

Spiritual Life

What is the gospel to you?

I was born into a Christian household, and accepted Christ as my savior at the age of 7. At the time, I understood that Christ's salvation was necessary, but wasn't sure why it was necessary specifically for me. After all, as a 7 year old, I didn't reflect much on my brokenness as an individual, and so I didn't view salvation as particularly personal. Yet, I recall feeling strange after accepting Christ - I felt joy and a physical lightness, like my heart was being lifted by an invisible force.

As I grew, I would begin to struggle and reconcile the ways that I was broken, and come to terms with why I needed God's salvation. One of the biggest struggles I faced, and to this day still face, is my desire for control. I wanted full control over my life - to have the power to solely determine my future. I would then be challenged in times that this control was removed - for example, during Covid. Covid was at its peak during my first year of university, and along with trying to make CS POST, my mental health rapidly declined. With no assurance of my future occupation, and amidst a pandemic, all I could do was rely on God. God provided - He led me back to Him. God reminded me that my sole purpose was to glorify Him, and the only identity that mattered was my identity in God. Knowing this gave me peace, and I was able to accept whatever outcome that God ordained. I tried my best, and let God do the rest, knowing that this was His will for me. I am forever grateful for the Gospel, as it allowed me to form a personal relationship with God who I trust and can submit all control to, knowing that Jesus sacrificed all control in the greatest act of love so that He could have a personal relationship with me.

As for how the Gospel has changed me, in lifting my life into God's hands, I feel more at peace with myself, the people around me, and my future. In finding security in my identity in God, I can see how God can work through traits I once thought were my weaknesses, allowing me to be genuine around other people. God has also filled me with the desire for fellowship and knowledge of Him, and through this desire I decided to attend Grace Toronto. At Grace Toronto, I am continually rooted in the Word through their sermons and in conversation with the Pastoral team, though I still seek to integrate myself further into the church by attending a small group. I recognize the need for spiritual support from individuals more mature in their faith, and this is something that I am taking proactive steps towards attaining.

Candidacy

What do you believe is the purpose of UTCCF and the UTCCF Committee?

I believe the purpose of UTCCF is to cultivate fellowship between Uoft students, where students can encourage each other in their spiritual journeys. This is through creating an environment where students can form deep bonds with each other, become further equipped to serve the kingdom of God, and feel supported in our call as Christians to share the Gospel outside of the fellowship as well. I believe that the purpose of the UTCCF Committee is to organize the fellowship so that the structures where fellowship, learning, and outreach can occur.

How has God led you to run for committee, as well as the specific position you are running for?

Through IG leading, I was able to see just how wonderful IGs can be as a place to form deep bonds with fellow brothers and sisters. IGs are the main place/structure where fellowship and deep bonds within CCF can be cultivated, and throughout this year, God has placed a love in my heart for my IG. Seeing our fellowship grow in the depths of our trust in each other and God was encouraging, and I realized just how great IGs were for individuals looking for fellowship. Therefore to continue working with IGs, and to be more involved in overseeing the IGs and the culture of relationships being formed, I felt called to run for the position of Vice Chair, and to see how God could work through me in this position.

If you are not elected to your chosen role, how will you still serve and carry out your vision at CCF next year?

If not elected, I will serve as an IG leader and try to carry out my vision within the IG. Centering God in our lives is something that pertains to everyone's journey in Christ, so I would urge the IG to dive into passages to extract truth that compels them to center their lives around God, while encouraging an environment of vulnerability and encouraging discussions surrounding faith.

Personal Evaluation

What God-given gifts do you see in your life? How do you see God using these gifts to further His kingdom at UTCCF?

One of the gifts that God has blessed me with is a heart that loves to observe and reflect - I seek to understand myself, the people around me, and what glorifies God. Through reflecting on what glorifies God, I have a strong foundation in knowing what is right (Christlike) and wrong (sinful or may lead to sin), and why that is so. When I reflect on myself, I am thus able to identify my intentions, confront my shortcomings, and figure out what steps I can take to emulate Christ's character. In knowing my own heart and being honest with myself, I am able to understand my brokenness and the brokenness of people in general. This allows me to empathize with the people around me, and to desire a deeper relationship with God for both myself and others. With my gifts of observation and reflection, God can use me to identify and share the truth of matters within UTCCF. God can also use me to identify the strengths of the fellowship, and how they can be further cultivated.

What are some areas of weakness in your life? How are you taking grace-driven steps to overcome them and become more like Christ?

Observation and reflection can turn into judgment and scrutiny. My judgments of individuals can be overly harsh if they don't meet a moral expectation I have for them. This can cause me to become closed off to the people around me. In becoming closed off, I can also fail to confront individuals of their wrongdoings, which can lead to a negative cycle where moral expectations are continually not met while my resentment grows as I hold everything in. This is unfair to the individual and hypocritical, and results from leaning into my own understanding instead of God's, and in turn failing to have patience and grace as God does.

To overcome this weakness, I continually pray to God for a heart that is renewed and full of compassion so that I can continue to empathize instead of judge, and for courage to share truth in love

instead of internalizing my thoughts and building resentment. After all, it is not my place to put expectations on the people around me - expectations should be set by God. By drawing close to God, and realizing He is enough, I can also understand that God can work in the hearts of people, so my judgments should never be absolute. Lastly, if possible, I try to get to know the individual in question better - to see where they are coming from - so that I can understand why they decided to make the choices they did.

Vision

God at the Center

In CCF this year, we saw the solidification of a community. The year before this one, there was a drive to build relationships, and this year, there was a drive to deepen them. There is a longing for community that CCF provides, through the structure of meeting up weekly on Fridays or through ministries, where individuals are provided with an environment where they can be intentional with each other. The question is - the community and relationships that have been built, and in the ways that we are intentional with each other - are they God glorifying? As members of this fellowship, for those who have accepted Christ, we accepted Christ with the intention to make God the center of our lives. In the deepening of bonds with fellow brothers and sisters, God, who is to be at our center, should be at the center of those relationships as well. Therefore as members of this fellowship, to achieve greater spiritual familiarity with each other, we first need to examine our hearts and ask: how can God be at the center of it?

We must realize our need for God, and know that God is enough.

1. Realizing our need for God

- a. "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." - Psalm 16:11
- b. Created by God, our sole purpose is to glorify God, and fulfillment of this purpose is life's ultimate joy, but we are broken. Born into sin, pride can lead us to believe that we know what is best for us - that ultimate joy does not come from God, and that we do not need God. This leads us to build identities of this world, so that being of this world, we may find short-term purpose and happiness. We must recognize our brokenness, that the things of this world will never truly fulfill us no matter how hard we try to conform, and realize our need for God, the only one who can truly fulfill us

2. Know that God is enough

- a. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" - Matthew 19:14
- b. In realizing our need for God, we can approach God in humility. Humility allows us to acknowledge that God is all-mighty and perfect in love. We can trust in God, knowing that God knows what is best for us, and find security and an identity as children of God: fully trusting, ever-dependent on Him. And since God provides, we can realize that God is enough - enough to love and support us at all times, and enough to devote our lives to/build our identity around.
- c. If God is enough for us, then our relationships won't hinge on the identities of this world, because security wouldn't come from people - it would be from God. So if we were

secure in God, there would be less fear in our relationships failing due to God being at the center of who you are, not your identity as seen from other people. In overcoming this fear, we can center God in the relationships we build in and outside CCF, and strive for greater spiritual familiarity within the fellowship.

By realizing our need for God, and knowing that God is enough, this ensures that God is at the center of our lives, and that everything we do stems from God being at our center. Next year in CCF, with IGs being a main structure in CCF where fellowship can be cultivated, I hope that we can approach serving God and forming relationships with people with the purpose of glorifying God.

Implementation:

- Personal steps:
 - Continually examine my own heart to identify whether God is at the center in the way I approach my life (and UTCCF), through identifying ways that I fall short of God and reflecting why
 - In building a secure identity in Christ, to be more open, vulnerable, and honest with the people around me
- For the fellowship:
 - As IG leaders pour into their small groups, to ensure the leaders themselves are poured into as well. Supporting IG leaders through check ins, prayer, and continual encouragement - whether from myself and/or the comm member assigned to the specific IG. Ensure that IG leaders feel equipped with the role of being a leader in the fellowship, and encouraging them in light of being students themselves
 - Creating an IG environment where members can feel welcome no matter where they are in their journey with Christ, and where the environment allows for people to be honest about who they are, and are encouraged to grow in faith.
 - Working with committee and Pastor Roger to select Bible Study passages that encourage the fellowship to center God in their lives