That changed quite rapidly. This seminar was an eye-opener. I encountered a whole different stream of literature that introduced and embraced a linkage between the domains of science and reason. I came to see the importance of being an inquirer rather than an opinionated apologist. Most importantly, I was affirmed in my faith: I had nothing to fear except being trapped in ignorance.

Perspective Shaping Professional Experiences

I am an educator. I am thankful for competency in research skills, and as a planner, organizer, writer, musician, and a scholar in the social sciences. But my first calling, since childhood, is one that I learned from my mother, who encouraged me to see myself as a teacher. “Help people become all that God wants them to be,” she instructed me over and over. Thus, my career has focused on educational competencies. Within formal education I have served administratively as well as in curriculum and faculty development in well over 75 different institutions. I have been called upon as consultant and evaluator for accrediting associations and governmental commissions in higher education, teacher education, graduate education, and professional education in such fields as medical education, legal education, and the arts.

Within nonformal education, I am recognized as one of the dozen or so who led the restoration of this mode to its rightful share of resources and credibility: through service and research in community education, industrial education, recreational models of education, and extension models of distance learning and adult education.

Most important, my role has always been defined as a teacher of teachers, a trainer of trainers, an educator of educators. In all of my professional work my trail has been marked by the leaders that I have helped to develop and who are serving in their own unique ways. On the lists of over 170 PhD degrees under my supervision are numerous leaders of the church worldwide.

During my years of overseas work, whether sponsored by the Ford Foundation, UNESCO, USAID, or Nuffield Foundation, I sought out opportunities to work among communities of Christians: church congregations, missionaries, and others who were serving Christ through the ministries of his church. In such contexts I was often asked if I were a missionary. It was an awkward question for me inasmuch as it seemed to seek a *yes* or *no*. The quick way would be to answer, “Not really, I am just a church member and thus am interested in these things.” But I *am* a missionary—and have been for most of the years of my life: I am engaged in helping the people of the world, from a wide array of cultures, to see Jesus and to grasp his love for them.

Similarly, I must carry out my educational mission with a broad definition of leadership in the church. The habit of dividing the church into *clergy* and *laity* seems destructive as it suggests a hierarchical layering of God's people. The church is the fellowship of the body of Christ. The body is but one body and its leadership is not delegated to a separate super-body of better-educated, more powerful, or more heavily robed *men*. As an educator, my vision of the church includes the development of all of God's people, defined even to include the *leadership development* of all of God's people. The church is intended to provide the learning experiences through which all of God's people develop all of their God-given characteristics, including the widely distributed gifts of service through leadership at home, in sectors of experiences in the church, and as Christians within the larger society. To lead is to serve; to serve is to lead.

Upon retirement from Michigan State University (1985) I joined the faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School as Dean of International Studies. Through faculty and administrative responsibilities at Trinity (as the founding director of the PhD in Educational Studies and the PhD in Intercultural Studies) I gave more and more time to the needy area of theological education reform. Persuaded that academicism is no particular friend of the church, I engaged in research and consultation in reference to ecclesiology-grounded and church-based programs and procedures for the development of competency in ministry.

My Major Commitments

My span of seventy years and more has been positioned across the most challenging periods of this nation—and some might say across the most valuable learning experiences of the shrinking world. Not an experience has been wasted. I have learned from life. First, because of the commitment to learning and wisdom rooted in family and church, and then continuing in a zeal for lifelong learning; respecting the insights of others and enjoying interactions with a wide variety of people along the way.

God has known me so well. He has insured my maturity by giving me physical weaknesses. In my youth, often ill and required to rise above physical limitations, God allowed the discovery of special talents and encouraged in me an empathy for others who are challenged in similar ways. As it has turned out, after fifty years co-laboring with an absolutely superb wife, five exciting children, and remarkable grandchildren, it is hard for me find the words to thank God for what he has done.

My major contributions have been in the realm of planning and organization of educational planning. The short list of general summaries of the meaning of these experiences may have some value for parents, students, and perhaps teachers. As I contemplate my remaining years, these two concerns still stay with me:

- 1) To encourage, provide counsel, developmental training, and anything else God wants to pass through my hands to those engaged in the church's responsibility for its own leadership development. The major criterion for fulfilling the great commission is the vital matter of developing church leadership. Among the appropriate means for the development of leaders are schools and school-like operations of several sorts along with the more promising approach as evidenced in the life and effects of Jesus Christ: through nonformal education and practical ministries. Leadership development requires well-grounded functional learning fulfilled through practical venues, especially those that carry out the specific ministries of the church.

- 2) My second commitment is to purposful research, sensible evaluation, clear reporting, and responsible accountability. At Michigan State University, I came to the realization while involved in a substantially funded series of projects, that there were fundamentally dissonant expectations guiding us and only dim awareness of the actual accomplishments of the project teams. Too often I have seen project leaders who exploit a foundation's two basic flaws: (a) limited understanding of the logical structure of the project, and (b) willingness to continue funding even after evidence of the project's diminished returns were evident. This issue of accountability has been a growing concern for me, largely in the background, but taking on a more urgent form in recent years.

Now That I am Old

Getting old is both a burden and a blessing. As the years roll on, my somewhat aggressive life-quest has shifted from discovery and exploration to a more sedentary mode: reconsidering and summarizing. While we are young, we engage in lots of talk. Listening matures later; in the early years we are not very good at it. More recently, I take satisfaction in finding simple ways to say what was once a wordy and likely boring series of many thoughts about a multitude of experiences.

Telling stories has always been a self-indulgent joy. But it, too, is a fading activity for me; at this period of my life. I often forget how a story ends, or wonder why I am even bothering to recite it for the nineteenth time. But the habits of observation, analysis, and reflection carefully nurtured and maintained, are still within me—although perhaps more obscure in the sharing. There is a difference now. Summary, correlation, and generalization have become more important. No longer do I take satisfaction in long lists of things to remember. The new source of intellectual pleasure is in finding the fewest possible, really important generalizations that convey the big truths and spread a neat garden of memorable thoughts across the chaos of human existence. I am reminded of the apostle John who, from the many and diverse incidents in his years of walking with Jesus, draws one profound and theologically fundamental conclusion about the nature of God and the purpose of Jesus Christ—God with us!

Since my senses are fading and my vocabulary is diminishing, I strive to make the best of it, and have found new excitement in the sharing of this short list of urgent conclusions. Each of the brief conclusions comes from experiences in the provincial and often arcane realm of teaching and learning. The domain that is generally called education has been my green pasture—a nourishing and pleasant place of wind and calm breeze, of storms and sunshine. I believe that this realm of experience has provided more knowledge and understanding than I shall ever pass along as knowledge imparted and more than I shall ever remember. Though much is slipping away, the important things remain.

[When Dan Aleshire, the Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools, heard of Ted's passing, he sent these words: "A life well-lived is likely the greatest testimony to grace and goodness as can be proclaimed." —Dan Aleshire, January 22, 2016]