

Vision

Candidate: Benjamin Ding

Position: Male Devotional Leader

Three-Point Summary

- To engender a greater love and appreciation for studying God's Word, and equip fellowship members with the right tools for studying this divine text
- To encourage more regular times of serving together not only as a way of fellowshiping, but to show God's light on-campus and in Toronto
- To build a tighter sense of Christian brotherhood between men of the fellowship and guide them as they attempt to navigate early adulthood as Christians

Purpose

I was raised in a Chinese church, but like many others, I joined the mass exodus of Chinese teenagers as God and Christianity were seemingly trivialized by an increasingly secular world. I dismissed the Bible as nothing more than an outdated and irrelevant text musing the wonders of a nonexistent God. But as I entered university, burdening myself with immense academic expectations, I crumbled. I struggled to find purpose or joy. It was in this humbling time that I turned back to that ancient text, and began seeing everything differently.

The Gospel is everything to me. While it translates to "good news," it is more than simply "good;" it is the life-changing, transcendent news that you are loved by the most magnificent and magnanimous being in the universe, and that such a being had a wondrous purpose in store for you. It is the same news which turned an emotionally negligent and physically abusive Chinese couple into the patient, God-fearing parents that I love and admire. It is the one thing that allows me to not only make sense of all the suffering in human life, but a way to go beyond it, to understand those experiences as necessary to my personal Christian growth.

My current walk with Christ is still full of inconsistencies and lapses, but it is genuine. I still yearn for more discipline, but I never doubt Jesus's love for me nor my love for Him. It is a love which constantly overwhelms me, leaving me teary-eyed simply at a thought of Him. I regularly engage in prayer and devotions in my own attempt to know Him more deeply.

I have been massively blessed in my constant connections within the church. My pastor, Brady Morishita, at my home church was the one relationship which tethered me to the church, even after I had left it. Brady is still one of my best friends. I regularly consult him and my mentor, Roger Ong, for spiritual guidance. I attend Sunday service and my small group regularly through my church here, Christ the King. It is through these relationships, commitment, and my own daily struggles that I grapple with emulating Christ.

Your Candidacy

As with any sort of Christian leaders, CCF's Committee is meant to be looked to as examples of solid faith while also overseeing the logistical workings of the fellowship. But we are

not elders in the same way that CCF is not a church; it is our role in helping CCF members to feel settled both within the fellowship but also within local churches.

The most rewarding experience I've had serving in CCF was at the 2020 Winter Retreat, for which I was the lead singer on the worship team and the main writer of the Fourteen - a series of thought-provoking questions meant to generate discussion between fellowship members. The reason these times of service were so gratifying were precisely because I was not praised or recognized for my efforts, even if I internally craved such shallow things. I was able to witness so many engage in thoughtful conversations, as well as lead others through musical worship without worrying about how my voice sounded. On Committee, I hope to persist in that background, supporting role. The role I feel called to is that of the Men's Devotional Leader (DL). All my life, I have sought out older male figures. Even as a hardcore atheist, my home pastor, Brady Morishita, remained a close friend and confidant. I am currently mentored by Roger Ong, an elder from CTK Toronto, and my father is an elder within my home church. These relationships have embedded within me the vitality of seeking out wisdom and direction from more seasoned Christians, rather than insularly only seeking out fellow CCFers. I aspire to provide the same sort of support and guidance for the men of the fellowship that these three men did for me .

Service cannot and should not merely exist from an official position. Jesus first began his ministry as a wandering carpenter, which no pulpit or church to preach from. Service is wherever you feel the Spirit beckoning. My specific calling within the fellowship would be to lead the Men's Ministry. I have a firm desire to cultivate a deeper sense of spiritual brotherhood and accompany others as we learn about god-centered manliness.

Vision: " A God-Centered Life"

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17)

For so many of us, our lives were greatly simplified in the aftermath of lockdown. So many aspects of our lives were suddenly taken away, and time seemed to blur as the days stretched on. It became ever harder for most people to find God in the midst of all this monotony.

A recent herniated disk left me unable to sit or stand properly and psychologically shattered. I myself have been forced to reconsider what's most valuable to me, and am gratified at how blessed I really am. I study and do research in something I love, and am surrounded by loving family, capable mentors, and wonderful friends. But by the grace of God, I have learned to be much more content, even in the face of hardship. That alone is enough to face everyday with a smile.

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal." (Isaiah 26:3-4)

The future holds more uncertainty now than ever, but by relinquishing control, by comprehending that only God knows and controls what's ahead, we can be at peace. More

importantly, we focus on remaining spiritually steadfast. We sharpen our own minds, keeping discipline by continually reading His word, praying, and trusting in Him. We can address the areas of our lives where we didn't realize we were lagging behind.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

The practical implementations of this vision will take on the form of more times of sharing during the Men's Ministry, as well as a more direct focus on specific issues guys face - including pornography and lust, singleness and relationships, and godly masculinity. Such topics do not get discussed often enough, despite how prevalent they are in the lives of so many Christian men. By generating discussion and asking questions, we can learn how to overcome such issues as we strive towards Christian manliness.

"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)

Another component is through serving together. Jesus always loved selflessly. Christian service is also an integral part of growing together. I understand that social distancing means that people are apprehensive about gathering, but for those willing, I propose a regular time of community service and volunteering, such as delivering food to those in need.

"I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches." (Psalm 119:14)

The cornerstone of my Vision is enriching others' experiences reading the Bible. By teaching others how to approach studying different kinds of passages, equipping them with the proper resources, helping them surmount that initial trepidation, that they learn to love reading the Word and are consequently, that much more excited to spend time with Jesus.

Personal Evaluation

I believe my single biggest asset is my sheer love for the Bible - particularly in recognition of the Bible as a coherent narrative, full of symbolic, thematic, and literary riches. I love telling fellow Christians about obscure Bible characters, or even making these supposed exemplars of faith seem much more human and relatable. Humans are inherently broken and sinful creatures. God forbade David from building His Holy Temple because of his military ruthlessness, but still promised him an eternal dynasty as His chosen king. Paul spent years persecuting and killing Christians, yet eventually worked alongside the Eleven Apostles and wrote one third of the New Testament.

Too often, Christians these days find Bible reading a chore. My desire is not only to allow them to enjoy and appreciate the Bible for literary treasure that is, but to teach them how to properly study it. They can go beyond simply memorizing details, but apply the lessons to their lives. This is further complemented by my love of social interactions, able to fully and coherently express myself. I desire to care for others, but understand my own limitations.

As all three of my nominators have indicated, I am passionate, but can be overzealous. I can be blinded by self-righteousness, unable to be swayed and inconsiderate to the needs and feelings of those around me. This last year has really forced me to reflect on the mistakes I've made. I've constantly asked for prayer about my anger, and I've consciously tried to listen more as opposed to rambling on and on.

Additionally, I tend to shirk on commitments when I am stressed. I will be entering my fifth-year as a part-time student both semesters, as well as minimizing other extraneous commitments to leave my schedule open and flexible. I would ask my fellow Committee members to keep me in check, ensuring that I am punctual, calling me out whenever these habits fall through. As with my overzealousness, I ask for prayer that I can strive towards greater discipline. The older men in my life, particularly Roger, are always there to keep me accountable.