



Hi church!

My name is Toshi and I have been blessed to journey through life with Andrea my wife, Akiko my daughter, and Shinji my son. My father is Shige, mother is Kitty, sister is Kiyoko, and brother-in-law is Jonathan. By God's grace that I was born into a Christian family and have been part of the GBC family since then.

While attending Sunday School under various uncles and aunties in church as a child allowed me to build strong foundations in gospel truths, much of my childhood was spent enjoying the people and fellowship, knowing I have a loving God, but still largely living for myself.

In my early teens, many questions began to surface about the credibility and relevance of Jesus in my life. Is He truly who He says He is? What does He really want from me? Do I really want to follow Him? What does that mean? While I maintained a respectable public persona, the doubts and desire to live for myself caused me to drift in my relationship with Him. While I did not deny the presence of God, my sinful nature rebelled the need for a Saviour for my sins and a Lord over my life.

Interestingly, it was nothing spectacular, but the seeming mundaneness of family, peers, pastors, even para-church brothers and sisters, and the larger church body reaching out, answering questions, modeling sacrificial living for Christ in their daily life, that convicted me of my sins, my need for repentance, my worldliness in pursuing material gains with my efforts, and my need for Christ to rule in my heart.

I took the step of obedience to be baptised in June 2001 as I believe Creator God Almighty created me and all creation to love and worship Him, but because I am a rebellious sinner, I had no relationship with God and had no way back on my own. Only through God's sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, as a blameless substitute for my sin, am I reconciled and adopted with Him as my Lord.

Along the way, I have had the joy of serving in children's Sunday School, led the Youth Ministry, served in the Missions Committee, and have been leading a Care Group while serving as Worship Deacon. Beyond the pleasure of working with different groups, I have appreciated how God has used these experiences to remind me of my proneness to avoid

discomfort, please man rather than God, and rationalise my sin. This is most prominent as I continue to learn and grow as a husband and father in leading and discipling my family.

When I was asked to consider the Elder Associate role a year ago, it was with strong feelings of inadequacy and fear, but what gave me encouragement to move forward was the opportunity to grow in my understanding and love for the church, to struggle with those who suffer and rejoice with those who are glad. Songs, music and praise are the ways I am most familiar and comfortable with, to encourage others to turn to Christ. Transitioning to a shepherding role in worship, I hope to learn to teach, oversee, pray for, and care for the church, to worship our God with a renewed sense of awe, reverence and adoration. Beyond that, I pray to better understand other ministries and ways that God is using Grace Baptist Church for His glory.

Please pray along with my family and I that God will continue to reveal areas of unrepentance and sin in my life, that He will humble me so that I rely on Him and not my strength or others' approval, and that He will focus my passions and desires for His glory alone.