

## **Spiritual Life**

- *What is the gospel to you? Briefly share your personal testimony.*
- *Describe your current walk with Christ. Are you supported by a church community and if so, how are you involved?*

To me, the Gospel is the story of who God is, who we are and what we have done, what God has done for us in spite of the great chasm between us and Him, and the response we are called to take in light of this. It is the ultimate manifestation of the face of God in a way that we in our flaws and limitations could grasp. That God in His holiness and omnipotence would choose to enter into a relationship with us who have been created in His image, but we rejected Him and fell into the depths of sin, eternally separated from Him. And God in His amazing grace and indescribable love made the utmost sacrifice to save us from our sin and bridge the gap between us and Him, so that we would be able to spend eternity with Him. How do we respond to such unfathomable grace and mercy? We offer up our lives to Him as a living sacrifice, to live lives that glorify Him and carry out His glory to the brothers and sisters around us. This Gospel is something that I have so often overlooked throughout my faith journey, but is something that I have come to realize must be experienced and lived out each and every moment of my life.

From a young age, being raised in a Christian household, I had been captivated by Bible stories and verses, developing an interest for memorizing Bible verses and gaining biblical knowledge. To me, the Gospel story was the “basic stuff”, more for new believers and less mature Christians; I needed the more “advanced” knowledge. This started off as memorizing Bible trivia as a kid, and eventually became seeking deep, difficult-to-comprehend theology. I was always the person in Sunday School who would roll my eyes at “easy” questions and raise my hand eagerly for the challenging ones, trying all the time to present myself as knowledgeable and “wise”. This intellectual pursuit actually proved to help me better understand why I believed in what I did in high school through exploring other faiths in our world religions class, which led me to confirm my faith through baptism. However, I felt stagnant in my faith and a lack of meaning in my worship, whether in reading and hearing from Scripture, musical worship or prayer. I was absent-mindedly going through the motions, doing all these spiritual practices that didn’t really seem to satisfy me. At the same time, I did not feel motivated to actively pursue godly relationships or evangelism. In the midst of this, God revealed to me the power of simplicity in the Gospel, how what I thought was the “basic stuff” actually proved to be the core of all of Scripture and everything that we do in our faith. It is by the power of the Gospel that we are called to respond by living a life in pursuit of Christ. There is no “deeper theology” or “greater knowledge” that is apart from this.

Currently, I am supported by my home church community in Toronto, particularly through the worship ministry where I serve. In every facet of my life, God has been constantly reminding me of how everything points back to Him and to live in light of the Gospel, seeing everything that I do as a living and active response to what He has done for me.

## **Candidacy**

Christopher Fan  
Worship Coordinator

- *What do you believe is the purpose of UTCCF and the UTCCF Committee?*
- *How has God led you to run for committee, as well as the specific position you are running for?*
- *If you are not elected to your chosen role, how will you still serve and carry out your vision at CCF next year?*

I believe that the purpose of CCF is to create an environment where students can grow in maturity in their Christian faith while walking alongside a community of believers, sharing life together during a crucial life stage. It is a place where God can reveal Himself and speak to our hearts through every facet of worship (e.g. singing worship songs, doing Bible study), as well as through the people around us. Furthermore, I believe that we are called to be witnesses for Christ in the communities He has put us in, living testimonies of the work of the Gospel who point others towards Him. Thus, the purpose of the Committee is to foster an environment where all of this is possible, to grow in our relationship with God which in turn translates into our relationships with those around us.

The vision that led me to run for this position in committee actually stemmed from musical worship, which gradually grew into being applicable to worship as a whole. I stepped into the role of worship leader last year with a duty-focused mindset—we pick songs every week and we execute them. As I was in the process of exploring songs for CCF worship, quite amazingly, God opened my eyes to see a perspective on worship that spoke powerfully to me. It started with seeing how different songs have different focuses, some on praising and exalting God, others on looking at our sinfulness and our need for God's grace. Then came one song that I grew up with, a Cantonese worship song called 愛是不保留 ("Unreserved Love"), and as I looked through the lyrics, God opened my eyes to see how it told the Gospel story back to front: who we are as a broken people, who God is as the utmost embodiment of love and the grace that He poured out to us through the blood of His son, and how we are to respond with our whole lives. And gradually, I began to see how every worship song tells of some part of the Gospel, and this led me to have direction in choosing songs appropriately, making sure that the Gospel was told in some way through every set. Little did I know, this same blueprint translated into my Bible study, then into my listening to sermons, and eventually, I realized how everything that we do in worship pointed to the Gospel. I was once again able to find meaning in spiritual practices, in why we gather as a fellowship at CCF. I felt God calling me to take this simple yet powerful realization and share it with the rest of CCF through serving on committee.

If I am not elected this year, I will continue to be driven by this vision wherever I find myself, sharing it with CCF by constantly pointing back to the Gospel and living it out.

**Vision: The Active, Gospel-Driven Worship**

What is it that enables and leads us to worship God? Often times, our acts of worship (e.g. doing our devotions, attending Sunday service, prayer) can feel like a stagnating, legalistic routine that is seemingly separate from the rest of our daily lives. Specifically in the context of CCF, we may ask ourselves: why do we do what we do in fellowship? What meaning do we find in worship?

Throughout this past year, God has graciously reminded me that in order for worship to be living and active, it needs to be driven by a living and active source, and that very source is the Gospel. It may seem that we are reminded again and again of this same old Gospel story that we have heard since childhood—how we are sinners who fall short of God's glory and that out of His great love for us, God sent His son to take the punishment for our sin so that we may have an eternal relationship with Him, and as we go about our faith journey we may begin to desire more "advanced" theology or seek out profound, life-changing spiritual experiences. But every time we worship, we should be in some way experiencing this simple yet powerful Gospel, where God reveals Himself to us and in turn prompts us to respond in a way that impacts how we see our lives and how we are to live. This way of looking at worship based on the Gospel as an active revelation and response is something that God has made very impactful in my own life, and in turn is the vision that He has called me to carry forward to CCF for us to live out together as a fellowship.

### **Worship As Revelation and Response**

It was God who first revealed himself to us out of his heavenly dwelling, through His sovereign grace and abounding love. He is the one who initiates worship, beginning all the way back in Genesis 1 where He reveals His glory by calling light out of darkness. Throughout the many divine encounters in the Bible—from the call of Abraham to the conversion of Saul, it is God who reveals himself, and from the revelation comes a prompted response, a call to action as a result of the encounter.

We can see this outline of worship through the prophet Isaiah's encounter with God in Isaiah 6:

#### **Revelation**

##### **Who God is**

In a vision, Isaiah sees the throne of God in His temple, with angels beside Him calling out "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*" (Isaiah 6:3) God reveals to Isaiah who He is, in His omnipotence and glory. All throughout the Bible, we see God reveal himself and who He is: His sovereignty, justice, wisdom, and all His other attributes that just leave us in reverence and awe.

##### **Who we are and what we have done**

Immediately as Isaiah beholds this heavenly revelation, God reveals to him who he (Isaiah) is and what he has done. As Isaiah looks at himself, he says, "*Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the*

*LORD of hosts!"* (Isaiah 6:5) In stark contrast to the first revelation, God reveals to us who we are and what we have done—our brokenness and sinfulness, how we have rejected God. We can see this all throughout the history of humanity outlined in the Bible, the ongoing cycle of sin. We realize that we are helpless, that there is nothing we could do to save ourselves. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

### **Who God is and what He has done...in spite of this**

After Isaiah sees himself and cries out, one of the angels takes a burning coal from the altar of God, touches his lips, and says *"Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."* (Isaiah 6:7) In spite of the great chasm between who He is and who we are, God, in His wondrous mercy and abounding love, comes to bridge that gap by forgiving our sins; this is ultimately demonstrated through the sacrifice of His son Jesus on the cross. It is a gift that we don't deserve, a grace that just doesn't add up.

### **Response: What more can we do?**

After Isaiah is shown mercy, God calls out and asks *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* (Isaiah 6:8a) And Isaiah, having experienced the grace of God, responds in obedience and says, *"Here I am! Send me."* (Isaiah 6:8b) As we come to realize what God has done for us out of His merciful love in spite of the divide between who He is and who we are, our only response should be to give Him our all, to *"present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice"* (Romans 12:1). It is a response to such a powerful act of grace that prompts us to pursue a life that is pleasing to God, to love Him and love others as ourselves. This response includes the community building and outreach that we do in CCF—everything that we do in our fellowship should be driven by the power of personally experiencing the Gospel.

### **Practical Implementation**

It is my prayer that as a fellowship, we can experience the power of the Gospel in everything that we do, whether through musical worship, Bible study or sharing; to look at who God is and what He has done, who we are and what we have done, and how we are to respond to God's gracious bridging of the gap between us and Him. Here are some practical ways that we can implement this—many of which we already do in some way but can be re-emphasized in the Gospel context:

- Beginning fellowship with songs and liturgical prayers of adoration and praise, celebrating who God is and what He has done
- Having a time of confession and "us-sighting" (in contrast to "God-sighting"), to reflect on our sinfulness and brokenness, our need for God
- Singing songs that speak to our brokenness and the salvation that comes from God; singing response songs that call us to action
- Being mindful of what the passage for each Bible study covers in terms of the Gospel (Does it tell us something about who God is? Who we are? How we are to respond to God's grace?) and planning the rest of the night accordingly

May we as a fellowship strive to truly encounter God in our worship, just like Job when God revealed Himself to him: *"I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you"* (Job 42:5)

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

One gift that I truly thank God for gifting me with is the constant awareness of where He stands in the picture, that everything we do should point back to Him. This includes being aware of when our attention has drifted away from God in something that we do and pointing the focus back on Him. This will especially help me with taking part in ensuring that we remain grounded in God in everything that we do in committee, that it will all be ultimately for His glory, for His work to be done and manifested in us. I also thank God for giving me the passion for breaking down difficult concepts in a way that helps me to better understand, and in turn help others to do so as well. In addition, I enjoy operating in a logical flow that emphasizes finding a reason for everything. All of this will enable me to have better insight in the theological aspect of our programming, to really understand the message that we want to convey.

During my discernment process, a major obstacle that I encountered was me dwelling on my weaknesses and what I can't do, how I might not be suitable for this position. One of these was my lack of organization and responsibility, which makes me hesitant to take on administrative and executive work. Another was my tendency to sit back and not take initiative in forming relationships; I find it difficult to maintain accountability especially in a leadership setting. I also see myself as lacking creativity, unskilled in coming up with ideas and planning events from scratch. Just as I was getting caught up in this detrimental headspace, God reminded me through his revelation to Job of his unfathomable, inexplicable power and through 2 Corinthians 12 of how He is able to show his power through my weakness. Who am I to think that it is up to me to make or break God's work? God reminded me that it is not about what I can do, but what He can do through my humble submission to Him. It is my prayer that God would constantly remind me of this as I go forward to carry out His work as a flawed vessel, while seeking to be honed and refined by His power.