

Departure Testimonies (Mark & Rebekah Yang, Toledo UBF)

My Fellowship with You in Christ

Mark Yang

Key verses:

1 John 1:2-3 “The life appeared: we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

I came to Toledo in January 2005 as a student missionary. Over last six and half years, God has trained me through his people, helped me enjoy the genuine fellowship with dear co-workers and led me to grow a responsible man. To summarize, God was with me and made me fruitful through the genuine fellowship with Toledo UBF co-workers. Over the years, this fellowship has been deepened and has grown. Through this fellowship, I personally experienced God in deeper level and this experience will remain as my valuable memory in my life journey of faith. Through this testimony, the grace of God may be revealed and I may express my deep gratitude to God and beloved co-workers in Christ.

God prepared me and raised me up as a missionary through trials and struggles. In 1976 I was born in UBF chapter director family (Anam UBF) in Korea. My parents (Dr. Mark and M. Anna Yang) were always busy to serve and take care of the campus ministry, causing me to have longed for a family fellowship. My teenage years were not happy because I often felt lonely and couldn't mingle with friends at school due to the different background I have been raised. During those times, God put me into lonely struggles and even I was confused what my identity was. Without finding the meaning of life, I committed many sins without knowing the way-out. God had mercy on me and heard earnest prayers of many God's servants including my parents. During fulfilling my military duty, God came to my life and I accepted Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. Since that time, I began to understand my parents and their life. I no longer suffered from my loneliness; rather, I learned to have fellowship with others in Christ. I experienced the overflowing joy through being with brothers and sisters in Christ. God also restored my true identity as a campus shepherd and a bible teacher. Through 2004 MSU Int'l SBC, God planted me a vision to live a missionary in USA. In January 2005, God sent me to Toledo as a student missionary.

Over many years in Toledo, I have worked with S. Mark and S. Carol under Blessing Fellowship. They have been like my father and mother. More than that, I appreciate their genuine fellowship with me. I always remember their personal care and love for me when everything was foreign to me during the first year of Toledo in 2005. At that time, I was yet married; I was hungry all the time. They took me to a nice restaurant and fed me each week. They helped me to learn American culture and adjust new environment in Toledo. They regarded me as a dear coworker and a friend. Their encouragement and fellowship did not grow cold till now. I'll never forget our true friendship through fellowship in Christ. “Thank you and I love you, S. Mark and S. Carol. May the grace of God be shown in your family. May the goodness of God be all the more

evident in your lives. May God richly reward your years-long commitment and devotion to God and the ministry.”

In May 2005 God established our house church based on Genesis 12:2, “You will be a blessing.” After that, M. Rebekah joined Toledo UBF in November 2005, which brought great encouragement to me. From June 2006 we moved into a house located at Wyndhurst, the place where years-long prayer had been accumulated through many God’s servants including Dr. Paul and M. Sarah Hong. Believe or not, since then, God blessed our family to have daughters one by one, Monica, Sarah and Anna, candidates of great mothers of prayer for generations to come.

Toledo UBF has been very gracious, generous, and active in serving people like me. Toledo UBF knew Christ and practiced having fellowship with each other in Christ. Good example is Friday testimony sharing fellowship. It has been like a heavenly banquet, full of love and grace. I felt the genuine Christian Fellowship during this weekly gathering. Students and our co-workers shared their sincere testimonies. We listened and prayed for them.

Each Sunday I was greatly blessed by the powerful and stirring message by our Pastor Dr. Paul Hong and many other wonderful messengers. I was privileged to participate in Messenger meeting each week. It was my one of many joys to learn from Dr. Paul and many other messenger servants including S. John and M. Peter. Fellowship in God’s words always brought me joy and strength during my toughest periods of Ph.D. studies. I will miss this fellowship.

God blessed me to have a joyous fellowship with Toledo American shepherds and Korean missionaries through various activities including testimony sharing, special song practices, soccer, and numerous informal and formal meetings. This fellowship was not based on our personal and worldly preferences but on our love for Christ and decisions to live as disciples of Jesus. This fellowship made us strong, united in Christ and committed to participate in God’s work for Toledo.

God helped me learn to practice my humble fellowship with American college students through 1:1 bible studies. I have been privileged to serve UT campus students with the gospel of Jesus. Students include Bill and Adrienne King, Kirk, Justine, Jonathan, Chris, Abdul, and many others. They have been so dear to me. Especially Bill and Adrienne have been our true friends since 2006. I pray that they may continue to study the Bible and grow in the living knowledge of God and Christ through having fellowship with S. Mark and S. Carol.

During my Ph.D. studies, I have learned to engage an intimate fellowship with God through Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those earnestly seek him.” Each morning I chose to come to God through prayer and developed my fellowship with Christ. This time became sweeter than any other times and experienced God’s powerful intervention and work of God upon my studies. In spite of many failures, I have experienced numerous victories in my research work and recently dissertation and my job. For this, I thank God for Dr. Paul’s ceaseless labor of love for me. Under his guidance and help, I could develop my research capacity and won small and big victories, which include national dissertation proposal award (APICS 2010), a number of fine journal publications, and so on.

I am also heavily in debt with incessant prayers of M. Sarah, M. Maria Hong, Dr. Silversea Kim, and M. Monica Cho for my life in Toledo and Ph.D. studies. Without their prayers, I can't imagine what I am now. Thank God for their Jesus-like shepherd heart and love. My in-law family, Dr. Joseph and M. Theresa Ahn have practically supported me in many ways. I thank God for all of their labor of love for me.

From August 16, 2011, I will work as a visiting assistant professor at the School of Business, College of Charleston, South Carolina. At this point, I am not sure whether or not we settle down there through my permanent faculty job. But we are assured of God's sure sign and blessings to pioneer a campus as witnesses of Jesus and share the genuine Christian fellowship with students at the College of Charleston. As many of you know, Charleston is the beautiful and historic city and is known as Holy City because of many churches in number. Charleston is a beautiful city and College of Charleston is located in the middle of downtown. Around 12,000 students enrolled at the College and it is the one of the good public universities in the States. There are numerous beaches and places to see. But we will miss the genuine Christian fellowship because no UBF chapters are around South Carolina. My hope is that we may practice the genuine Christian fellowship, starting from our family members and extend to college students at Charleston through our 1:1s. Please pray for us that we may sustain our life of faith through fellowship with Christ and people.

At this point of departure and a new beginning of my life at Charleston, I hold on to Joshua 1:7-8, "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Through practicing to obey God's words I may first and foremost develop my personal fellowship with Christ and share this joy with college students. I may remember the grace of God I have received in Toledo and share the same grace to others in Charleston.

One word: My fellowship with Christ and You.

For This Is God's Will for Me in Christ Jesus

Rebekah Yang

Key Verses: 1Thessalonians 5:16-18 "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

By God's grace, I share the grace of God shown in my life over past five and half years in Toledo. Toledo is my second home where I found genuine welcome, love, and encouragement, and where I deepened my relationship with Christ through His words and prayers. Thank all of you for being with me in both times of struggles and blessings. Thank you for sincere love and friendship in Christ.

I was born in 1979 with diligent and hardworking parents who worked as country farmers and with two active younger brothers. I grew up like a tomboy playing outdoor activities. In 1998, I entered into Seoul National University of Education with the scholarship because of my diligent and hardworking lifestyle learned from my parents. In freshmen year, I was invited to one to one bible study, through which I met Christ as my Savior and Lord. God removed all my shames, emptiness and meaninglessness through Jesus Christ. In times, peace of God came and filled my heart with hope in him and faith in his word. I started my shepherd life from junior year with God's calling, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." God gave me a world mission vision through Acts 1:8 during 2004 MSU Int'l SBC. In 2005, God establish House Church between M. Mark and me with his vision to serve America and China campus mission. Over last six years, God richly blessed our family: we could have healthy and beautiful three daughters and had great privilege to serve several American college students. During this period, my prayer was simple: To become a source of blessing and to grow as a good shepherd like Jesus. With this vision, God blessed and trained me accordingly. Thank and praise God for His divine discipline and love for me. I thank God for many God's servants who demonstrated Christ-like love to me.

1Thessalonian 5:16-18 were my 2011 year key verses, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." God helped me consider what God's will is and how I practically carry it out to fulfill his will for me. At times, my understanding of God's will for me was limited. However, God's vision and will became clearer when I laid down my own will and humbly sought his. In view of this, I may share God's will for my life in Toledo and my future.

First, Be joyful always. After I joined Toledo UBF in November 2005, Toledo became my home because coworkers genuinely welcomed me with love and friendship. Over the years, Dr. Paul and M. Sarah Hong helped me and my family to find ways to grow fruitful servants and missionaries through their guidance and prayers. I personally thank God for her labor of love for me especially during my three times maternity periods. Through Blessing Fellowship (S. Mark and S. Carol) I was welcomed, nurtured and cared. For many years, M. Mark and I shared our joys and sorrows with them and spent memorable time together. I remember for first two years we had eating fellowship with co-workers with gourmet food made by Carol. I will miss those times and will keep in my memories. I also thank God for friendship and love relationship with both junior and senior prayer mothers and missionaries. I had been privileged to be a part of Toledo Orchestra through the leaderships of S. Kevin and M. Rebecca and their commitment to

the music ministry. After my children were born, I began to participate in CBF ministry with joy. I thank God for S. Peggy and S. Sandy who faithfully taught words of God with prayer each Sunday.

Though I enjoyed time together with Toledo co-workers, not always was happy and sometimes I had to go through dark tunnels and times of doubt and hardship. From time to time I was burdened and depressed due to the circumstances I faced. This led me to think what the real source of joy was and how I sustain my life with God's joy. I realize joy does not come from external circumstances but from deep down in my relationship with Christ, the source of true joy. In times of anxiety and anger, I lifted my eyes to Jesus who suffered and died for me. Then he healed all my wounds and filled me with his joy, peace, and comfort. Jesus becomes my source of joy. He is the only reason I can rejoice all the time. I am happy because of Jesus and I am happy because of all of precious God's people surrounded me. The joy of Christ Jesus may lead and guide me to share his grace and love with others.

Second, Pray continually. Through Luke 18:1 "Always pray and not give up," I learned a widow's persistent and desperate prayer. Through Lord's Prayer, I learn to pray for God's kingdom and His will. Through prayer I found God's will for me. Through prayer I found God's divine plan for me and our family. Through prayer God personally spoke to me, promised me and guided my path. Many times, I came to God with tears and sincere desire to meet him. From time to time, I fell asleep and spent time with God in dreams. Other times, I questioned God due to many unanswered prayers. I prayed for M. Mark's Ph.D studies, my 1:1s and many family matters. God answered one by one but not all of them. After one prayer was answered, another problem occurred. God made me continue to pray. God taught me the meaning of prayer through Proverb 3:5, 6. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Prayer is the way that I trust God and acknowledge him in my path of life. God helped me not depend on my own strength but his through life struggles. God enlightened me that life problems are inevitable for me to come to God in prayer.

God taught me the importance of having prayer partners to pray together through Matthew 18:20, "Two or three come together in my name, there am I with them also." With prayer servants including M. Sarah, S. Carol, M. Susan, M. Anna and M. Monica, I experienced the fulfillment of God's promises. Especially, I give my special thanks to M. Monica Cho who babysat our children with endless prayer support. My parents-in-law, Dr. Mark and M. Anna Yang supported our family with intercessory prayer and practical support. Thank God for these beautiful prayer warriors.

In the middle of preparing our transition to the mission field, Charleston, South Carolina, God faithfully answered our prayer one by one as M. Mark and I inquired of the Lord and sought his will and guidance. I may continue to seek God's will and his leading through faithful prayer life. May God help me keep the lamp of prayer each morning, so that our family may find ways to please God in the new mission field.

Third, Give thanks in all circumstances. Although I have many wonderful memories in Toledo, I was not always thankful for everything. Sometimes, I couldn't be thankful when things went

challenged and difficult. Life here was not always simple and easy. Even so, I must give thanks in all circumstances because this is God's will for me and God will work for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28). I give thanks to God because he works for the good of me and my family. I give thanks to God for Toledo ministry because God will work for the good of co-workers.

I thank God for the wonderful ministry through which I could lay my spiritual foundation as a missionary and a prayer mother. Through God's servant, Dr. Paul and many other messengers I could prepare my Bible notes to serve bible students including Rachel, Sunyoung, Nonye, Meredith, Alyssa, Brittany, Bill and Adrienne, and many others. I especially thank God for his living work upon the hearts of Bill and Adrienne. Shepherd life was not always easy, yet it brought me joy more than what I imagined. In time, they became my dear friends. I thank God for their faithfulness to come each week, humility to learn from me, and our year-long friendship we have built. May God continue to guide and help them to grow in their personal faith in God and knowledge of him. I also thank for the opportunities to learn and co-work with Korean missionaries and American shepherds to serve campus mission. I believe God's greater plan will be fulfilled through Toledo UBF. I will remember all of your love and friendship in Christ and pray for you whenever possible.

By the grace of God, M Mark got a faculty job at the College of Charleston and next week we will leave Toledo. This is a great encouragement for our family but at the same time, it will be greatly challenging for us to sustain there, where no coworkers are present. The environment would be very different. But God will make me prosperous when I put my faith and hope in him and his words. My first priority is to meditate on God's word day and night to overcome my fear (Joshua 1:7,8) and grow God's instrument to witness his name to Charleston. With a genuine desire to grow as a source of blessing and a good shepherd, I may be strong and courageous to spread the gospel and invite college students to 1:1 bible studies. Please pray for me that I may find God's lost sheep and establish faithful 1:1s.

One Word: God's will is this: Be joyful, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances.

Our Prayer Topics are:

1. Follow God's leading after one year contract is over whether or not to stay in Charleston.
2. Keep the lamp of God burning through daily prayer and meditation of God's words.
3. Serve college students at the C of C (College of Charleston) through faithful 1:1s and house church ministry.
4. M. Mark's teaching & the completion of his dissertation by next summer (2012).