MIRACLES in LITTLE TOKYO

OVERALL BOOKLET STUDY GUIDE

1. What can we learn about leadership through Bill's example?

2. Consider Bill's career journey from mechanical engineer to social worker to community developer. How was God involved in Bill's vocational evolution? What can we learn about God's interest in and direction for our vocations, careers, and working lives?

3. What basis does Bill have for believing that all the things that he and LTSC accomplished should be credited to God? How do you explain all the unexpected occurrences that Bill and LTSC had no control over which worked to the benefit of the project and the Little Tokyo community? Coincidence? Luck? Destiny? Divine force? The God Bill knows? Please explain.

4. What pattern, progression, or order, if any, is there to the programs and projects Bill worked on? What do you think God is trying to do?

5. What can we learn about the interplay between human effort (Bill's and LTSC's work) and God's sovereign intervention (the miraculous happenings)?

6. What project or story interested you the most, or was the most meaningful to you, and why?

7. What "city" has God placed you in? How have you been seeking the prosperity of your city? Or how can/will you seek the prosperity of your city?

IWA, INC. PO BOX 3796 GARDENA CA 90247
626.398.3468 IWAROCK@AOL.COM

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Coming to a Community in Need

1. The following factors are described as being the forces that had impact on the Japanese American community in Little Tokyo from the early 1940's to the late 1970's:

   a. World War II internment of Japanese Americans
   b. Post-war migration to the suburbs
   c. Community redevelopment in Little Tokyo
   d. The attraction to other Japanese American communities outside of Little Tokyo
   e. The local and national problem of homelessness

   Which of these were internal forces (operating from inside of the people or community), which were external (operating from outside of the people or community), and which were both? And how did each force cause Little Tokyo to be "a community in need?"

2. Which of the above-mentioned factors do you think was the most significant, and why?

3. Was it inevitable that the Little Tokyo community would follow the way of other inner city ethnic communities—into decline once succeeding generations were on their feet and able to move out to the more affluent, desirable suburbs? Or would it have continued to thrive had it not been for outside forces that came in to compel it to disperse, scatter, and fade away into the mainstream? What do you think?

4. How would you describe the Little Tokyo community that Bill came to work in in the late '70s? What possible reasons might there be for anyone to choose to work in a community like that?

Giving God Credit

1. Reflecting on his work in Little Tokyo for more than a quarter century (and still counting), Bill gives God credit for his perseverance in, his motivation for, and the success of his career. Can you relate to what he says? What do you think and feel about it?

2. Is it a valid connection that Bill makes between God's encouragement to the people of Israel to seek the prosperity of Babylon, and God's encouragement to him (and to us) to care about and serve the communities we live in? Why or why not?

3. What difference does it make whether or not Bill gives credit to God for the success of his work and of LTSC? Isn't it enough just to acknowledge that through his and LTSC's efforts, many great things have taken place that have revitalized Little Tokyo, without bringing in God and religion? Why or why not?

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4. Bill asserts that God cares deeply about Japanese Americans and Asian Americans. How does he know that? What evidence is there? Do you believe it's true? If not, what would convince you that it is?

Following the Signs

1. How did Bill end up in the "wrong" profession? What made him think his profession was not right for him?

2. How could Bill have found the "right" profession the first time around? Consider Proverbs 3:6—*"In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths."* Why might we miss experiencing what is promised in this verse?

3. How did you end up in the profession you are in? Or, if you are in school, what have you been doing to find the "right" profession for you?

4. Bill tried to correct his mistake by waiting on God to show him "a clear and unmistakable sign" of God's will for his life. He had to wait 18 months. Was that a wise thing to do? Can what Bill did be an example for us all of how to find God's will for our lives? Why or why not?

5. What was Bill's attitude when it seemed he wouldn't be able to take the interesting and dynamic "Social Change" class? How do you react to disappointments like this? Can you share any examples? What can you do to handle disappointments like the one Bill had?

6. Why did Bill take the "Social Legislation" class? Why didn't he just forget the whole social work thing since he couldn't get into the class he really wanted to take? How did Bill's taking this class he didn't really want to take result in something good for him? Was it just a coincidence?

7. Would you call Bill's acceptance to UCLA Social Work School a "miracle," as he did? Why or why not?

8. How was it that Bill didn't feel disappointed when he received the rejection letter from UCLA? Was he naive, misguided, unrealistic? Or did he really know something he could depend on?

9. What do you think of Bill's vision of the path? Is it hokey or does it make sense? Was it a hallucination or real? Why?

10. Looking at how Bill finally ended up in social work school, do you think it was all a bunch of coincidences, or God's guidance?

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Finding Work in Little Tokyo

1. In what ways was Bill's job at the Pioneer Center "perfect" for him? He credits God with putting him there. If that's true, besides the work he did for the elderly, what other purposes might God have had for giving him that job?

2. What coincidences had to happen for Bill to end up with the job as Executive Director of LTSC? To what degree did Bill have control over these circumstances? He says that "God was . . . silently and secretly in control?" What do you think?

3. Bill said that he didn't see it at the time, but God was orchestrating things so that he could have a new job. Is Bill's experience typical or unusual? Can we learn something from the way he went about finding his job at LTSC?

4. Bill started his new job at LTSC the day after his job at the Pioneer Center ended. What importance did that have for Bill? What does that say to us, if anything?

5. Note that Bill was trying to do a service for others—applying for a rent-subsidy for JACCC tenants—but he ended up with a job for himself for which he credits God for giving to him. Is there something we can learn from this?

6. Consider Psalm 37:4—*"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."* What were the desires of Bill's heart, and how did he end up getting them?

Planting Gardens, Eating Produce

1. While Bill was working at LTSC by himself for nine months, what gave him confidence that he could fulfill the charge by his Board of Directors to build a comprehensive multipurpose social service agency—something he had no clear idea about?

2. When LTSC hired new workers, how was Bill able to work with two people who didn't share the same faith or the vision he had? What potential problems did they have because of their differences and how did Bill handle the situation? How would you have handled it?

3. What talent did Bill use to begin tackling the problem of starting an escort program? Where did his talent come from? What did he need besides his talent in order to get the escort program off the ground? How much of it was within his control and how much was outside of his control?

4. How would you describe the way that Bill obtained the CCF grant for $11,000—result of hard work, coincidence, miracle? How much of it was due to his talent, and how much was outside of his control?

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5. How did the escort program get re-funded after the first year? Who initiated the call about the funding? What can we say about the timeliness of the call? How much was within Bill's control and how much was outside of his control?

6. How much of the success of our work is due to our talent and hard work, and how much is outside of our control? Is Bill's situation typical? What do you attribute his success to?

Building Houses

1. Bill prayed about changing his job, and a phrase came into his consciousness: "Don't change your job because your job is going to change." What do you think about that phrase as an answer to his prayer—does it seem weird, hard to believe, nothing special, fascinating, amazing? Does God really answer prayer in this way? How can we be sure that it's not just our own thoughts? Have you ever experienced anything like that?

2. Bill and LTSC took action to secure affordable low-income housing in Little Tokyo—he/they wrote to the Mayor about re-opening the boarded units in the Firm Building (and the request was declined), sponsored a Firm Building clean up and painting day to bring public attention to the need (and got the publicity they hoped for), and lobbied the City Council to save the building from being demolished (and got more than they expected). What can we learn from what they did?

3. How did the City Council's recommendations go beyond expectations? How did the recommendations have the potential of changing the nature of LTSC's housing work? Did it take faith for Bill and the LTSC Board to move in this new direction? If so, what kind of faith did the LTSC Board have? What kind of faith did Bill have? Was it the same, or different? How so?

4. Bill believes that LTSC's bilingual social work undergraduate intern, who was minoring in architecture and had a real interest in this kind of housing development project, was perfect for the work—a God-send—not just a result of serendipity or good luck. What do you think? Why?

5. How did LTSC's first venture into the area of housing development work out in the end with the funding, the budget, the time it took for completion, the satisfaction of the residents, and compensation as the developer? Can it be called a success? If so, was success "inevitable?" Why or why not?

6. What impact did the Firm Building renovation project have on the residents? On Bill? On LTSC? On Little Tokyo? On the City of Los Angeles? If this was God's work, what does this say about God?

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Planting a Cultural Garden

1. How did Bill and LTSC end up with the project to renovate the Old Union Church? How much was it due to Bill's initiative and how much was it due to outside forces?

2. How was this project similar to and/or different from the San Pedro Firm Building renovation project? What did this project add to the revitalization of Little Tokyo that was different from the Firm Building project? Did the experience with the Firm Building project help in any way with this next project?

3. How would you have felt if you spent a year designing the space just to accommodate a particular tenant, and that tenant decided not to go through with it—waste of time, anger over being left in the lurch, panic about not having an anchor tenant? When the Little Tokyo Public Library pulled out of the project after spending a year of negotiations, why wasn't Bill disappointed about it for very long?

4. What was the process that led to East West Players' becoming the anchor tenant? If God was involved in that, as Bill believes, what steps in the process can be attributed to God's doing?

5. Why does God allow destructive natural occurrences like earthquakes (or floods, tornadoes, wild fires) to happen? What good came out of the Northridge earthquake for the Union Church project?

6. Why would God care about housing a theater arts group, a visual arts organization, and an art gallery in an old church building in Little Tokyo?

7. Bill gives credit to many talented people who worked on this project, but also notes that "God was silently, invisibly, but actively involved." If God can be given credit for orchestrating certain circumstances to make the project a success, can't God also be given credit for the talented people who also contributed to the success of the project? Why or why not?

8. And of what importance was Bill in all of this? If God had not placed him as the leader of the project, would the "Union Center for the Arts" have come into being? In what ways was Bill the right person for the job?

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Building More Houses

1. How was this project similar to and/or different from the San Pedro Firm Building renovation project? What did this project add to the revitalization of Little Tokyo that was different from the Firm Building project? Did the experience with the Firm Building project help in any way with this project?

2. How was this project similar to and/or different from the Union Center project? What did this project add to the revitalization of Little Tokyo that was different from the Union Center project? Did the experience with the Union Center project help in any way with this project?

3. Bill states that he believes that "God had brought amazingly high caliber people to LTSC to work on these projects"—people like Judy and Lisa. If they didn't have the faith and vision that Bill had, how can that be true? Do you agree with Bill?

4. This project seems to have had fewer obstacles to get past than the previous projects. What made this one easier? As Bill sees it, how was God involved?

5. What impact did the Casa Heiwa project have on the residents? On Bill? On LTSC? On Little Tokyo? On the City of Los Angeles? If this was God's work, what does this say about God?

Saving Lives

1. How did Bill and LTSC get involved in this new project to recruit Asian and Pacific Islander potential bone marrow donors? What steps along the way might God have had some hand in to get this project started and going?

2. How does this project differ from the others that Bill worked on? How does it contribute to "the prosperity of the city?"

3. What leadership was needed to see this project through? Without that leadership, how far would the project have gone?

4. Bill wasn't thinking about getting funding when he took on this project, and yet it became LTSC's biggest funded project at that time. Was Bill proceeding unwisely by moving ahead without strategically planning out a way to fund the project? And was it a stroke of luck that there happened to be federal funding for just the kind of effort he was engaged in? Or might there have been something else at work here?

5. Over 100,000 potential bone marrow donors were recruited and over 100 APIs received bone marrow transplants from over 100 API donors. Was the result worth the effort? If this was God's work, what does this say about God?

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Doing Something New

1. When Bill asked God for a sign to let him know whether or not LTSC should proceed with the planning of a Tofu Festival, he saw that he was holding a pen with a tofu ad inscribed on it. Was it just a coincidence? Does God really answer our prayers in ways like this? Do you know of any similar cases? In any case, what was the impact of that "sign?"

2. What are the chances that a member of the LTSC Board has a father-in-law who was a former business partner of the man who founded Hinoichi Tofu Company? Was it just a coincidence? Was something else at work here?

3. What is the likelihood that both the founder together with the general manager of a Japanese company like Hinoichi would show up to a meeting with LTSC Board members? And how likely is it that Hinoichi would agree to be a festival sponsor and underwrite the cost of the festival with a $20,000 donation? Bill calls it a "miracle." What do you think?

4. What impact did the Tofu Festival have on the participants? On LTSC? On Little Tokyo? On the City of Los Angeles? If this is God's work, what does this say about God?

Seeking Revitalization

1. Looking at the community development work LTSC has done over the years, such as the renovation of the San Pedro Firm Building and the Old Union Church, and the construction of Casa Heiwa, Bill believes that God has been leading him and LTSC in the long-range direction of revitalizing Little Tokyo. Does that direction make sense? Why would God want to "help preserve a historic cultural neighborhood" like Little Tokyo?

2. Over the years since 1995 when LTSC and other stakeholders began working together to develop a master plan for building a gymnasium, there have been many roadblocks such as political opposition by Councilwoman Walters, offers to purchase two parcels of land which fell through, investigation of over two dozen sites that turned up nothing suitable, and opposition by museums and other community institutions. Since other projects did not have problems like these, could opposition be a sign that this project is different and perhaps should be one to abandon? What reasons did Bill and LTSC have to keep pursuing this? What can you learn from this?

3. When the Councilwoman opposed the building of a gym on the First Street North site because she wanted to have an open green park space there, and then three years later gave approval for the Children's Museum to be built on that site, what message did this switch of intentions send to LTSC and the gym supporters? How could the angry conflict that resulted have been avoided? How would you have reacted to the situation? How did Bill react?

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4. Why was Bill reluctant to build a grassroots power base to counter the forces that were preventing inclusion of the gym at the First Street North site? Consider Jesus' attitude toward power which Bill mentioned:

   Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place. . . . (Philippians 2:5-9 NIV)

   The principle here seems to be: "The way up is down." How does this differ from the way power is generally viewed? How was Bill able to resolve his internal struggle over this? Is that a healthy way to proceed? Why or why not?

5. Was the political action the gym supporters took, such as the 500-person demonstration in 2000 and involvement in the City Council race in 2001, an appropriate and effective way to go? What was the impact of it on the participants? On LTSC? On Little Tokyo? On the City of Los Angeles?

6. How did Bill try to "stay above the fray" of contentiousness and accusations? Was he wimping out? Consider what Jesus said:

   You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:43-45 NIV)

   How does this run counter to the way enemies are generally viewed and treated? Jesus connects loving one's enemies as being characteristic of those who are members of God's family—How has the Father demonstrated this type of love, and how does the family trait get passed down to the "sons?"

7. Like Bill, do you believe that God has an end in sight for the gym project? What do you imagine will happen, and why?

IWA, INC.
PO BOX 3796
GARDENA CA 90247
626.398.3468
IWAROCK@AOL.COM

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Divine Intervention or Coincidence

1. Looking at all the circumstances that led to Bill's ending up at UCLA's School of Social Welfare, do you think it was all a bunch of coincidences, or God's guidance?

2. What coincidences had to happen for Bill to end up with the job as Executive Director of LTSC? To what degree did Bill have control over these circumstances? He says that "God was . . . silently and secretly in control." What do you think?

3. What do you think of the things that had to happen for Bill to obtain the funding needed for the Escort Project? Were they the result of hard work, a coincidence, a miracle? Please explain.

4. Consider the process that led to East West Players' becoming the anchor tenant of the Union Center for the Arts. Did it come about as a result of a series of coincidences, or was there divine intervention?

5. Bill wasn't thinking about getting funding when he took on the project to recruit Asian and Pacific Islander bone marrow donors, and yet it became LTSC's biggest funded project at that time. Was Bill proceeding unwisely by moving ahead without strategically planning out a way to fund the project? And was it a stroke of luck that there happened to be federal funding for just the kind of effort he was engaged in? Or might there have been something else at work here? Please explain.

6. What are the chances that when Bill was pursuing the idea of a Tofu Festival with the LTSC Board, a member of that Board had a father-in-law who was a former business partner of the man who founded Hinoichi Tofu Company? How do things like that happen? Was it just a coincidence? Was something else at work here? Please explain.

7. How did the Northridge earthquake in 1994, temporary gym facilities built in the San Fernando Valley, and a Japanese American who owned land in Little Tokyo, all come together to kick into gear a movement to build a gymnasium in Little Tokyo? Was this all a coincidence? What did Bill think? What do you think?

8. What basis does Bill have for believing that all the things that he and LTSC accomplished should be credited to God? How do you explain all the unexpected occurrences that Bill and LTSC had no control over which worked to the benefit of the project and the Little Tokyo community? Coincidence? Luck? Destiny? Divine force? The God Bill knows?

9. Which of Bill's stories convinced you the most that Bill was justified in his belief that God was involved in what took place? Why?

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Does God Get Involved In Our Day-to-Day Lives?

1. Bill said that he waited on God to show him a clear and unmistakable sign of what God wanted his life's work to be. He believes that God gave him that sign when his Social Legislation professor happened to see him in the parking lot after the first lecture and told him to apply to the UCLA School of Social Welfare as he is on the review panel and wanted to help him get in. Does God really get involved in our lives in this way? Does God really care whether or not we become social workers or mechanical engineers? Why was Bill convinced that this was "the sign?"

2. With the acceptance letter from UCLA in his hand, after receiving a rejection letter two weeks before, Bill saw a picture in his mind's eye of a long, perfectly straight road with extreme brightness and light all around. He felt that it was a vision from God laying the direction for his life's work in social work. Was it a hallucination, or was it real? Does God really communicate with us through mental pictures like this, or do we conjure them ourselves and attribute them to God? If God really does operate this way, what does this say about God?

3. When he probably should have been looking for a new job when his job at the Pioneer Center was coming to an end, Bill was working on a grant proposal for a rent subsidy for the groups planning to move into the JACCC. His efforts for the benefit of others resulted in the organization of a new social service group—LTSC, acquisition of funding to support it, and creation of a staff position which turned out to be a new job for himself. And to cap it off, his new job started the day after his old job ended. Does God really orchestrate circumstances like this and attend to details like the timing of the beginning and ending of a job? Why would God do all that for one individual?

4. Bill prayed about changing his job, and a phrase came into his consciousness: "Don't change your job because your job is going to change." So he stayed in his job and his job did change—a whole new field—housing development—was brought into his life. And he received a substantial raise to go along with his new position. Does God really communicate with us through words and phrases like this, or do we conjure them up ourselves and attribute them to God? If God really does operate this way, what does this say about God?

5. Bill prayed for a sign from God about whether or not to pursue the idea of putting on a Tofu Festival, and after he finished praying, he saw that the pen he was holding had a tofu ad on it. So he believed that it was the sign he prayed for. Did God really orchestrate things so that that pen with that ad would be in Bill's hand at that time and Bill would see it right after he prayed, or was it just a coincidence? Does God really care about being involved in our lives by providing signs when we ask for them?

6. Looking at the community development work LTSC has done over the years, such as the renovation of the San Pedro Firm Building and the Old Union Church, and the construction of Casa Heiwa, Bill believes that God has been leading him and LTSC in the long-range direction of revitalizing Little Tokyo. Does that direction make sense? If God was truly at work, could God's involvement in Bill's career moves serve a larger purpose than just Bill's well-being? Could God's involvement in our day-to-day lives serve a larger purpose than our own individual well-being? Why would God want to "help preserve a historic cultural neighborhood" like Little Tokyo?

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7. Bill lives as though God is a living person who is interactive with him. Do you live, as Bill does, as though God is a living person who is interactive with you? Why or why not? If God could be actively involved in your day-to-day life, would you want to have a relationship with God like the relationship Bill has with God? How would your life be different if you did?

Dealing with Disappointments and Hardships

1. What was Bill's attitude when it seemed he wouldn't be able to take the interesting and dynamic "Social Change" class at Cal State Northridge? How do you react to disappointments like this? Can you share any examples? What can you do to handle disappointments like the one Bill had?

2. How was it that Bill didn't feel disappointed when he received the rejection letter from UCLA School of Social Welfare? Was he naive, misguided, unrealistic? Or did he really know something he could depend on?

3. How would you have felt if you spent a year designing the space just to accommodate a particular tenant, and that tenant decided not to go through with it—waste of time, anger over being left in the lurch, panic about not having an anchor tenant? When the Little Tokyo Public Library pulled out of the Old Union Church renovation project after spending a year of negotiations, why wasn't Bill disappointed about it for very long? What do you think about how he handled the disappointment? Why do you think he was ultimately able to respond in the way he did?

4. Over the years since 1995 when LTSC and other stakeholders began working together to develop a master plan for building a gymnasium, there have been many roadblocks such as political opposition by Councilwoman Walters, offers to purchase two parcels of land which fell through, investigation of over two dozen sites that turned up nothing suitable, and opposition by museums and other community institutions. Since other projects did not have problems like the ones that plagued the gymnasium project, shouldn't the problems and opposition be signs that this project is different and perhaps should be one to abandon? What reasons did Bill and LTSC have to keep pursuing this? What can we learn from this?

5. When the Councilwoman opposed the building of a gym on the First Street North site because she wanted to have an open green park space there, and then three years later gave approval for the Children's Museum to be built on that site, what message did this switch of intentions send to LTSC and the gym supporters? How could the angry conflict that resulted have been avoided? How would you have reacted to the situation? How did Bill react?

6. About fifteen years have passed and the gymnasium is still not built. How is Bill handling the disappointment of a project that is taking so long to be completed? How can we maintain hope and a positive outlook when something takes much longer than expected to be accomplished or resolved?

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7. Many people believe that success in life is based on having such things as money or power or achievements. But do these things really bring us happiness? What is success in life based on for you? What was success based on for Bill?

Discerning God's Calling and Making Career Choices

1. Bill felt he ended up in the "wrong" profession—as a mechanical engineer. How could he have found the "right" profession the first time around? Consider Proverbs 3:6—*"In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths."* Why might we miss experiencing what is promised in this verse?

2. How did you end up in the profession you are in? Or, if you are in school, how have you been going about finding the "right" profession for you?

3. Bill tried to correct his mistake by waiting on God to show him "a clear and unmistakable sign" of God's will for his life. He had to wait 18 months. Was that a wise thing to do? Can what Bill did be an example for us all of how to find God's will for our lives? Why or why not?

4. In what ways was Bill's job as a Project Coordinator for the Japanese Community Pioneer Center "perfect" for him? He said it seemed that God had put him in the right place. How do we know when we're in the "right" place?

5. Bill said that he didn't see it at the time, but God was orchestrating things so that he could have a new job as Executive Director of LTSC. Is Bill's experience typical or unusual? What can we learn from the way he went about finding his job at LTSC, if anything?

6. Bill prayed about changing his job, and a phrase came into his consciousness: "Don't change your job because your job is going to change." What do you think about that phrase as an answer to his prayer—does it seem weird, hard to believe, nothing special, fascinating, amazing? Does God really answer prayer in this way? How can we be sure that it's not just our own thoughts? Have you ever experienced anything like that?

7. Bill's job did change, as without any experience, he entered into the field of housing development when LTSC took up the challenge of renovating the Firm Building. How was this job as a housing developer the "right" job for Bill? What can we learn from Bill's experience about finding the "right" job?

8. Looking at Bill's career moves, from mechanical engineer to social worker to housing developer, what do you think about the current vocation Bill believes God has called him to—to be a community developer who advances the revitalization of Little Tokyo? Is there a progression here—from small to large, individual to community, personal benefit to social good? What is the bigger story that Bill has become a player in? Is there a bigger story that God wants all of us to be players in?

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Working With and Against Those Who Differ

1. When LTSC hired new workers, how was Bill able to work with two people who didn't share the same faith or the vision he had? What potential problems did they have because of their differences? How did Bill handle the situation? How would you have handled it?

2. Bill often gives credit to the talented and high caliber people who made a project successful. They were people who may not have shared the same belief in God that he had, but he also gives credit to God for bringing these people to work on the project. Do you agree that God doesn't just orchestrate circumstances but also provides people—whether or not they are attuned to God's promptings—to accomplish God's work and will? Why or why not? How was Bill able to work with people who didn't share the same belief system that he had? What qualities did he need in order to provide effective leadership for them?

3. Bill and LTSC took action to secure affordable low-income housing in Little Tokyo—he/they wrote to the Mayor about re-opening the boarded units in the Firm Building (and the request was declined), sponsored a Firm Building clean up and painting day to bring public attention to the need (and got the publicity they hoped for), and lobbied the City Council to save the building from being demolished (and got more than they expected). What can we learn from what they did?

4. Why was Bill reluctant to build a grassroots power base to counter the forces that were preventing inclusion of the gym at the First Street North site? Consider Jesus' attitude toward power which Bill mentioned:

   > *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place. . . . (Philippians 2:5-9 NIV)*

   The principle here seems to be: "The way up is down." How does this differ from the way power is generally viewed? How was Bill able to resolve his internal struggle over this? Is that a healthy way to proceed? Why or why not?

5. Was the political action the gym supporters took, such as the 500-person demonstration in 2000 and involvement in the City Council race in 2001, an appropriate and effective way to go? Why or why not?

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6. How did Bill try to "stay above the fray" of contentiousness and accusations? Was he wimping out? Consider what Jesus said:

   You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:43-45 NIV)

   How does this run counter to the way enemies are generally viewed and treated? Jesus connects loving one's enemies with being a member of God's family—how has this family trait been displayed by God the Father? How does this trait get passed on to us if we are "sons" of the Father?

Faith

1. What did it take for Bill to walk away from a career as a mechanical engineer and pursue a career in an entirely different field—social work—which he knew little about at the time he determined he was in the wrong profession? Can you relate to what Bill did? What do you think about what he did?

2. When Bill couldn't get into the Social Change class, what was the reason he gave for enrolling in the Social Legislation class which was the only other night class being offered in social work and which did not seem very attractive compared to the other class? Where did he get this positive attitude toward this seemingly "dull and boring" class of second choice? Is there anything we can learn from this?

3. When Bill applied to UCLA School of Social Welfare, he didn't bother to apply anywhere else because he said he KNEW what God's will was. Was he being overconfident or arrogant? Did he really know something that guided his actions? What do you think about what he did?

4. With one phone call, a businessman was able to get a Councilman to be willing to make a grant to help groups move into the new JACCC. Bill states that it verifies the old saying, "It's not what you know but who you know." He goes on to say, "Though I didn't know the Councilman, it didn't really matter because I did know God and that God was still silently and secretly in control." How does Bill have the audacity to say that he "knows God?" Can we really know God as Bill said he does? And if we can know God, what kind of attitude toward life could "knowing God" give us? What did "knowing God" do for Bill and for his attitude toward people and circumstances he had no influence over?

5. When Bill first started his job as Executive Director of LTSC, he was all by himself with one desk and two chairs in a large room at JACCC, with the charge by his Board to begin building a comprehensive multipurpose social service agency. According to him, where did he get the confidence to take on such an ambitious and daunting task? Can you relate to how Bill felt about tackling the task before him? Why or why not?

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6. Bill's co-workers, Yasuko and Evelyn were worried when the nine-month City grant was nearing the termination date and there were no back-up funds in place. But Bill wasn't. And sure enough the City re-funded them. What made the difference for Bill? Is there anything we can learn from Bill about how to be worry-free from the concerns of money?

7. When LTSC received a $400,000 grant from the National Marrow Donor Program to do recruitment of Asians and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles, to what did Bill attribute the funding and why? Had something like this happened to Bill and LTSC before? What insight can we draw from this?

8. After Bill prayed for a sign from God about whether or not to proceed with the "risky venture" of putting on a Tofu Festival, he immediately got a sign (a tofu ad was on the pen he was holding), and moved forward with it, urging the Board to reconsider putting on such a festival. If Bill had not acted in spite of the risk, what do you think would have happened to the festival idea? After seeing the ad, he could have done nothing. What motivated Bill to take action? What do you think about what he did?

9. After about fifteen years of twists and turns, ups and downs, in the journey to building a recreation center in Little Tokyo, there is no gymnasium yet. What is Bill's attitude toward this unrealized dream? What do you think of his attitude?

10. Some people think faith in God is a "crutch." What do you think? What can we learn about faith from Bill and his stories about God's involvement in the revitalization of Little Tokyo?

IWA, INC.
PO BOX 3796
GARDENA CA 90247
626.398.3468
IWAROCK@AOL.COM

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