

Interviewee: Daniel Ho

Interviewers: Niky Bao, Priscilla Li

Date/ Time of Interview: February 10, 2018. 5:00 PM

Transcribed by: Tian-Tian He

Edited by: Niky Bao, Priscilla Li (3/14/2018)

Audio Track Time: 49:07

Background:

Pastor Daniel Ho is the Senior Pastor at Chinese Baptist Church (CBC). To add to the Chinese Baptist Church research project, Pastor Dan was interviewed on his life story, from being born in Hong Kong to moving to New York City, and finally moving to Houston where he works at CBC. He shared his profound life moment in becoming a Christian and his involvement in the church since then.

Setting:

The interview was conducted in a conference room at Chinese Baptist Church.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

DH: Daniel Ho

NB: Niky Bao

PL: Priscilla Li

—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop

...: speech trails off; pause

Italics: emphasis

(?): preceding word may not be accurate

[Brackets]: actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)

PL: So we're here today at Chinese Baptist Church on February 10th, 2018, um and it's 5 o'clock in the evening. Um, and we're here to interview doctor - um Pastor Dan Ho. My name is Priscilla Li.

NB: I'm Niky Bao. Um, so like, Pastor Dan Ho, where and when were you born?

DH: I was born in Hong Kong, uh, I think it was 1957 but we don't have birth certificate [laughs] so, um that's what is put on my immigration papers. So, yep.

NB: So like what schools did you go to in Hong Kong?

DH: I went to - back then there were no public schools. Uh I was in Cheung Chau. And so uh, my parents uh got me to go to these private schools, and I went for 4 years. Uh first and second, kindergarten, there's 2 years of that, and then first grade, second grade. And then we came to America.

NB: And that was what year?

DH: 1965.

NB: Okay. So like, why did your family immigrate to America?

DH: Well, all Chinese people want to come here. And we got sponsored by a Christian group, and they paid the tickets for all 9 of us to come.

NB: So how many siblings do you have?

DH: I have one brother and 5 sisters.

NB: So when you first came did you experience any cultural shocks?

DH: Oh yeah, oh yeah. [**NB:** What?] Well, every imaginable thing. I was in New York City, so uh, one of my cultural shock was snow, I didn't know what that was. White things falling down, I had no idea. Uh, cold, 'cause we came in October, and so in Hong Kong it's always hot. Also, uh, I got - just to understand that uh people are different. I wasn't very old, but um, I was always with Chinese people in Hong Kong, and uh here there's a whole kind of mixture of people in Chinatown, New York City. So.

NB: Did you experience any sort of discrimination?

DH: Uh, probably, um, didn't know it was discrimination back then, it was just growing up. My parents were typical, they were hardworking people, and um we went to school, and the school we went to I remember my classes, there were 7 Chinese kids out of like 34, 36, so. And we were the skinny ones, at least I used to be, and uh they beat us up all the time. Usually the African-Americans, the Hispanic-Americans [laughs] they picked on us mercilessly. We got used to it, that's just typical. 'Cause we're small.

NB: But like from the CBC staff website, it says that you quickly got lost in an immigrant environment where [**DH:** Uh-huh.] work and education were the most important things in life. So like, what happened? Like why were you lost?

DH: Well, uh my parents were working, typical. Um, you know my father went to work at 4 in the morning, came back 1 at - in the morning. That was every day. My mother also worked with him, they started a little business, became very successful. So I was on my own, uh just hung out with friends and pretty soon uh, yeah, actually got involved with some gangsters and all that too when I was young. And uh, but I became a Christian at the age of 13 and I changed my life. But still, I was a typical Chinese then, I just studied hard, did well in school, got scholarships, went to study engineering and stuff like that.

NB: So like um, what got you out of that situation?

DH: Well, you know when I was uh 18 years old - I became a Christian at 13. When I was 18, uh God called me to ministry. It's a calling. So I had a sense that I shouldn't continue to be an engineer, that I should pursue something in the ministry which is pastor, missionary, stuff like that. So I went to a Bible school and seminary and stopped uh, pursuing the engineering area, so.

NB: Um, so like were you parents supportive of your decision to go into ministry?

DH: Not in the beginning at all, not at all, because I was an engineer, I had a full scholarship to one of the best schools in New York. Um, they were very proud of me to be an engineer, you know. Picture in the newspaper, all that kind of stuff Chinese parents love. And when I told them I want to become a pastor, they're like, "What? Why would you want to do that?" Uh, so they were not very happy about it. But later on, uh after I finished the education, became a pastor, they were very, very supportive, so.

NB: So like what struggles did you go through, like when they were not like supportive?

DH: [sighs] Well, yeah, just disappointing my parents, right. Uh it took a long time for me to, to cross over, you know to leave my uh situation, so-called, and uh to pursue something else. They were also not supportive of my education so I didn't have any scholarship to go to Bible school and seminary. I had to work hard, I worked quite a bit. I worked full-time putting myself through school because I didn't have any more scholarship, I lost it. So um, so it was tough, but it was a good learning experience you know, it was a time in which I was able to trust God and uh, and know that God has me in His hand, and He got me through it. And uh my parents were good! They were just disappointed as a typical Chinese parents would be. 'Cause they figure if I'm gonna be a pastor, I'm gonna be poor. Um, and there's no resources I would have. That's typical understanding. And so they didn't want that to happen to me. They wanted me to be well-off, as they thought and hoped that I would be. Yeah.

NB: What college did you go to?

DH: Uh, I went to the Cooper Union for engineering, and that's in New York City. It's a really good school, full scholarship they offered you. Um, and then afterwards when I went to Bible college, I went to Nyack College and then Alliance Theological Seminary, I went to seminary as well, so.

NB: How was your experience at Nyack College?

DH: It was good, it was good. Learned a lot, uh, met my wife, that's good. Had a lot of transformative experiences. Uh, grew up, and uh got to know a lot of stuff real quick, so.

NB: So did you ever do any job like other than being a pastor, or did you start...?

DH: Well, not too much, but I did work - when I was 13 years old I was a paperboy. Then I was a security guard. [laughs] Then um, you know, I worked in a factory, putting myself through college. And then I worked uh, you know as a yards guy, mowing grass, and uh fixing things, that kinda stuff. Just handyman stuff. Just getting uh money for tuition and living. That's what I did - I worked in the factory for a short time, it was too hard. It was terrible [laughs] actually. *But* you know, you have to pay the bills so. Yeah, that's - 'cause uh after seminary, um, I immediately became a pastor. So that's at the age of 22, so, yeah.

NB: Do you know what year it was?

DH: Oh yeah, I do. 1979.

NB: Um, so like, how was it when you first started to become a pastor?

DH: Well, it was interesting. We loved it, uh, I was married, and um we went back to New York City - the school wasn't in New York City, the seminary was upstate New York. We went back to New York City to work with uh, second-generation Chinese. So I worked with a lot of young people. Uh, it was fun, seeing how they are and helping them work through their situations. Um in the Chinatown in 1979, 1980, those times, it's not the same as now. A lot of gangsters, worked with a lot of gangsters. I had to go to courts for them, had to take custody over them, some of those. Uh, scary situations, but they were just lost, they were just - didn't have any hope in their lives you know. They came and, not all Chinese people are valedictorians. Not all Chinese people are good in school. A lot of them are not, and they get thrown aside, the parents just give up on them. And a lot of them get involved - I was uh, when I was growing up I was uh part of the Ghost Shadow gang, which is the toughest gang, the worst gang in Chinatown. They still existed then in the '80's, so. I worked with a bunch of the Flying Dragons, some of the Vietnamese gangs started, so a lot of bad situations. I lost a couple of kids. A couple - one kid was uh, tortured and killed, and uh, another one, you know, committed suicide, things like that you know. Lot of bad things, 'cause Chinatown New York City, uh probably still, is a ghetto. It's a ghetto. Even though there's a lot of wealth there because the Chinese people, the conditions are really hard. You know, a lot of uh, sweatshops and a lot of parents that are just working to death, sewing and sewing and sewing, even bring it home. And the kids are out there, they're just lost, so we uh, we work with them. Um -

NB: How were you able to help?

DH: Hm?

NB: How you able to help them?

DH: Well, we uh, [sighs] we use sports. Put a lot of teams together, I ran a uh, basketball thing probably for about 23 years. Uh, we go to the gym every - we went to the gym every uh, every week, we had lots of them come in to play volleyball, basketball. And then we ran tournaments throughout the years. So we got a lot of them off the street that way and we got to know them. We did that, and uh, of course we started the uh, church. Started the church. And that was in Chinatown, and we uh started a second church in New York, that was in Flushing, with the second Chinatown. You know, a lot of Koreans are there, a lot of Chinese people are there, and so uh we did that there. So we just bring - brought them in, and uh, shared with them the love of Jesus Christ, tell them the good - the Gospel, and um, some of them responded, and then they grew up with us. Some of them were with us for like 20 years. You know, I saw them from being not even teenagers to getting married, having children; I married most of them. I probably married about 120 couples, uh, from the times I was in New York. And many of them I, you know, I got to know them that way, so.

NB: Have you encountered any difficulty as a Chinese pastor?

DH: Uh, yeah, sure. There are always uh, things, you know. Being Chinese will bring you opportunities but also of course bring you difficulties. Um I mean one of the things that uh, that happens a lot is stereotyping. That's typical. Um so even though uh, I'm a Chinese-American, I can speak fluent Chinese, but you know I think English, you know, that's where I raised - I was raised, but you - you just don't - don't wanna assume that. They - they usually ask me in conferences and places, they ask me, "Where are you from?" I say, "I'm from New York". "Where are you from?" "I'm from New York!" "Where are you *really* from?" They really want me to say "I'm from this crazy country where people don't wear shoes," you know, don't wear clothes and will run around. That's basically what they wanna hear sometimes, you feel like that, you know. But I'm really from New York, you know. [laughs] Um, raised there, and so uh, that can be difficult. Uh, there's a lot of assumption. But at the same time, there are positive things, because a lot of great people... that understand that because of your cultural background, you have specialties, and understandings. Not the least of which is linguistically and cultural, you understand things that otherwise you might not. So that's fun. And uh, I enjoy people, um, and I think uh being Chinese-American was - is a plus you know in that way.

NB: So like what achievements have you made in your pastor life? Like in New York and then in Houston?

DH: What changes?

NB: Uh, achievements.

DH: Oh, I don't know. [**DH** and **NB** laugh] Don't like to talk about that too much. I was in New York for 28 years. Uh, we started a Chinese - a second-generation Chinese congregation in the church in Chinatown, we did that and then we started a brand-new church uh, in Queens, New York. 25 years we were there, and then we came here to Houston. I don't - achievements are not the stuff that I would say. I think just being faithful, doing what God has called us to do, that's - that's what I love to, you know. You know the statistics for pastors, in case uh - especially even Chinese pastors - is uh, only 10% survival rate. 9 out of 10 will quit, or be out of the pastorate in their lifetime. Half of them will be finished within the first 5 years. So, achievement-wise, when you say, the best achievement is longevity. [laughs] Being faithful, being there, so I've been a pastor going on now, well, yeah, 39 years. Right? So, still a pastor. So I see that as a, the best achievement, you know. Just being faithful to God, who called me to be a pastor, so. Haven't quit.

NB: So how did you manage to, like, solve all the problems, and - ?

DH: Uh, you know you go through it. It's good and bad. Um, I gotta say most of the time it's been fun, I enjoy doing what I do. I really enjoy being a pastor. I've been offered a lot of different positions. Uh, big positions higher up, and I've turned them down because I'm a pastor. That's all I wanna be. You know, like a, what they would call a bishop equivalent, or you know just district superintendents even that kinda - I don't want to do that. I just wanna be a pastor. Because I feel like that's what God has called me to do, to minister to people, uh, to love them, to care for them, to be there, available for them, to be a help to them, to encourage them, you know. To lead them to the direction that I believe God wants for them, that's - that's my job, I love doing that. My wife and I, we just love doing that. So yeah, uh, so...

NB: Okay, so how is like pastor unique from like all those other positions?

DH: Pastors? Well, I think the pastors care - you know the word 'pastor', you know in English we can understand it as like a shepherd. You know, shepherd takes care of the sheep. And so the great shepherd is Jesus Christ, that's our lord. But I am the under-shepherd for whatever church He pulls me to. And uh, so we care for the sheep. We care about them, we wanna take care of them, watch out for them, pray for them. Uh, minister to them the best we can. So it's very relational, you know, it's not a machine. It's not uh, a profit line, it's none of that. And a lot of times you know we work with people, we may not even know ultimately what happens, but we just trust that we - we put good things into their lives. You know, we share with them the word of God, I mean, we're just the under-shepherds so we can't make things up, I'm not gonna write my own book and say follow this. We follow the Bible, you know. And uh, we trust God in - in handling people, so.

NB: Um, so like have you challenged your own beliefs, or has anyone challenged your beliefs?

DH: Oh, lots of people challenge my beliefs, yeah. Uh, and it's fine. I think uh, if someone doesn't believe what we believe, you know, it's perfectly fine for them to challenge it, but what we need to do it be honest with it and open, uh, to discovery, you know. Truth. And uh, I believe that what I follow, what I believe in, uh, the word of God is truth. And um, if somebody doesn't like that, that's fine, we can talk about it. I love talking with people about it. Uh, I don't want to get too philosophical, I did study philosophy and religion in college, but uh I don't want to get that way because you can - you know, you can always prove something to someone, and then somebody else come - comes along and proves the opposite you know, that kind of thing. Uh so what we say is this: we believe in the word of God. We believe in what God has taught us. And it requires faith. You have to believe it you know, you have to say, "Hey, I really believe this is true. I'm gonna step out in faith." And uh, you gotta take a step of faith to believe. So, uh, I've been challenged a lot. Um, especially I love talking to college students, so college students love to challenge you. [laughs] I mean, they've yelled at me, you know, but then a lot of them have uh good conversations you know, so. Yeah.

NB: Okay, so like how would you like respond to their like yelling or - ?

DH: [laughs] Yeah, what I would do is - first this one thing, I remember this one fellow. He - came at me, and he basically really yelled at me for being ashamed of being Chinese. I said, why? Why am I ashamed to be Chinese? I'm Chinese, I never - he said, because you're a Christian. Being a Christian means that you disavow all your Chinese traditions and everything, right? They get that way because some people don't understand, they think that Christianity is a Western religion. And so being Chinese, I'm not - not so much in Houston as much, but up in upper New York, you ask anybody in Chinatown, what religion are you? They're Buddhist. They don't even know what Buddhists are, okay, they - they literally sometimes don't even know what the Buddha's faith is about. Now I studied Buddhism hard, I know what it is about. They don't even understand it. But, if you're gonna be Christian you just disavow being Chinese. So there's almost Chinese and Buddhism is linked together. So I was talking to the fellow, I said, "No no no, I am proud to be Chinese. I am proud to be Chinese-American. But you know what? I'm prouder yet of being a Christian. I am a follower of Jesus Christ, and that has nothing to do with being Chinese -

English, or you know American culture." So he didn't know anything about it, so I began to talk to him. I said, "You know, you know Jesus was a Jewish guy, right? You know that right?" [laughs] So he's not even American. So, so we just had a conversation. And it ended pretty well, as I remember it. He didn't become a Christian, but you know we had a cordial conversation. So those things happen, you know. And that's okay.

NB: So what do you do as a senior pastor?

DH: What do I do? [laughs]

NB: Yeah, like, [laughs] duties...

DH: I think a lot of people think I just work on Sundays, but uh, no, basically, you know I have to manage my staff. Um, do a lot of things administratively but also uh, I, I - my primary - my primary duty is to care for this church. To make sure that uh - as best I can - that it's going in the direction that God wants it. But I also am - I'm not the only one that preach, but I am the only preacher for our English congregation when I'm here. I believe in that, I believe that God calls pastors to be preachers. Preaching is, you know it's not just giving a uh, you know, homily of some kind. But we really believe that we need to share the word of God, expound it, and teach it so that people can understand it. Uh, so that's what I do, that's a big part of my, my preparation every week. Uh, but also I teach, and uh I will have Sunday school classes, sometimes I don't - right now I'm not teaching Sunday school class, but I would teach Sunday school classes, I would also uh, have to, of course officiate and be the person that represents the church in so many ways. Um, also mana - managing my staff, you have other pastors, they also preach and they do different things as well. But I oversee the whole - whole congregation, that way.

NB: So like when it comes to like decision-making, like how the church is going to change, [**DH:** Well-] things like that, like you would decide that?

DH: Well, we have a council, we have a church council. And when we make some decisions, you know we also have committees that work on them first. Like when we changed some bylaws, we had some committees that worked on the bylaws and find out you know, times are changing, there's some changes that need to be made, you know that is more appropriate for now. That kind of stuff. Uh, there's some things that change that I can just make. Uh, they told me that a lot of the ministry, church ministries - I asked them when I came actually, uh, different churches are different. Sometimes you know, to put a chair somewhere else, you gotta get the permission. [laughs] But uh, not this church. They said you know, if you wanna do ministry pastor, it's your prerogative. You do the ministry. Uh, when they cost money and stuff, I have to get the appropriate budget, and we wanna cancel certain things, you know we need to talk to people and make sure that people aren't hurt by, you know, make mature choices like that. Uh, yeah there's always decisions being made, and I make a lot of them. And - but I'm not, I don't think I'm a dictator, I don't see myself as one, I don't like being a dictator. So, something I don't need to make, and someone else can, that's fine with me. You know, I don't micromanage, that's not my leadership style, so... I see the big picture. I see where um, I believe God wants our church to be in our community, you know how we relate to our Chinese community, our Houstonian community, and then I'll uh, you know, bring people in that direction.

NB: Can you explain like how you see that? [laughs] Like where God wants you to be, like the direction? (?)

DH: Oh, yeah. For instance um, alright, I really - when I came here I really felt like you know, our purpose is to reach people, to make a difference in more people than what we have here. Now, there's a lot of community centers that - they're more like a country club. You know, you gotta get involved. You're not welcome unless you're welcome, right? A lot of community centers are like that too, where you have to pay your dues, you gotta - you gotta fit in, or else we don't want you. Sometimes churches are like that too. They shouldn't be. It's not a country club, it's not a community center. You know, a church is a church. We call it the body of Christ, this is a spiritual community, you know? And people are welcome everywhere. And not only that, our purpose is to expand it, it's not to prevent people from coming. We don't put barriers, we don't want to put barriers. We don't care whether you are black, white, Asian - whatever, you know, we care about you. You know, we want you to know that, and not just words, we mean it.

So when I came, what I wanted to - our church to do was to be able to do that, to expand out. Um, when I first came, I mean for whatever reason, no need to talk about any of that, it was kind of close - a little bit close-minded. It wasn't expanding out. And so what I - we did was we began to do that. You know, we do different things. We do some things personally, something this and that, uh, another thing we did was we opened our church to events, you know like the banquet, Chinese banquet, Fourth of July picnic, we open it up for people to invite people. Uh, right now you know last year we opened our church to a school. So a school comes, you know 300 children, 300 kids come here, and uh teachers and - for the community, our Houston - you know, they come from all over Houston. Now we don't gain anything from that. Like I said, we do it for free, they don't pay us anything. You know they just pay the expenses. But we did that because we said we want to be able to expand outward, to help people, that's one of the things we wanna do. Same thing with the different congregations like that Russian congregation we have, because we care about the Russian community. That's why we do that. So that's what we do, you know, to answer your question, you know. Uh, and we hope that we can always do that, because my - in my heart, I think the purpose of the church is to be able to expand out, to impact people like you guys, you know, people that are just out there and say, well what's Christianity about, what's the church about? We want people to know it's about the love of Jesus Christ and it matters. It matters to you, it matters to me, you know. That's what we wanna do. And this - we gonna discover it you know, 2 years if you came back and ask, we'll probably give you a few other things that we're doing, so. [laughs]

NB: So like what impacts did your parents have on you that have shaped you as a person?

DH: My parents?

NB: Yes, who you are today.

DH: Um, my parents, they were Christians before me, so that was an impact. Uh, secondly um, because they were Christians, there was a Christian group that flew us here. Is that amazing? They paid our tickets from Hong Kong to New York, totally paid for. Now my parents, my father paid it back, but paid it back

like 15, 20 years later, 'cause he became rich and he really was thankful. But they didn't know we were gonna pay it back you know, it was so nice of them. 9 tickets from Hong Kong, that's a lot of money! Anyway, they just paid for us, as a Christian group that did that. So that, that impacted me 'cause it brought me here, it brought me to uh the States and that's when I became a Christian. So they impacted me that way. Now how else they impact me, they were very typical Chinese. Even though they were Christians, and God bless them, they were really good Christians. But they worked so hard. Just typical Chinese immigrants, just work, work, work, you know? And he didn't have a nickel, my father didn't have a nickel in his pocket. And when he passed away, he was a multimillionaire. And the good thing is, he left the bulk of it to a foundation that I, I chair. Uh, a foundation that helps children, orphans. Um, and we do - we open uh, foster homes, and built support orphanages in Eastern Europe, that's what we do. So that's what he did you know. So he um, he and - he and my mother, you know they're wonderful people. I wasn't that close to them, 'cause they're working all the time. [laughs] You know, just difficult. And uh, our whole family was kinda on our own, you know just... but I discover - I became a Christian, and because of that I was, I was good, I was rescued. Because again I was getting involved with the gangs in New York. My two best friends were founding members, actually. They were founding members of the Ghost Shadow fon - gang. And now I don't know where they are, I'm sure in jail or, or dead. Because if you stay in that life there's no other choice. You know, so, but God rescued me and I got out of that, so.

NB: But did you just like suddenly realize that you wanted to become like a pastor?

DH: Uh, well I became a Christian when - at the age of 13, I literally gave my life to Jesus Christ. I was in my bed and I said, "Lord, uh, if you're real and I believe you are, please forgive my sins, I want to become a Christian, I want to become a follower of you." And so I asked him to come into my heart. And the next day I'm telling you, uh people will tell you, I was a different person. I just transformed, really different. That's 13. So I, I quit the gang, I did all that, right, and I became a normal, good guy. Uh, my pastor would tell me, "Boy, you were so different, you know... before you were just miserable [laughs] but now he's a good kid." Anyway, from 13 to uh, to 17, I studied hard in school. It was easy actually, I was you know, being Chinese, math and science very easy. And then I got into the good, really good college to study engineering. And then uh, study, study and then I went to a conference, I went to - you know what it is, a conference where people go and uh speak there, and the speaker challenged me - not just me, to everybody else - and said, "Do you want to serve God full-time?" He said, "That means you're gonna give up everything you're doing now, you're willing to do that." And I felt my heart, you know, that I really wanna to that. He says if you wanna do that come up - I was really shy. I was sitting in the back, and I walked all the way up front, which was really scary, and uh he prayed for me. And from that moment on, the next day, I lost all interest in engineering. All interest. I still can do it, but I have no interest whatsoever. All I can think about is what I can do and what I - that kind of thing. And uh, I didn't even know what to do. I had no idea, gonna be a pastor, missionary, I had no idea. And then when I went to Bible school, uh about - that took about a year before I went to Bible school, gave up my engineering, went to Bible school. I was in a, you call a chapel. You know, you sit there, they have one of these things every day for 30 minutes. And a missionary from, from um, not Vietnam but uh, not Laos... Cambodia! [laughs] Missionary [inaudible] Cambodia came, he was talking about what they would do, and this is when uh, you guys too young for this. This is when uh, there's Pol Pot, and they slaughtered the Cambodians. They killed uh, 3 million of them, something like that. The things they did to them is unbelievable. And actually I had a friend that was a Cambodian uh, sergeant, he was there in the school, I

was working with him on campus. He was telling me stories, he said they would take a, a squad out, 12 of them, every night, he'll come back with 3 or 4. That's it. I mean they were vicious there. So anyway, they were talking about it and here I am, right? I... pretty like, you know, manly man, in a sense, right, I'm an athlete and everything. Tears are just pouring out of my eyes, I couldn't stop it. I just couldn't stop it. And then, they're telling - showing these - back then there's no video right, there's just slides [laughs] little slides. Pictures of these Cambodians. And I remember saying to God, "God, please send me to Cambodia. Even if I die in one day, I think that will be worth it. I want to go there just for one day to help these people, to tell them about Jesus." That's what I said. I was sitting there by myself. I mean, there's crowds, hundreds of people and students, but I was sitting there watching this, I remember making that declaration to God. He didn't send me there, it's not like I can go to Cambodia, I just wanted to, it was my heart. I really like, that's it. My heart was changed. I was not going to live for anything else, you know? I'm already in Bible college, but I am not going to live for anything else, I don't need to make any money whatsoever. I don't need to live, I just wanna go and do that. And so I pursued it, and uh, met my wife, and she shared the same passion with me. And then uh, afterwards you know, I really wanted to go to Thailand, 'cause Cambodia you can't go to, but Thailand you go - all the refugee camps are there, you know. And uh, I have so many friends there that uh, that went there actually, and uh worked at the refugee camps. And it's a horrific stories they tell, you know, these Cambodians coming over the border. The things they did to them is horrible, I mean *awful* things, can't even mention it. Um, so that's, that's why I became [laughs] a pastor. You know, uh God kept me here, you know I was studying, and working to be a - I was a pastor here, and I was gonna be a missionary. But for some reasons, they didn't send us to Thailand, they were gonna send us to Argentina, and over the course of time it just discovered that God wanted us to stay here. And so we did, we stayed and went to New York City. But we always have a heart for missions, this called missions, you know going out overseas. And so we've always gone, like you know I usually go to Ukraine, Latvia, uh, 2 or 3 times a year, just to do some ministry there. I've gone to you know the Philippines, South America, on and on. So that's our heart, even though we're not there, we encourage people here to go there. A lot of my staff, my former staff, are now missionaries to Taiwan, um, to uh, Thailand, to uh, Africa, different places. They work with me for a little while, then they went there, so.

NB: So what's the purpose of overseas missionaries?

DH: Well, the purpose is if I was to go there, I want to share with the people there, uh, the love of Jesus Christ, is the purpose I have everywhere. But in overseas a lot of places, um, you know, you're from China, and in China there's - there actually is a lot of Christians, but um, in America you know, everybody has a Bible, you know, there's Christians everywhere, so called, right? There's - you're immersed with it. But in other parts of the world it's not the same. There's billions of people that have never even heard about Jesus Christ, they never read the Bible. In fact uh, some places they don't have the Bible, they're not translated into the language yet. So that's what mission's about, go there to share the love of Jesus Christ to people that, you know. But it's hard, you know, you go there, you gotta learn the language, right? I mean before you tell people anything, you gotta speak the language. So it's interesting. Uh, we have some great missionaries. Um, and we have a lot in - that are doing things in China right now, so uh, but I didn't get to go, um and I know that God wanted to keep us here, so.

NB: Uh, you and your wife met in college right?

DH: Mhm.

NB: So was like the larger environment and your family supportive of your interracial marriage?

DH: Uh, at first no. [laughs] Uh, it's funny you know, back in those days, I would go to college, alright, she's - my parents weren't too happy with me leaving engineering anyway. And then go to college and then she would call me and we would talk, and they'd say, "Don't date any Americans, alright? Don't date Americans." That's typical. But there were seven Asians in my college. The whole school, is seven Asians. If I wanna date somebody, it's probably not gonna be them, because first of all, half of them are guys, and the other, the girls, they're friends, but I don't like them. [laughs] I like them as people, but you know. So uh, but you know I met my wife and um, actually met her the first month we were there, and... yeah, we uh, we got along really well, fell in love real quick, and uh 2 years later, after we graduated, we got married. So it was good, but yeah interracial marriage, back then it's - like when I went to New York City one time, I mean I had a rock, uh, bottle thrown through my window because we were interracial married, yeah. Um, so it wasn't, it wasn't easy. I think the easiest place was probably California but New York City was not open to that back then. Like '79, no.

NB: How do you and your wife work together in church?

DH: Oh, she's, she's uh, she does a lot in the church. So she does a lot of counseling, she's a writer, um, she you know she does like, she's preparing for a conference right now in Ukraine, she used to speak there. She does a lot of women's fellowship and different things here. Uh, she teaches Sunday school class, she does a lot here. She enjoys it. I mean she's not employed here, so she volunteers, and she does whatever she wants. [laughs] But she does a lot, so, uh, sometimes I think she gets a little bit too stressed out. She's a real good heart - she's got a great gift of hospitality, so she cooks a lot and uh, always brings food to church you know, so she enjoys it, she loves it.

NB: Um, so now there are some questions about the Houston community. [**DH:** Mhm.] So like how has the Houston community changed over the years and how has that - like how have those changes impacted the church?

DH: Um, I think the church has been impacted, especially the last uh, oh, I'm gonna say 5, 6 years. Because the community has gotten so big, so diverse. It is the most diverse community in the nation. Um, I forget what is this - 320 different people groups, something like that. I'm not sure, I forgot the statistics. But um, so the church is impacted that way because we are now uh, called upon to minister to them. Uh, being Chinese is a good thing, but not always. The reason for that is you know 65 years ago, it was a real good thing because it was needed. You know, we needed a Chinese church. Uh, and so now, um there are 50 Chinese churches. And I think we still, it's important to keep our heritage and all, but now opportunities are opening for us to minister to beyond Chinese. And I think we need to take that, um, certainly to the Chinese from China, we have to take that, that's really important. But also, you know there's so many friends of Chinese people that are not Chinese. We have to make sure that we can uh minister to them and impact them as well. So it's a challenge in that way, you know, it's a good challenge, you know. Uh, Houston being this way, so.

NB: Uh, what are some like critical issues that you see like in those people that you serve and are trying to serve?

DH: I think um, I think it's always... important for people to understand and know why they are here, their purpose in living but also their purpose in being in this church. Um, that's important. I think uh another issue is I'm seeing a real need to minister to the children in the family, because this society is so dysfunctional family-wise. Even if you have an Asian - tight Asian family, the kids are just, I don't think the parents know what in the world is going on with the kids. I mean with all the capacity of you know, the social engineering, I mean... you can hardly even have a dinner together, right? I mean, usually you have about 3 or 4 gadgets going. Um, so that's really tough. Um, I think a lot of families are wanting the children to have some semblance of attachment, and I think the church can help that. I think the church is a big part of that. Uh, so if the church can help the family just thrive, and uh you know from - even though the children are growing up, that would be a big impact. Um, again, for the young people though, I think uh what I'm trying to stress to our leaders is that the young people, their friends and family, are not always gonna be Chinese. It's just not happening. And so if our church is not friendly to their friends, their friends won't come, but worse - not that it's worse, it's bad too - they won't come. Because if I can't bring my friend to something, I'm not going to that thing, right? Whatever it is. If I can't bring my friend to a party they invited me to, I'm not coming to it. Uh, so it's important that our church understands that, that it's getting to the place because of the diversity of Houston, uh our church has to be that diverse as well.

NB: [to **PL**] Um, do you have any specific questions?

PL: Um, I was just wondering how did you come from New York to Houston?

DH: You know, it's uh, people have asked us that, it's interesting. I'm gonna just give you an answer that may not make sense, but, God called us here. 'Cause we, we started a church in New York, the second church. Remember, I told you two churches, we have been in three only. And it started with nothing and it became a pretty big church, it was about 650 people. And we had a big facility, we built a big - it's not as big as this place, but it was worth 20 million dollars in New York City. So, out of the blue, just had a sense that God wanted us to come to Houston. I was praying about it. So I asked my wife, this was in December 2006. "So what do you think about Houston?" She's like, "What? You're crazy, Houston, why Houston?" I travel a lot, I speak in a lot of churches and conferences, internationally and also in the states. Houston, I came once. I don't even remember this church. But I go to California a lot, Florida, you know, Pennsylvania, Canada. Houston wouldn't be the place I'm thinking about. I come to Houston only to fly through, you know, to the airport, that's it. But there was a sense that God wanted us to come to Houston. So, a year later, we came to Houston. It's just like that. Um, it wasn't uh, it wasn't even this church, it wasn't the church that called us, we just came. We just left our church, we came here. And uh, and - long story you know, but it's just, it's supernatural I think, it's miraculous because it doesn't make sense. And we're not like that, we're not flaky people you know, last church we were in we were there for 25 years, it's not like we were going here, there and everywhere, we don't go anywhere. Uh, but God called us here and we came, and uh, we've been really happy that the Lord has called us here. It's a calling, you know, in the Christian circle we call it a calling. Um, but we always say if God calls us to Timbuktu tomorrow, we

go tomorrow, that's it. You know, our life is not our own, I mean we serve God, and that's what we do, um, so.

PL: Oh, so what were the names of the churches that you served at?

DH: Uh, well, it was with another denomination, it wasn't Baptist, uh the first church was called New York Chinese Alliance Church, and the second is called Queens Christian Alliance Church. That's the church we started. We were there for 28 years in total. We uh, we started in about '79 and uh - '79 ish - yeah and then 28 years later we came. Yeah.

PL: So um, if your parents were Christian, they didn't raise you as a Christian?

DH: You know, they tried, but again [sighs] the immigrant situation is like that, like I said you know, you never, I never saw my father and mother much at all. My mother more, my father almost never. So they didn't really raise me, um, and that's just the typical immigrant situation, particularly in New York City. They did a survey, I remember in the '80's, and they asked children, you know, how often they saw their father, alright. 23 or 24 percent said they never saw their father, and the father lives at home with them. Never saw - a quarter of the kids. And the mother was about 18 percent, same thing. 'Cause they're working all the time. So my parents fell into that too, they did the same thing. They didn't bring me to church at all, I wouldn't even go. So they went to different churches than me, they went to a Baptist church actually and I went to another church that uh my pastor, who was just a great, great guy, you know he ministered to me. So we go to different churches. And that's okay, she - they just glad I went to church, you know. Uh, so, that's just how it is. So they didn't raise me like that. I mean again it's not a knock on them, it's just typical immigrant experience.

PL: Um, so I guess we didn't talk about your children, so did you raise your children Christian?

DH: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I have two sons, uh, one in uh - was a pastor, he is now in Longview, Texas, he works for Eternal University which is a Christian college right now. My other son is a, a New York City police sergeant in Times Square. So if you ever go to Times Square, you need a place to visit, you know, you can find him, look for Sergeant Ho, he's there. Uh, so he's there, I have three granddaughters, two in New York and one in Longview.

NB: Have they influenced your thinking in any way? Like Christian thinking?

DH: My kids? Uh, I can't say they influenced my thinking too much, um, they've been a part of it, but I - not as far as influence, um, I'm just glad uh, you know, the Lord loves them and has special plans for them as well. Now I have three granddaughters I'm thinking about them, uh, how they would be, you know, it's interesting. Uh, both of them, my two sons obviously they're halfies, but they both married white girls. So their grandkids are - they don't look anything Asian at all. They have the almond eyes and that's about it. [laughs]

NB: So like lastly, what ad - what advice can you give to people, especially Asian-Americans?

DH: What advice, well I would tell -

NB: Just like general advice. [laughs]

DH: General advice, I wanna tell people as much as I can that Jesus loves them, every single person is precious to the Lord, and uh, they cannot imagine a better life than a life knowing Jesus Christ is the lord and savior. I can tell them that, from the depths of my heart, you will never regret that decision. I made that decision in 1970, that's 47, 48 years ago, you know, and I don't regret a day of it. That's the most important thing. After that, you know what, uh, the experience of life is all about uh, just a walk with Jesus Christ, really. Um, He's gonna bring you through all kinds of situations and experiences, and um, and it's gonna be great. The ups and downs of life, uh, it's just no better than having Jesus as your lord. I will say that - I know I'm a pastor, but I will say that no matter where I am. So, I've told that to many people and I believe with all my heart. [pause] Good?

PL: Okay, I have one last question [**DH:** Okay!] this is like a question we always ask, but um, how would you identify yourself?

DH: How would I identify myself? Oh, first and foremost, I am a Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ, and I am a proud Chinese-American, serving God in Houston. Uh, I can say that, and I love every bit of what God has made me, so.

PL: Is there anything else you would like to add, anything else you would like to share?

DH: Oh, no... You know, I'd uh, I know you guys are doing the Chinese Historical Society, uh, thing here, and getting the history but there's a lot of great Chinese Christians. And uh, I'm just uh, Viola and I are just following the footsteps of those. Yeah, that's about it.

PL: Okay, thank you so much for your time.

NB: Thank you very much.

DH: Yeah, my pleasure.

[interview ends]