

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” Galatians 5:13

Throughout my life, I have been blessed with leaders, friends, and family who have displayed love through acts of service. UTCCF, in particular, has consistently provided an environment for this type of work. In these three years, God has revealed to me how rewarding it is to not only be served, but to serve others. Therefore, my vision for the fellowship is that we partake in joyful serving. Joyful serving is the loving act of diligently supporting our brothers and sisters’ Christian journeys, while understanding that it is worth the sacrifices we may consequently have to make. It is veering from our natural selfish tendencies, in order to prioritize others. Most importantly, it is extracting our motivation to serve from our joy in the gospel. I believe that this vision is necessary for our community for the following reasons:

1. We are all called to serve

It is the Lord’s commandment that we love our neighbours. Love, as is joyful serving, is an active process of gracious sacrifice. Therefore, to serve others wholeheartedly is to show your love for them. “As imitators of God, as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1), we are tasked to follow His ultimate example.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

2. It directly empowers the fellowship

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10

A community that serves one another is strengthened and edified. Servitude builds trust, support, and vulnerability. It softens hearts, sows a willingness to grow in God, and inspires future leaders. It focuses on building each other up in God, so that we, as a group, can run faster on straighter paths towards the Kingdom. Furthermore, we become so satisfied in Christ that we can’t help but continue to serve our community.

3. It lifts our eyes to the Kingdom

The act of serving is often thankless and difficult. Moreover, it is natural to be self-serving and reserved, especially in such a large community. However, when the Holy Spirit softens our hearts and convicts us to serve, we learn to derive our abilities solely from God and the

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gospel, since we are inherently powerless. As a result, our pride is dissolved, and our focus is purely on God and His people.

Acknowledging these concepts was a journey in itself. In my first year at CCF, I was burdened with feeling like I did not belong to the community. The sheer number of people at CCF was overwhelming, and I wasn't especially close to anyone. However, the joy that I witnessed in the fellowship, even if outside of myself, was palpable. I wanted to partake in this happiness, but I wasn't sure how. I felt entitled to being loved, yet this restrained myself from loving others. Thus, when I was asked to help lead an IG, I felt convicted to do so, regardless of my insecurities. This was because I had faith that God would use this role to soften my heart, and to open me up to the fellowship.

I soon started to understand exactly why so many leaders sacrifice their time to serve the fellowship. I found that spending time with my IG members made it easy to love them, and my role as a leader was no longer an obligation. At the same time, studying the gospel challenged me to take up my cross and be a godly servant. Through leading, I grew closer to the community, and closer to God. It was a fruitful, unrelenting process by which I felt more fulfilled each week. Now, I harbor a deeper appreciation for the humble leaders around me, and realize the significance of my vision.

Since joyful serving is the very essence of ministry, I believe that this idea can be applied to every aspect of our fellowship. Even members who are not official leaders can serve by participating with gladness, willingly reaching out to others, and allowing themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit. When I think of my vision, I see several clear examples of how it can be manifested in our programs.

1. In large group

- Even at the end of a tiring week, members still desire to meet up and experience God together as a community
- There is a true sense of belonging, and newcomers feel welcome
- Conversations are intentional, and lasting friendships are nurtured
- Committee members seek to plan activities of the most value for participants

2. In investment groups

- Leaders find true fulfillment in reading the Bible, and thoroughly study the passages to share as much insight with their groups as they can, for their good
- Members desire to partake in meaningful conversations to learn how to better support each other
- Members take ownership of the Bible study, and understand that their ideas are powerful and impact the learning process

3. In ministries

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- Members are deliberate about exploring the ministries, to better understand how they can use their spiritual gifts
- Leaders are glad to share their homes, resources, and wisdom with participants

These are all familiar scenarios, because they thankfully already exist in some capacity. However, there is always more to be done, and reflecting on my vision helped me define my goals as a member of UTCCF. Therefore, I am running for the position of vice chair, to exercise the practicality of my vision. The vice chair of the fellowship is responsible not only for big-picture visioning, but also for doing their best to realize the tangible objectives set by the committee—they are a joyful servant of the committee. Personally, I feel called to establish and uphold an environment that is conducive to the inspiration of joyful, selfless attitudes. The following are some examples of practical strategies pertinent to establishing such an environment:

- Interactive large group activities, such as sharing and prayer, close the distance amongst those who do not normally interact
- Larger pre-study groups, where multiple pairs of IG leaders prepare together, allow leaders to serve one another in offering broader and more enriched perspectives.
- A heavy emphasis on Scripture presented through worship and Bible studies instills dependence on the Word
- Designated meeting times for leaders to share their experiences in serving provide a support system
- Outreach workshops teaches members to extend joyful service to the world

It is in my prayers that UTCCF will continue to treasure our holy calling to edify each other through willing and joyous serving.