A Time of Transition

Most of you should have received an email Saturday afternoon, sharing with you the news that Tot and I, as well as we as a Church are moving into a time of transition.

Every healthy ministry will and should go through times of transition. The Body of Christ is a living, breathing organism and in that reality, change and transitions will take place. But, changes and transitions are never easy. It always takes a time of flexing, faith, patience, and adjustments. Some people seem to thrive in times of change while others dread it and try to avoid it at all costs.

For some, their lives are in a constant state of flux, never staying in one place for very long... they are not the ones you look at and consider that they are at peace — there always seems to be the “next thing” on the horizon.

For those at the opposite swing of the pendulum, there appears to be the attitude of digging in and digging deeper, no matter what may come or what opportunities avail themselves. They strive to remain the same, no matter what.

Regardless of where you stand on the scale of change vs. consistency, newness vs. tradition, God will work and move in all of us for His glory when we are surrendered to His will and way... and regardless of our “personal feelings”.

Please, don’t get me wrong. God gave us emotions and feelings, but He also gave us His Holy Spirit, and it is by the Spirit of God that we must move and be directed.

Having said that, it is through a time of extended prayer, personal conversations, counsel of friends and mentors, and with a great amount of mixed emotions that Tot and I have come to the conclusion that it is time for me to step down and for us to step away from the ministry here at Calvary Chapel of Casa Grande. God has shown Himself faithful time and time again, as we have sought His face and leading; trusting Him to guide us and provide for us these 29 years.

When we began the Home Bible Study at the home of Jeff and Debbie Pryor back in March of 1991, we had no idea where the Lord would lead, or how He would supply?
I am reminded of the words Jesus told Peter, Andrew, James and John as He called them into ministry, “Come and follow me. I will make you fishers of men.”

When Tot and I moved to Casa Grande, we left jobs and a home, longtime friends, a Church family and what the world looked at as security. We moved to Casa Grande, without a job, without a home, and knowing only those who had begun attending our Saturday Night Home Bible Study. Of those that were a part of that study, Robert and Bertha Castro and Ira Prince remain. Each of them longtime friends and co-workers together in the work of the ministry.

Just like Peter and the boys, we weren’t exactly sure what that call involved and neither did we know how He would provide. I’m not sure if Pastor Chuck Smith coined the phrase, but he certainly used it a lot: “Where God guides, God provides.” And that’s exactly what He did as He led us and as we experienced Him fulfill His Word of Philippians 4:19, supplying all of our needs according to His riches in glory, that and so much more.

Over these years Tot and I have seen His hand direct and supply in so many ways... some of them in absolute supernatural miracles. I won’t take the time right now to recount them, but I will at a later date. But just know this Church, our God is faithful beyond our obedience and His love is continual even in the midst of our fickleness.

In the Old Testament we find where Amos declared to King Amaziah that he, himself was “no prophet, nor the son of a prophet...” (Amos 7:14). And I can whole heartedly connect with that statement. However, I would like to share with you what I feel the Lord is wanting to do with the fellowship called Calvary Chapel of Casa Grande.

First of all, what does the future hold for CCCG?

**Change.**

Yes, and in many ways, but I’m talking about healthy change. A change that will be a **good** thing, because it will be an expansion of what the Lord has already done, and is currently doing now. I stand in agreement with Paul as he told the Church at Philippi –
Philippians 1

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 
4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 
5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 
6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

In addition there will be growth in what the Lord is currently working in your lives. With the transition and the coming of a new Senior Pastor there will be an excitement and freshness of ministry, vision, and mission.

The Board of Elders and I will be working together with Poimen Ministries, praying for the Lord's leading as we seek out the man of God's choosing. Poimen Ministries is made up of seasoned, veteran pastors who have banded together to assist other Calvary Chapel Senior Pastors through encouragement and counseling, ministry assessments, interim preaching, and times of pastoral transition. They have worked through the pastoral transition process with over 40 different Calvary Chapels of various sizes from very small to very large. Calvary Chapel of Maricopa and Pastor Roger Thompson being a very successful transition close to our area.

Together we are seeking a man filled with the Holy Spirit who is not afraid to ask, seek, find, and fulfill God's desire for this Fellowship for the next 10, 15, 20 or more years should the Lord tarry in His return.

We believe the Lord would desire a man with a heart for His Word and gifted in the expository teaching of His Word; a man focused on a systematic discipleship of the people of God; and a man who has a passion to lead this fellowship to reach the lost in our community and around the world.

We are prayerfully seeking a man with a Shepherd’s heart and the pastoral experience to enable him to lead the Staff, the Elder Board, and ministry volunteers to excellence in their continuing and faithful service to the Lord and to His Church.

We are asking the Lord to reveal the man of His choosing with the capabilities to direct the multiple facets of this ministry and all the while not being afraid to take new Ventures in Faith as the Spirit would lead him. He must have a heart to see the radio
station KVNG, Grace 91.1FM continue to grow and reach out into the community; to
lead this fellowship in missionary outreaches both domestic and foreign; to see Calvario Casa Grande (our Spanish language ministry) become all the Lord desires for it to be as we reach out into our Latino community; to support the ongoing work of our Homeless Ministry, as well as our ministries to the Convalescent Homes.

Just over the last two years we have seen the hand of God touching lives in a powerful way through our Two-Forty-Two, Home Group Bible Studies. We have seen individuals grow, couples challenged and lives changed through this ministry.

I personally believe the 242 groups, as well as the other ministries will continue. They definitely will go through some times of changes, but I honestly feel it will be for the good and to more completely reach our Church and Community.

You also need to be assured that Tot and I are not leaving today, or tomorrow, or in any soon time frame. Today I am simply speaking to the “Elephant in the Room”. As I shared in the email: "Although an actual date has not been set, this transition will take place sometime later this year and we ask for each of you to continue to pray for the Church, each of her ministries, and all of the leadership during this time.”

Our current plan is to be here through the transition and to present to this Fellowship the man whom we feel God has chosen.

You may be listening to me right now and you’re asking, “What about one of the men we have now, one of our Assistant Pastors? Why not Pastor Robert, or Pastor Eric or Pastor Leo or Pastor Joe? I can assure you that each one of these men have a calling and gifting in their lives that God is using in a powerful way. Their part, place, and value to the work of the ministry here at Calvary cannot be over emphasized. But, as I have honestly and openly sought the Lord’s direction in this area, I have had confirmation after confirmation that these men are where the Lord would have them at this time. Each of them have a great opportunity to stand beside and support whomever the Holy Spirit directs us as the next Senior Pastor, while serving the Lord and His Church in their current positions.
Let me leave you with a few thoughts this morning that each of us need to be reminded of, and somethings that I will continue to bring to the forefront during this whole process:

1. **Jesus Christ is and always has been the Head of this Church.**

   Regardless of who stands as Senior Pastor, the Lord is the Head of His Church and we all are valued members of the Body of Christ. As Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:11-12, the Lord gives to the Church *some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*…

   It was through His calling and His leading that the Lord led us to begin this ministry. It was never *our* ministry, it is and always has been His. And He shall always remain the Head of the Church. And with that, we have His promise that He “*will never leave or forsake us*” (Hebrews 13:5). The truth is, *pastors will come and go.* But the Lord Jesus Christ will never leave as we continue to seek Him and His leading in our individual and corporate lives.

2. **We are not the first Church to experience a change in the Senior Pastor.**

   The fact is, *every Pastor is an interim pastor.* Given enough time, every pastor will be replaced by another. If you stay long enough in one Church, you’ll experience this transition… and sometimes in multiples. But you also need to understand this…

3. **Since Jesus is the Head of His Church, God is always in control.**

   Just as we have shared many times in the previous weeks and months, our God is sovereign over *all His creation.* And so, we need to walk in the confidence that even in times of transition, *it is God* who “*works all things according to the counsel of His will*” (Eph. 1:11).

   It’s not the smooth times, but it’s through times of change and transition that *our belief system is challenged.*
Do we believe that our God is **sovereign and omnipotent**? Do we trust Him to work His will and purposes out in our lives and in the life of His Bride, the Church? Or do we simply **pay lip service** to those necessary and fundamental truths of the Gospel?

You must see and understand that this transition isn’t happening outside of the will of God. It has been through much prayer, seeking His direction and timing that brings us to where we are today. God is working this **according to the counsel of his will**.

So the question is not, “Who is in control?” God is in control. The question is, “Will you rest in Him by trusting him?”

But even in the **fullness of that trust**, we come to #4

**4. It’s okay to weep.**

While we fully trust that good will come out this transition, that doesn’t remove the deep sadness in some of our hearts.

For some of you you’ve come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ during our years here at Calvary. For some, I’m the only pastor you’ve ever known – *now that’s scary!*

Through the years I, along with Tot have had the privilege and honor of performing and being a part of some of your wedding ceremonies; we’ve assisted you as you dedicated your children to the Lord; for some of you we’ve walked with you and honored the life of your loved ones and spouses during memorials and funerals; we’ve laughed together and in some instances cried together; and with many of you, we’ve had the blessed opportunity to simply walk through life together.

I’m reminded of how the Ephesian elders wept at Paul’s goodbye:

> “And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping **on the part of all**; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship” (Acts 20:36-38).
I believe the Ephesians knew that God would be with them, that He was in control, and that He was going to bring good out of this transition. Nevertheless, they wept. And it’s okay to weep. **But don’t forget, we’re not gone yet!! So, let’s not overdo it okay, we’ll all get worn out before we leave.**

So, even though there will be weeping, the work and ministry of Christ will go on. That brings me to point #5

**5. The Ministry will go on.**
When Paul left Ephesus to go into Macedonia, the ministry didn’t stop. He left Timothy there to continue to work which had begun.

We also understand through the Word of God that Paul sent Titus to the island of Crete to continue the work which had already begun.

Moses took the Children of Israel out of Egypt, but it was Joshua that led them to the Promised Land.

We all need to continually remember, the work of the ministry is not and should never be the work of any one man. It is and must be the work of the Holy Spirit of God: He is the One who sets things in order; He is the One who equips the saints; He is the One who maintains the ministry through times of change and transition; He is the One whom Jesus said would come and lead us. It is the Holy Spirit of God who will abide with you forever—even the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17), and in and through Him, the ministry will go on.

And you have an awesome opportunity of being a part of the continuance of this ministry, the next chapter of this glorious journey. Which leads me to my 6th and final point

**6. The church must not scatter.**
Jesus quoted from the Old Testament writings of Zechariah as He warned the disciples that the flock would scatter at His crucifixion (Mat 26:31). Zechariah states that the Lord of Hosts declares, "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” And the
fact is, for a season, that’s exactly what happened. The unfortunate reality is, many times we see the same thing happen within a Church when there is a transition in pastoral leadership.

For some, they are a part of a ministry because they like the preaching style or even the personality of the pastor. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing, but if you’re not a part of a particular Church Fellowship because you feel the Holy Spirit directing you to be there and to be a part, then you will actually find a number of reasons to leave. And transition can be a big one.

The fact is, times of transition are the times when the Family needs to pull together even stronger. This is when the gifts of one member can really strengthen the weakness of another. If Calvary Chapel is your Church Family, realize that there is a specific place here for you to be a part of… to serve the Lord Jesus through serving His Church…

One of the worst things you can do, is to divide up camps as the Corinthians Church did, were each one said,

12 "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

He then goes on to drive home,
23 we preach Christ crucified… 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

Let me encourage you in this: if you truly want to honor the Lord Jesus Christ through your service to His Kingdom and if you truly love, respect, and honor the ministry that Tot and I have been a part of over these three decades, determine in your heart even today, to be a powerful part of a successful transition and the next chapter of the life and ministry of this family of Believers called Calvary Chapel of Casa Grande. Stay the course. Commit yourself and your family to be a part of the excitement and freshness of what the Lord desires to do in this place and in your hearts.
Committing to a Church is one thing, but if you’ve never committed your life to Jesus Christ and accepted His offer of forgiveness there is a greater issues at stake — your eternal salvation and current relationship to the God who created you...

The Word of God is clear when it states that all of us have sinned and everyone of us have fallen short of the glory of God...