

Fall 2008

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Insight—Fall 2008

A Note from the Editor

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Statement of Purpose:

Insight is a magazine/newsletter distributed on behalf of UW-CCF to the CCF community. It is an opportunity for others to share their thoughts, experiences, memories and laughs (or tears) with their fellow brothers and sisters.

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Another term has been gone, and it has gone fast! It is a joy to fellowship and serve together with all of you, as we grow together in learning and experiencing the presence of God as a body of Christ. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate this year's vision statement:

To be a spirit filled and spirit led fellowship, grounded in the Word, where we know, love and worship our Father in heaven, evangelizing and discipling everyone around us as Christ did.

This vision is based on our theme verse:

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' " - Matthew 28:18-20

All start in our relationship with God, when we truly know our heavenly Father then we seek what His heart wants, and

we surrender to His Spirit who enable us to be transformed into the image of Christ, to live like a disciple, to disciple other brothers and sisters, to serve the Lord, to serve the body of Christ, and to share the gospel to the people around us. Also we need to be grounded in the Word, because there is power in Scriptures, as it is God's word speaking to us today. God's word can encourage us, rebuke us, teach us, and comfort us in all times.

There is no particular theme for this term's Insight newsletter. Sometimes it is very easy to be limited and constrained by a theme. The main purpose of Insight is to share to others any personal experiences or insights from our walk with Christ, so that the rest of the body can be edified and encouraged. Many times we get so many superficial conversations in our lives, and we long for something deeper. One verse that is very challenging is the following one:

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." - Ephesians 4:29



This is challenging because the verse commands us to say words that are only helpful to build others up, in other words to edify them. As a body of Christ, let us show love to one another and let us take effort in speaking words of truth and love so that our brothers and sisters can be encouraged, edified, and challenged.

I pray that you will find these articles encouraging and inspiring. And I challenge you to share your insights to others!

Servant of Christ,
Jorge Quan

An Indescribable Year By: Diana Trieu

As I reflect upon my experiences of this year, only one word comes to mind: Amazing. The past ten months have been a pivotal point in my journey through life as I found my way to God and developed a new understanding and purpose to existence. Being raised in a non-Christian family, I knew nothing about Christianity for the vast majority of my life up until January of this year. A Christian friend of mine introduced me to Christ and suggested that I start attending church. At the time, I felt a small spark of curiosity to learn what the religion was about. I remember the first day I walked into church, nervous, scared, and unsure of what to expect; I was immediately greeted with many smiles and was warmly welcomed. Rarely was I surrounded by such a group of people whose actions spoke volumes about their character. The sermon specifically that day was about the wise and foolish builders from Matthew 7:24.

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”

I remember I was taken aback for a bit, and I started thinking about my past and all the times I’ve fallen and been blown by storms. I wondered if there was really something out there that could offer me peace and comfort even through rough times. As I pondered about my experiences, I felt drawn in as more and more questions popped up in my head. I felt this sense of attachment and I wanted to learn more. People came up to me and asked me how I felt and what I thought about church, and they explained to me more about who Christ was. Just being in an environment where so many people genuinely care about each other is so comforting to witness and experience. I can honestly say that the very day I decided to go to church was the best decision I’ve ever made.

From that day on, I continued attending church every Sundays in attempt to gain more knowledge about Christianity. Every week was something new, and more to think about. As the months passed, I felt that my life was more and more intertwined with Christ and my belief in Him strengthened. There were a number of instances where God helped me pull through some obstacles. Through the power of prayer, He has never failed to hear me and relieve my uneasiness. I examine my life before and after being introduced to Christianity, and I notice a difference in how I view things and my attitude towards different situations. Throughout the past 8 months, I’ve felt a kind of happiness that I haven’t felt before; it’s as if a huge burden has been lifted off my shoulders. By realizing what I’ve gained spiritually, I understand how much I was lacking in the past.



I think that God has a plan for your life; the decisions you make, the events you experience, the people you meet – and I’m overjoyed that my path ultimately led me to Him. Through my personal experience, I understand how important it is to expand His kingdom. We cannot undermine the importance of outreach as we are called to serve God and spread the gospel. There are so many people out there who have never even heard about the gospel let alone know who Christ is, and I think that it is so important that we make this information known to others. Consequently, through CCF, I joined the outreach ministry and helped plan Coffeehouse in hopes of reaching out to nonbelievers. It is great to see even only one individual planted with a seed and express interest in Christianity, and I feel that CCF should continue to foster a growing motivation to outreach. Through the incredible grace and love He has shown me in this past year, I feel that He will give me the drive to fulfill what’s in my heart for the remainder of my years in CCF.



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Always Available but Never Free By: Amanda Lo

**“It’s not about us.
Really. It isn’t.”**

It’s not about us. Really. It isn’t.

I’ve always been the busiest amongst my friends. Completing homework at lunch, rushing to volleyball practice, going to church activities, helping the teacher in school and hitting the books well past midnight was basically what constituted my weeks. Taking time to rest was a luxury; everything else seemed like another thing that had to be done. Besides hanging out with family and a few close friends, rarely did I take time out to “chillax”.

If you had something important to say, you could always send me an offline message on msn and I would get back to you when I had a minute to spare. Sometimes, you would be lucky to get an instant respond if I was appearing offline.

If you needed help, I would always try my best to help, but after carrying out my responsibility as a servant of God, I would quickly leave to go finish my work. If you asked me now why I was serving and doing so much, I would say it was because I felt obligated to. I had the mentality of “If I didn’t do it, no one else would.”

“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16.26). After coming to Canada in 2006, leaving my close friends and family members, I realized I was not doing a very good job at running my life. Although it seemed like I was doing ok from the outside, I was feeling quite lonely and helpless on the inside.

God is good. When I was having lunch outside SLC one day, an upper year from CCF that was studying in the silent study room came out to accompany me. Being surprised by how the CCF upper years spend their time to take care of and love one another, I asked him, “so... how do you manage to do so much and still be so joyful everyday? Aren’t you tired or burnt out?” His response was quick and simple. With a big smile, he said something along the lines of: “the joy of the Lord is my strength.” At that moment, I realized the lack of joy in my life. Life had always been a struggle because I had always thought it was MINE to live.

As university students, we easily fall into the trap of idolizing our studies. If I received a dollar every time I heard someone say “I’m so behind in school”, I would be rich. =P University is a lot of work and we should make sure we don’t idolize our studies. I am not saying our grades are not important and that we shouldn’t do our best to do well in our studies, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” (Colossians 3.23), but that our schoolwork should not be in front of loving God and loving His people. Real people are passing by each day with pain

in their lives. Many are lost. If you pay attention, you can tell from their faces the misery they are going through. If we, the ones with Christ living inside us, are always busy and caught up in our studies, work, relationships, face book, msn, video games, etc, we will be missing out on opportunities to love others and to be blessed.

In Matthew 6:33, the bible says that everything we want and need would be given to us when we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. God does not need our help. If He wished, He could make everything perfect. He could eliminate all the suffering and pain in this world. Yet, in His awesome love, He gave us the opportunity and privilege to serve Him. There is now so much more joy in my life. Waking up each day knowing that God is with me gives me joy and peace inside me. Not only has my life been blessed with many wonderful new friends, God has also blessed me with more efficient study and working skills.

God does not want parts of us. Nor does he want most of us. He wants all of us. Why? Because it is only when we fully surrender to Him do we then experience his full and abundant blessings. It is only when we are willing to let God be our Lord and master are we able to experience his full and abundant blessings and his help in times of struggles.

The true love, sincere concern, genuine friendships and selfless service of the brother and sisters in CCF have taught me a lot about being a follower of Christ. They have put loving God’s people first and in doing that has changed my life.



Learning the “Martyrial Arts” of Christianity

By: Jacky Chan

“ God will give to us what is best for us... We just need to ask!”

Hey guys, have you ever had a time where you felt life was kinda down, you didn't really want to do anything, occasionally you are too mentally tired to even go to CCF? Or maybe, that you were straight out spiritually dry? Then the solution could very possibly be: Self-discipline! Read your Bible, pray to God about it --

if you, like mentioned before, feel too mentally tired: *go to CCF!* The answer might seem obviously simple, but it took me a full 2 years (and it's probably going to the rest of my life) to fully comprehend.

But maybe I am jumping ahead of myself; let's just back up somewhat and let me tell you a bit about myself. Self-discipline has been a very integral part of my life, and it certainly has been even more so this term. My dad teaches civil engineering, and he lived a very regimented life in doing so; as a consequence he quite naturally required my sister and I to do so also. Yet, though I say I was born to a Christian family, I was never pushed to do the same in my spiritual life. For the longest time, I didn't even know what "devotions" were. Coming to Waterloo and getting integrated into the CCF community has given me so many opportunities to grow spiritually, and particularly when I started a more serious growth in God, through a disciplined spiritual walk with Him.

I've come to realize more and more that a week without adequate time spent being with God brings about disorientation and loss of focus, especially in terms of connecting with Him through prayer and scripture-reading. It helps sooo much when one is brought back down to the reality of God's and putting Him first -- in a way, "wearing Godly glasses" and living life with a more Godly perspective. And for me, these things have to come from self-regulated devotional time, as it is not something that comes naturally for me in a busy schedule.

I'm not saying this it is a burden or a pain to go through stuff, but rather, realizing at the end of it all, that I could fall back into His arms and let Him guide me in whatever I have trouble with, and rejoicing when triumphs are made in His name. And in fact, it's not so much as doing these regularly, as it is **INSISTING** on doing them at times when you feel least about doing so, whether it be going to church, going to CCF or cell groups, or personal time set apart for chumming with God. Usually the time that you feel least about doing things for God and with God is the time you need God most.

I think it was Mikee who said something along the lines of: "Prayer is the most power tool in the arsenal of a Christian", and I agree very much with it. Indeed in Scripture we have Philippians 4:6-7, for example, telling us to ask earnestly for God's help through prayer and petition. And there's no doubt God will not give to us what is best for us, at the time best for us, we just need to ask! And I forget the powerful truth in that... a lot. Every time I do, however, something as simple as asking for peace in sad or frustrating time in and out of school, God has provided, and will provide. Which is **awesome**.

As for reading the Bible: God definitely wants to communicate with us, and what better way than reading about what He's said? I've particularly been encouraged and motivated by Deuteronomy 11:18-21 (and also Psalms 1). Constantly thinking about the sovereign Word of God was a very effective way in helping myself go through tough times of work and times of temptation, or keeping myself in the right mindset, like when I can see just a ton of work waiting for me to get done.

It has been a joy and blessing to grow in God, and I'm still working on it! It's easier said than done, I guess; I thank CCF for providing the resources and the kind people that I can share with and providing this comfy environment we can encourage each other with. CCF rocks because God rocks!



My Vision for Evangelism: Our Mission Here on Earth

By: James Ng

I believe that God gives each and every one of us a unique vision or mission that we are passionate for; a Grand Purpose for us here on Earth. Through this year and my first term here at Waterloo, God has really put in me a specific vision that I want to see happen in this campus. This vision is evangelism. It has been really encouraging to see all the steps that God has taken to invoke in me this vision, and I will share this to you through this article.

It all started near the beginning of this year (2008) in around February. Through a series of events, I was exposed to a few sermons from a youth pastor for universities through someone from my home church. She was a year older than me and was already in university, McMaster. Her fellowship at McMaster (CCF) was studying this pastor, Jaeson Ma, through sermons and his book. And so out of curiosity, I started watching some of these sermons. I was quickly absorbed in the message that the sermons were portraying. Without going too deep into the content of these messages, they were about the Great Commission that Jesus gave to us before He ascended into heaven, and how each and every one of us, as followers of Christ, have been given this mission. In particular, the sermons were aimed towards university students. Using many anecdotes and his own testimonies, Jaeson Ma, the speaker, quickly touched something in my heart, developing a real desire to see His Name be spread. His message stayed resounding in my head for the passing months as university approached. This, I believe was the first seed that God planted in my heart for evangelism. The first step towards my VISION of seeing a campus changed and revolutionized for God.

The rest of my high school year ended before I knew it, and university was just around the horizon. And so, I was excited as ever for university and completely looking forward to finding a fellowship and integrating into it. God quickly gave me a chance before university even begun. My church being very small, it is not often that we get a newcomer. So, one Sunday, after

Worship, someone I had never seen before came up to me and asked if I wanted to go to a Waterloo CCF Frosh BBQ (she heard that I was going to U of Waterloo from the church announcements). Seeing it as a great opportunity, I accepted and went. That night I had a great time with all the CCF upper year students and also meeting other froshes like me who were going to Waterloo. Looking back, I really see God working in my life even through something as small as this. Through this event, I was able to meet a lot of CCF'ers and received a lot of info about CCF. This opportunity really helped me to integrate into CCF when the time came to go into university.



The CCF Frosh BBQ got me even more excited for fellowship at U of Waterloo. Before I knew it, I had already moved into Waterloo and it was Frosh Week. Again, through a series of events, God brought me to many CCF events/activities that got me even more integrated into the fellowship and helped me to meet more people, froshes and upper years alike. Events like the first unofficial CCF Meeting, New Students Reception (NSR), first Official CCF Meeting on Sept 12 and the CCF Fall Retreat, really benefited me. Again, I could see God continually guiding my every step, always developing the vision that I had ever since February. I really met and got to know a lot of people. I think through all these things and blessings that God gave to me, I was able to serve and really get to know everyone in CCF.

Through all these events, God was able to confirm the initial vision that I had after watching the sermons from Jaeson Ma about the Great Commission. First off was the CCF Vision for the Fall Term and the Bible Passage that came along with it (which I was exposed to through these events). The Bible Passage for the term, was, the Great Commission. At the moment, that really struck me as something that came from God. It reminded me of Jaeson Ma's sermons and the initial seeds of the vision that God planted in me back in February. Second, I met one of the upper years, Mikee Chan at the Fall Retreat. He told me that he had actually encouraged the CCF Committee to read Jaeson Ma's book, the Blueprint (which has the same/similar theme to the sermons I saw that he spoke in). It turns out that the Committee members all had a big vision for the campus of Waterloo. For me, both of these really helped to confirm that this vision was from God and that it was really something that He put in my heart to set out to do.

God continued to confirm and grow this vision during the first General Outreach Meeting in September. We discussed many things in regards to outreaching to others in the meeting. Though I really wanted to do other outreach things like Oasis (a soup kitchen) and Operation Christmas Child and other charitable works, one of the points we discussed appealed considerably for me. It was during this meeting, that the idea for Coffeehouse was born, a casual event, where CCF'ers would get the opportunity to invite their friends to come out and learn more about Christianity. An outreach event where we could make the gospel available to all those who were curious.

We only briefly scratched upon it during the meeting, but while walking home with Stephanie Hadi (the outreach coordinator for this term), we talked more about it. In the end, Steph asked me if I would be interested in organizing the event. Seeing it as a great God-given opportunity, I quickly said “yes”. And with that, came a chain of blessings and experiences, which continued to develop my longing, my desire, my vision for evangelism:

In one sentence, my vision would be to see the campus changed, to see revival happen by making the gospel available to everyone in Waterloo. With that as my vision, there came to be a second part that inevitably was attached to the first. I wanted to see other brothers and sisters to have that same passion for evangelizing. I truly believe that evangelizing and being God’s witnesses and ambassadors here on Earth (The salt and the light) is one of the MAIN purposes God has for us in this alien world. We are CALLED to go OUT and make disciples of all nations and baptizing them (Matt 28:19-20). It is really easy to stay in our comfort zones and not go out. WE can’t expect to further God’s kingdom, if we stay where we are. Jesus commanded us to GO. But where does this heart from evangelizing come from? What if you know that this is a command given to us by God, but we just don’t have the heart? I believe that before you can even think to start outreaching to others, you have to first off look at your own relationship with God. Without a solid and intimate relationship with God, you can try to evangelize to your friends, but you will have no success. Evangelism by definition should result from a direct OVERFLOW of our passion for God. If we don’t love God with all our hearts, with all our strength and with all our mind, then it will be no wonder if you can’t evangelize. But once you DO have a loving relationship with our Father, then it will not be hard to find a heart for others. WE need a passion for God which will in turn flow out of us into a love for others. A love for God will create a love for others around us. How do we get this “passion” for God? Simple, we study HIS passion for us! “But God demonstrates his

love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8 God loves us so much that he died on the cross even though we completely deserved to die. God did not have to do that, but he loves us so so much. Not only this but God continually provides and cares for us in our daily walk with Him to this very day. He has “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”. Jeremiah 29:11 One of my favourite quotes from Jaeson Ma really grasps and puts God’s Love for us in perspective.

“My sins put Him on that cross. My sins crucified Him. If I did not disobey, He would not have to die. But He did it for me. He considered me a friend. What else can I live for? If You died for me, You gave up everything for me. What is this life that I give it up for You?”

2 Corinthians 5:14 says “Christ’s love compels us.” It is His Love that should compel us to want to reach out to the lost. Think about it. We have experienced God, through the blessings he gives us daily, through the fellowship that he has enabled us to have, through the care and support of our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, how can we NOT want to show others this AMAZING Father. In a sense it is sort of a sequence: God loves us, therefore we love God, therefore we love others just as He loves us.

When you start to develop this heart for others, you will start to see others through more than just their time here on earth, but their spiritual destination. Where are they heading after they are done living here on Earth? You will begin to realize that there are thousands just in this campus of Waterloo, who are LOST, all heading in the same direction. To eternal damnation, to a place completely separated and devoid from the presence of God. The thought of a place where God is not there is just unbearable, the ultimate torture in itself. Well, that is where your friends are heading who don’t know Christ, it is where all those lost are heading. And if you just think about it, our time here on Earth is not long. We don’t know when our friends or the people

around us will leave this world. We might even be the only Christian that our friends know, and if we don’t make the most of every opportunity God gives to us to spread his Kingdom, then we are not living to the full potential that God has made us to be. WAIT A MINUTE...What is Evangelism to begin with? What do I believe it means?

To put it simply, evangelism is when we “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28: 19-20

Essentially, it is when you take that step out of your “bubble”, COMPELLED to announce the Good News, further God’s Kingdom and save the lost. Evangelism is usually thought of just being verbal, but I believe it is also through your daily living. When you live an authentic Christian life, how much more attractive will it look for a Non Christian when you speak/evangelize to him/her about Christ? Taking the previous verse (the Great Commission), we can break it into four main parts: 1-Go, 2-Make Disciples, 3-Baptize Them, 4-Teach Them. The first part says “Go”. Jesus is clear that we are to go out and preach His Word. Many times, we rely on church or fellowship events to invite our friends and THEN tell them about God. But Jesus says “GO”, he doesn’t tell us to tell others to “Come”. I’m not saying that church/fellowship outreach events are bad, but that they are not and should not be the main outreach method we rely on.



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Second, Jesus says “make disciples”. What is a disciple? A disciple is someone who follows Jesus wholeheartedly, someone who submits and surrenders their lives to God. We are to go and tell others about Jesus, making the gospel available to them. But Jesus also tell us to make disciples, to make followers for Him who surrender their lives to Him, not just “converts”. Third, Jesus tells us to baptize them. As new disciples, they are to be baptized, signifying their death to sin and their sinful ways, and their new life in Jesus Christ. It is an outward act or representation of what has happened in their hearts. Finally, we are to teach them to obey what Jesus has commanded. It is not enough to just tell others about Christ, not enough to make them followers of Christ who deny themselves and submit themselves to Jesus; we are also required to continue to follow up with them. We are to guide them in Jesus’ teachings, helping them in their walk and continually helping them to obey and continue in their spiritual walk with God. For an analogy, we can plant a seed in someone’s heart (telling them about it) and the seed can take root and start to grow, but we need to continue to care for it and water it, or the plant will only wither. All so that not only will they continue to learn about our Father, but that they will OBEY Him and all the commands that He has given us.

So that is what evangelism is, but what do we need before we can do it? To evangelize, you will need at least 3 things: first, as said above, you need an intimate relationship with Christ; second, you need His Holy Spirit: We can do nothing without the Holy Spirit, but with the Holy Spirit, we can do all things that God wills us to do. Thirdly, you need to PRAY. I encourage you to pray for God to give you a heart for evangelism if you do not have one. If you do, pray for opportunities to reach out to your friends and that you would be filled with the Holy Spirit so that you can make the most of all opportunities that God gives to us. Prayer is just so powerful. And in a sense, we can never pray enough, and God is never tired of hearing us pray. One thing is certain, if we want to see lives changed, the campus changed, revival to happen, then we have to pray.

And so it is my prayer that each and every one of us here in CCF would just really realize the spiritual condition of all on this campus. That evangelism is not something that you CAN do when you’re a Christian, but something that you MUST do. That we need to live authentic, Christian lives so that others may see God’s love THROUGH us. I want to emphasize again though, that though this is something that Jesus has commanded us to do, we have to remember that most of all we have to focus on God. That we are doing all this for His Glory, for His Kingdom, for His Purpose...because we LOVE Him.

With this vision for evangelism in my heart, it has just been a great blessing for me to help organize Coffeehouse. I’ve been able to learn and experience so much about evangelism through the planning of these events. It’s been really great looking back, and seeing all the things God has done in my first term at Waterloo to place in my heart this desire to evangelize. It really does seem that everything that has happened has only confirmed my heart to evangelize. God is amazing, and so let us show others just HOW GREAT HE IS!

I will end off with a song that really summarizes what my vision and desire is when it comes to Evangelism. It is called “Set the World on Fire”, by Britt Nicole:

I wanna set the world on fire
Until it's burning bright for You
It's everything that I desire
Can I be the one You use?

[CHORUS]

I, I am small but
You, You are big enough
I, I am weak but
You, You are strong enough to
Take my dreams
Come and give them wings
Lord with You
Nothing I can not do
Nothing I cannot do

I wanna feed the hungry children
And reach across the farthest land
And tell the broken there is healing
And mercy in the Father's hands

[CHORUS]

Take my dreams
Come and give them wings
Lord with You
Nothing I cannot do
Nothing I cannot do

My hands my feet
My everything
My life, my love
Lord, use me

I wanna set the world on fire
I wanna set the world on fire, yeah

Take my dreams
Come and give them wings
Lord with You
Nothing I cannot do
Take my dreams
Come and give them wings
Lord with You
There's nothing I can't do
Nothing I can't do

I'm gonna set the world on fire
Set the world on fire



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Desert Song By: Sophie Chen

Brooke Fraser

Verse 1:

This is my prayer in the desert
When all that's within me feels dry
This is my prayer in my hunger and need
My God is the God who provides

Verse 2:

This is my prayer in the fire
In weakness or trial or pain
There is a faith proved of more worth than
gold
So refine me Lord through the flame

Chorus:

And I will bring praise, I will bring praise
No weapon formed against me shall remain
I will rejoice, I will declare
God is my victory and He is here

Verse 3:

This is my prayer in the battle
When triumph is still on its way
I am a conqueror and co-heir with Christ
So firm on His promise I'll stand

Bridge:

All of my life, In every season
You are still God
I have a reason to sing
I have a reason to worship

Verse 4:

This is my prayer in the harvest
When favor and providence flow
I know I'm filled to be emptied again
The seed I've received I will sow

I have always loved to worship and experience God through music. When I first heard/watched this song and the story behind it on Youtube in the summer term, I could not control the tears from rolling down my face. This powerful song really touched me because it describes my journey as a Christian – in the past, present, and future. It is also the prayer of my heart to God in every season of my life.

This past summer term was very refreshing for me as I spend some quality

time reflecting on my journey with God over the past 5 years. It has definitely not been an easy one, but what I have discovered as I looked back was the amazing work of God in my life that has brought me to where I am today.

I have been in the desert, when God was unfamiliar to me. But He knew me and called me out of the darkness and worldliness of my life into a life of hope and purpose. For the next five years, I hungered to know Him more and to seek His will in my life as I struggled with relationships with friends, classmates, and parents. Through it all, I came to know the God of love and grace, learned to love others, learned to trust Him, and so much more. By grace, He also provided me with everything that I ever needed – physically, emotionally and spiritually, including just enough faith to remain in Him.

I have been in the fire, when my faith, as little as I had, was tested and tried. In my relationship with non-Christian parents, I have questioned this path that I have chosen to take. I have doubted whether the things I have done through faith was truly worth it, or, as my parents suggested, simply a waste of time.



But God always found ways to remind me to stand firm in Him, whether through a sermon, a song, or an encouraging friend. "Rejoice and be glad" He said, "because great is your reward in heaven..." (Matt 5:12).

I have been in the battle, a spiritual one that is yet to be won. I have had arguments with my parents that always led me to complete brokenness before God. I felt powerless and inadequate. I was never able to find the right words to say at the right time. But the power of the Holy Spirit strengthened me and protected me from harm. With a gentle whisper, He told me to persevere and to wait for the fulfillment of His promise, in His time.

I have been in times of providence, of joy, of peace, when everything seemed to be going well and when it was easy to praise Him with thanks. I have experienced times when God was so evident in every aspect of my life and when I can sense His presence everywhere I go. I came to know that He has blessed me with those experiences so that others may be blessed and encouraged through them. He has filled me with His love so that His love may overflow from me to those around me.

Indeed, this life has been full of ups and downs. Even this term has been quite a bumpy ride for me as I strived to preserve my relationship with Him above all else in life, including school. But in every season, regardless of my circumstances or my perception of Him, He is always the same mighty God who is always in control. "In all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). Being able to see the bigger picture, to view situations from His perspective, is what gives me the ability to rejoice in Him.

In the past, I used to be afraid of the uncertainties in my life, the challenges I will face. But now, the certainty of God transcends all my fears and worries. And this gives me a reason to worship Him in the present time and in the years to come. He will always be my God and I will always be loved by Him.

What the Gospel Means to Me

By: Liz Kao

I've been a Christian for most of my life. But if you were to only ask me a year ago what exactly did I believe in, I would not have been able to tell you. This, I'm afraid, is quite common, even in our fellowship. So I shall briefly share what I've come to know as the truth and how it has changed my view on Christianity.

The gospel is God's ministry of reconciliation to us. What that means is that Almighty God chose to reconcile Himself—a perfect, holy being—to us—imperfect, sinful people.

All of us are sinful beings. Romans 3:23 says that "For all who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." God has crazy high standards for us as laid out by the Law, for "through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20).

So why should we care that we're sinful people?

We need to care because the *wrath* of God is upon us, as plainly said in Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." It should be self-explanatory why it's not the greatest idea to be an enemy of the almighty and wrathful God.

So, at the end of days when we have to stand before the perfectly just God, we have to give an account of everything we did. (Understand that God is not like a human judge who only knows the evidence presented. We're talking about an all-knowing God here. There is nowhere to hide from Him.) As sinful beings, we deserve death, for the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). There needs to be an atonement for all the sins we have committed.

God knows all about our inability to live according to His standards. He knows we are destined to fall without His help. So what does He do? Colossians 2:13-4 says that "when [we] were dead in [our] transgressions and the uncircumcision of [our] flesh, He made [us] alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile



to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Wow. That's what God did for you! Don't ever think for a moment that your salvation is something you've attained by yourself. God gave that to you. Paul says in Romans 1:16-7, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'" The gospel is the *power of God for salvation*. It is God who saves and who gives the righteousness He demands of us (v. 17).

To quickly summarize, the gospel is simply God giving us the righteousness that He demands of us, and us reaping all the benefits from it.

So how does this relate to me? I find that there's a misconception that the Christian life is difficult and hard because there are all these rules and laws. Yes, it is difficult, as shown in Matt 7:13-4. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that *leads to life*, and there are few who find it." I'll say it off the bat, the Christian life is a lot of suffering. But in John 10:10b, Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." For the longest time, this really

confused me. What does an abundant life look like? What does Jesus mean by it?

I feel like I'm still scratching the surface of the answer to this question. But 2 Corinthians 3:17 sums it up quite nicely for me: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." There is liberty in Christ, because it is not I who does anything, but the Spirit of the Lord who lives in me.

This means that my hope is no

"The gospel is simply God giving us the righteousness that He demands of us, and us reaping all the benefits from it.."

longer in my own ability to be "Godly", or Christ-like, but that it's in the Lord. This truth takes a lot of pressure to perform off myself. Don't get me wrong, I believe that while the Spirit enables us to be more like Christ, we have to actively strive and do our parts.

Not only does the gospel alleviate me of the pressure to be more like Christ on my own strength, it also demonstrates how much God loves me. Romans 8:16 says that "[we] have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but [we] have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" Oh man! Children of God, heirs along with Christ! That is who we are!

As if that's not enough, Romans 8:28 goes on further to say that "*we know* that God causes **all** things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." This verse helps me sleep at night, knowing that I can rest assured that God will take care of all the uncontrollable variables in my life.

So as to sum up, God is simply amazing. "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

Spiritual Living: The Inside Out Journey

By: Tim Li

The past few years at Waterloo have been very instrumental in shaping and forming my faith. When I reflect on the past few years, I realized I've grown a lot and formed many deep convictions about my own faith journey. My perception of spiritual things in our common faith matured much. One such conviction that I have been discovering and rediscovering over the past couple of months is: living our faith, inside out.

This begs the reader to ask, "What is this inside out journey?" In this article, I will do my best to explain what I mean by the inside out journey and argue that this is what the Bible teaches. I will support this argument from scripture and my own experiences.

Firstly, let me explain what I observe spiritual living is commonly perceived to be in the church. Spiritual living can really be summed up as living a good Christian life; for which the emphasis is on the deeds and actions that you do. A typical example would look like this: A Christian who attends church every week, reads the bible every day, prays daily, volunteers at the soup kitchen once a week, teaches Sunday school, helps old ladies across the street, offers to help carry groceries, opens the doors for others, washes the dishes, etc, etc. You get the point. There is nothing wrong with these actions and good deeds and I think anyone whose lifestyle is similar is to be commended.

Many of us Christians will think we need to be like this Christian and imitate his good deeds and actions. However, I will take this example a step further and ask, "Why is this Christian doing this?" or "What is causing this Christian to live this way?" So using a similar analogy, we all must learn to walk before we learn to run. Yet many Christians want to run when we are still crawling on all fours as infants do. Let's try to answer the question, why this Christian is living this way. I believe that a Christian's actions come from a desire to love and obey God. 1 John 2: 3 says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." So what are his commandments? 1 John 3:23 tells us, "This is His commandment, that we

believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us." So Christians will desire to obey God's commandments and one of the greatest commandments is to receive Jesus Christ His Son and to love other Christians. However, now I need to ask the question, "why do Christians have a desire to love and obey God? The typical Sunday school answer is because God first loved us. However, let me add to that by quoting 1 Peter 1:2. To all the people in verse 1 and including us, "who are chosen according the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood" [Emphasis mine].

From what I understand from this verse, God is causal in our love and obedience to Himself. This was a big realization for me, that we obey and love God because God made us Christians to obey Him. So now that we understand why we love and who is causal to our love and obedience, let's look at this whole inside out journey.

I think that as a Christian, you must know who you are before you know how you are to act. What I mean by this is that you need to know your position in Christ. Ephesians 1 tells us that we are blessed by God with every spiritual blessing; chosen by God before the foundation of the world to be adopted as sons; redeemed and forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ; have an eternal inheritance that is all sealed by the Holy Spirit which signifies we are God's own possession; all ultimately done for the praise and glory of God.

If you don't know this or don't understand this, how on earth are you going to be able to live a life to the praise of His glory? This is what I mean by the inside out journey. My Christian life starts with Christ and an internal realization of who I am in Christ. Another example, if we don't know that Philippians 2:12-13 tells us that God is the one doing the work in us so that He could be satisfied by our work as we continue to work out our salvation, would be we trying to live the Christian life in our own strength?

Yet another example, Romans 12:2 tells us to test and prove the will of God. How are we to do this? The passage tells us that a renewing of the mind is a transforming work that allows us to test and prove God's will is perfect as we live out the inward renewal of the mind.

So how do we renew our minds? We study God's words in the Bible and we meditate and reflect on it. For "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, **equipped for every good work**" [2 Timothy 3:16-17, emphasis mine]. So as we fill our minds with God's word, our theology leads to practical applications of every kind. For myself, when I reflect on scripture, I continually preach it to myself until the truth of God's word becomes a deep, burning conviction in my life that I would die for. These convictions are truly transformational and it is with this deep, burning conviction that I do my outward good works.



I believe this inside out living is what the Bible teaches. Colossians 2:6-7 says, *“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.”* In this verse, I see the order of the actions is as follows: first one must receive Christ Jesus (salvation), then they need to be firmly rooted through instruction before they are able to walk in Christ with overflowing gratitude and be continually built up and established in your faith. I’m just looking at the tenses. Most of the actions are past tense, while walking is a continual tense.

I believe one of the reasons that the Bible teaches us this inside out method is because there is a danger with practical application without theology. The danger is that practicality without theology leads to guilt. What I mean by this is that if application is the sole purpose and one’s identity and position in Christ is not taught, attempts to live the Christian life leads to failure because we are trying to obtain this life by our own efforts. By failing over and over again, guilt inevitably arises because we know how we ought to be and live, but are never able to live that way. In cases, where our position and identity are not taught, the power of God’s Word is diminished as sermons become little more than weekly prep talks in hopes of motivating us to perform better next week.

As I quote from one of the most practical books of the Bible, look at what is prior to the application. James 1:21-25: *“Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror, for one he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”*

My point is this: you cannot be a doer or a hearer of the word if you don’t know the word. Here, verse 25 is key because it says to look intently at the law, abide in it and in doing so; you become a hearer and doer which manifests itself in blessings through everything you do.

Finally, I think Peter has the best summary of my inside out journey because I realize my walk with God will never grow beyond what I know and how deeply my convictions are founded on the grace of God through Christ Jesus. 1 Peter 1:13-15: *“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour.”*

*All scripture references taken from NASB.



Fall Retreat 2008



True Greatness

By: Jorge Quan

The definition of “greatness” from the world perspective differs a lot from the Christian view. For many people, greatness can refer to recognition and respect from society, success in the professional field, financial stability, ability to pursue personal goals or satisfy personal wants, and many other things. As Christians, we put all those things secondary, and acknowledge that everything that we do and pursue is for the glory of God.

As students of UW, many of us like to pursue high marks and that can be good or bad depending of our mindset. We definitely have to do our best, because everything that we do should be done with all our hearts as we are working for the Lord (Colossians 3:23). At the same time, I used to work so intensely for high marks that it became an obsession and an idol. I definitely see the goodness of getting good marks, and that is God-glorifying. But when God is placed second after “good marks”, then that’s idolatry and it is a sin (Exodus 20:3).

Other people, in the pursuit of greatness, like to serve and get very involved in the fellowship. Serving is a privilege, an outward expression of God’s grace lavished on us, and it should be a natural behaviour for every Christian to want to serve God. At the same time, having the wrong reasons to serve is not good. I struggle many times with evaluating my reasons to serve; often I find myself seeking acknowledgement from others and I get prideful. The more I serve, the more I see myself having more reasons to justify that I am better than others. So as I get soaked in my self-righteousness causing me to judge and condemn others. This is one of the most heated battles I have with sin, my issue of pride.

Saying all these, I want to explore the definition of “greatness” within the Kingdom of God. I am not speaking of this topic because I have grasped the full

control of it, but I want to share the realizations and insights from my walk with Christ hoping that the body will be edified.

In Matthew 18, the disciples were asking Jesus about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Then, Jesus called a little child and said, “*whoever humbles himself like this child is the **greatest** in the kingdom of heaven*”. Later on, Jesus said these words to the mother of James and John, his disciples:

*“whoever wants to become **great** among you must be your **servant**, and whoever wants to be **first** must be your **slave** – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).*

This is truly intense, illogical and it is completely different from the world viewpoint for what greatness represents. In the Kingdom of God, the ones considered great are those who humble themselves like an innocent little child and who live like a servant. The best example is Jesus himself, and the passage of Philippians 2:3-11 illustrate Christ’s humility in a very beautiful way. One should consider others better than ourselves, and look for the interest of others and not just for our own (v 3). The next part is just beautiful and so heart-striking. Christ, who is God, emptied himself of His divine rights as God to humble himself as a human in the nature of servant (v 7). What is marvellous is that he remained humble and became obedient to the death on the cross (v 8). That is just crazy! There’s really no words that can describe this degree of humility from Christ, and the grace that God offers through this demonstration. I am speechless whenever I reflect upon this act of grace. Later God exalted Christ to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name (v 9). That is true greatness. Christ gave up all His rights when He was on earth, He did not complain when He was abused and suffering before His death, and He remained faithful to God even on the cross. After

that, God lifted up Christ to the highest place of glory. This is true greatness because Christ as God had all the rights to not go through all the suffering, and did not have an obligation to serve us, but He did it with willingness and remained faithful to God even in the most desperate circumstances. As follower of Christ we ought to follow His example, acting with humility, giving up our rights, and being obedient knowing that God gives vindication to those who remain faithful to Him.



That is the beauty of life that we are called to live with true humility. We are captivated by how wonderful and how great God is, amazed by the immeasurable riches of His grace, and we acknowledge our own sinfulness and weakness, knowing that it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can further God’s Kingdom and exalt the gospel on high. God takes delight on this, as He said, “*This is the one I esteem: he who is **humble and contrite** in spirit*” (Isaiah 66:2). The word “contrite” means “feeling sorrow and remorse for one’s sin”.

By going through the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), we can see that the things that God values is very different from the reality of this world. God gives the kingdom of heaven to those who are poor in spirit, God comforts those who mourn, God gives inheritance to those who are meek, and God fills those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Being poor, meek, hungry, and thirsty, and mourning are seen as very weak attributes, but God blesses all of them. Later on, Jesus said that we should turn our left cheek when someone strikes our right cheek. It seems illogical, but that is what God wants from us. Just a note, the aspect of giving the left cheek is not representing that we should remain passive when our cause (the gospel) is hurt, but that we should show what true Christian character is by acting with love.

What is great from human eyes are very different from what God values. Therefore, it is very important that we always pray to be sensitive to His Spirit, so that we know what God's heart wants, see what God sees, and feel broken from what breaks God's heart. Continuing with the Sermon of the mount, Jesus presents many examples of how we should behave as Christians, and the most important lesson I get is that it is not about what we do or how much we do, but it is our hearts that matters the most for God. He called us to store up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20), and if our most precious treasure is our Lord Jesus Christ, then our heart will be all for Jesus (Matthew 6:21). Therefore, God values where our heart is, and not too much on what we do. Even if we surrender our bodies in flames but we don't have love, then we gain nothing (1Corinthians 13:3). Obviously, if our hearts is in tune with God's heartbeat, then it will be more than natural that we will do good works for His Kingdom. Ideally, our actions should come out spontaneously.

“What is great from human eyes are very different from what God values.”

So no matter how much time and effort you are putting in school, or how many roles you are serving in ministry, the most important thing is to go after God's own heart, deny yourself and follow Jesus by carrying your own cross (Matthew 16:24). That is absolutely true beauty and true greatness. Even if I have done a lot of good works, gain many good things, collected enough reasons to justify myself as a good person, I consider all these as *“a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”* (Philippians 3:8). The world will look down on us because we do not pursue what is great from the world viewpoint. But that is alright, we do not have to complain or retaliate, but just follow Christ seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), and knowing for sure that our work for the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58) as buds of true greatness start appearing in each of us.

I want to extrapolate briefly the aspect of greatness in the definition of a man of God. Many times we talk about the man of God, and we usually end in very general conclusions. In the bible (Ephesians 5, 1Timothy 3), there are many description of what a man should be, especially in the context of the roles as leaders of the church and a husband. A man should step up as leaders, take the initiative, be respectable, be responsible, manage his family well, lead in the Word, lead in righteousness, be bold, be courageous, be self-sacrificing, love God the most, and love his wife imitating Christ's love to the church. These are all true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy things to pursue for a man. But there are times when even pursuing this we will not have the right heart. Therefore, I think the most important thing is to imitate David as a man after God's own heart (Acts 11:22). In Psalms, we can see how David expressed his sorrow, anxiety, despair, longing to see God when he was suffering in consequence of his sin.

David fell in sin many times, but each time he desperately wanted to go back to God knowing that without God's presence is the most terrible state he can be in. David knew he was not good enough, undeserving, and a sinful man, and always expressed remorse for his sin (he was contrite in spirit).

By having the awareness of his sinfulness and knowing his dependency on God, he developed a longing heart towards God, crying for mercy and praising Him with joy. God took delight because David was after His heart. God delights when we walk humbly with Him.

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8).

For my sisters in Christ, I have not much to say specifically as I don't have the right to say anything. But I do want to share a verse that is very awesome and describes the true beauty of a woman.

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful” (1 Peter 3:3-5)

That is truly beautiful and captivating.

Closing the Gap By: Bily Xiao

Commit the will to God, and immediately you will find Him near. Not because He has moved any closer, for He has always been at hand, but because you have finally allowed yourself to be near.

It is a common occurrence for Christians to feel distant from God, not a rarity. We may feel God has left us to fend for ourselves, and in a way He has—but He has not forsaken us. Sometimes God appears to leave us so we can grow. Parents cannot always be at their children's side if the children are to come into their own.

We may feel, furthermore, distant at some spiritual level. Not only does God seem to ignore our prayers but we no longer "feel His presence". We should realize, however, that losing the sensations of spiritual high is sometimes a matter of God giving us choice. We are then not impelled to follow Christ by surging emotions. In the quiet we must choose.

Sometimes we feel especially kindled with fervor. A Christian life is not led by such passionate impulses as that which constitutes emotions, but by love. Though God does not leave us permanently like this, He may test us and shape us in numerous ways, including this one. As the proverbial they say, "if you love someone, set them free. If they come back they're yours; if they don't they never were."

In seeking to be restored to the right place with God, do not try to climb back up to a spiritual high like you might have had when first you decided to commit yourself to Christ. Just commit yourself by your will. "Spiritual highs" come and go. They are not bad in themselves, but they are only a catalyst.

Feeling distant? Ceaselessly steel your very will to that of God's, realize that you are near, and you are near.

The entire Christian life -- a life of Love -- is a constant affair of the will.



Discipleship

By: Michael Chan

"I have decided to follow Jesus, No turning back. No turning back."

Throughout the course of our Christian walks, most of us (I believe) truly desire a relationship with Christ on a deeper, more intimate level. More often than not, we know what we have to do. We know we ought to pray, read and study the Bible. We should love and display compassion. We should edify, evangelize, and exhort. But in the end, it feels like we're always one step short of experiencing something (anything) spectacular with God.

We witness and hear about 'spiritual giants' and 'passionate' leaders that constantly seem to have intimate encounters and experiences with God, and we wonder. What sparks that intimacy? And truthfully, the answer lies within **genuine discipleship from Jesus Christ in complete surrender and obedience**.

Over the years, discipleship has somehow lost part of its immense life changing power. In many cases, it has become a training program in the local churches taught by elders and teachers. In other places, it has become an activity – the next step up – from accountability meetings and personal mentorship. It has intertwined itself with earthly ministries. But discipleship is so much more than any class or activity, or even any earthly matter. It is a strong personal calling.

Discipleship is the entirety of the Christian life.

Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The profound insight from that claim can only be appreciated when we understand that discipleship can only occur between yourself and Jesus; No one else. Discipleship is actively following Jesus (who still lives today), and having Jesus teach you all about Himself.

Many Christians have what we might call a "cultural holiness". They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God.

– Jerry Bridges

How can we be like Christ, if we are learning from those around us?

However, the joy of discipleship is not an easy route. True discipleship requires complete surrender followed by obedience. It requires you to relinquish all personal worldly desires, such as: pride, career goals, social status, educational achievements,



riches, aspirations – for the glory of God. It requires you to suffer, persevere and obey extremely difficult teachings.

A lot of the times discipleship sounds backwards, and it's almost as if following Jesus means a life of pain, suffering, and poverty. But the Kingdom of Heaven is backwards. And you'll soon realize that following Jesus is not what it seems. Following Jesus is beyond human logic, and becomes a blessing. So the last will be first, and the first will be last.¹

Actively following Jesus means to listen, surrender, and obey.

And I'll let God speak through his scripture, because there is something exceptionally powerful to be learned from the first disciples of Jesus Christ.

*[And] as Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their **nets** and **followed** him.*

*Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and **immediately** they left the **boat** and their **father** and **followed** him.²*

When Jesus called you to follow him, did you *immediately* leave everything behind, and take action to follow him?

Are you just a *believer* of Christ or a true *disciple* of Jesus?

There are many lessons and teachings that you'll come to learn; some difficult, like leaving your livelihood (career and education³) and loved ones (family and friends⁴) for Jesus. But trust and have faith in God.

There are a many ways, to cultivate the path to follow Jesus, but the starting point lies within you. Always fix your eyes on Jesus⁵, and know we have been made complete in Christ's love for us.

If you are craving to experience God in powerful ways, then:

*Be **transformed** into the **image** of Christ
from in the inside out by the power of the
Holy Spirit.*
— Eileen Liu

Surrender everything.

Desire to be disciplined by Jesus and with entire simplicity, follow Jesus only.

¹Matthew 20:16

²Matthew 4:18-22

³Luke 5:27

⁴Matthew 8:22

⁵Hebrews 12:2

*I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back, no turning back
Though I may wonder, I still will follow
No turning back, no turning back
The world behind me, the cross before me
No turning back, no turning back.
Though none go with me, still I will follow
No turning back, no turning back.
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back.*



Can You Live Without A Computer? By: Vivian Lo



It was a nice quiet afternoon as I sat comfortably in front of my one year old long Macintosh with its stylish red cover. Nothing seems unusual. The computer was running fine and everything was well set up as I waited for the arrival of the participants coming to the research study. Just five minutes before the study session, I reached forward to take a sip of the nice aromatic coffee that I had made. And then it happened. The cup slipped out of my hand and fell right on top of my laptop. Events that happened next became a whirlpool as I tried to make an Olympic dash to the paper towels while my co-experimenter tried to salvage the laptop. It was too late. The coffee won. My laptop filled with much of the wicked caffeine decided to breathe its last. To cut the long story short, the laptop was damaged and I was out of a laptop.

The days that followed became some of my excruciating moments as I wandered aimlessly in my room. I could not do anything. I could not check my emails. I could not procrastinate on Facebook. I could not talk to anyone on MSN or Googletalk. Or do any real work such as typing my papers.

It was then I realized how important that piece of 13" inches by 9" inches technology comprising mostly of plastic, wires and metals meant to me. My whole life depended on it. The uncountable hours of past papers and work that I had written and done over the years, dozens of song records that I enjoyed and built into my playlists, memories of my past formatted in jpeg pictures etc. were all kept in that seemingly small 13" inches by 9" inches box. I could not live without it.

In today's technological society, I believe my sentiments echo many people's thoughts on how much we rely on technology to do, some-

times the simple day-to-day things.

That insight brought a question that I asked myself. Do we rely on God as much as we rely on technology? Will I feel equally as antsy and find life "meaningless" if His presence was missing from me today? How much do I rely on Him? If Christ is indeed the Lord or put it another way, the motherboard of my life, does my lifestyle reflects that?

The short-livedness of my laptop (despite the traumatic endings) also reminded me of the wonderful eternal grace and love of our everlasting Father. For unlike a laptop which could malfunction by a mere drop of a liquid or become outdated by the next 'in' thing, our Almighty but yet Loving Father is not. As Matthew 24:35 declares, *"Heaven and Earth will pass away, but His words will never pass away."* *"For He is the same yesterday, and today and forever."* (Hebrews 13:8)

And so as we come to the end of the year 2008 and approaching Christmas, let us once again give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and let us not forget the important things that really matter most in our lives.

What are these things for you? And why are they important?

** The author would like to express her gratitude and thanks to the following people during the laptop episode: Herman Lam for lending his laptop; Tim Wai, Vincent and Eric from Notebook Galaxy for their time and rescue work on my laptop and most of all, Jackal Ngai who lovingly stood by my side throughout the whole stressful period. J

Don't Be a Stalker By Herman Lam



With the new advent of Facebook, information about ourselves and others is becoming easier to access by those around us. A click to www.facebook.com will get you the latest information of anyone on your *friends* list. With some people, you can see what they are doing at that very moment (eg. Herman is currently *writing an article for Insight*). The only reason we remember some people's birthday is because Facebook reminds us of it. We find out about our friends' significant others through Facebook before any other mean.

Some people can spend hours on Facebook *catching up* with friends by reading their profile updates, looking through pictures, and leaving three sentence wall posts. Now c'mon, seriously, how many of those people on Facebook do we actually have a true relationship with? Granted there are people who live far away and Facebook provides a practical way to *stay in touch*. But on the whole, it feels like our generation is starting to lose its social ability in getting to know people.

I am not innocent of this. Though I am not an avid Facebook user, I still recall my first year where I amassed an extensive amount of information of others to myself. I constantly got contact information of every new person I met and took tons of pictures of people around me. In a way, it felt like if I had a piece of information or picture of a person, I am somehow associated with them, and that I *knew* them.

The scary thing is it's all too common to see this attitude reflected in our relationship with our Lord. How many of us simply have a lot of knowledge *of* God? Does it feel like we know a lot *about* Him, but not really know Him? It is easy to just see the *latest wall postings* when we go to church and hear of His work in our neighbourhood and in the world. It is easy to just browse through *uploaded pictures* when

we sit there and watch Him at work. He doesn't want you to simply leave *wall postings*, but he delights in your time exclusively to Him, listening to Him and talking to Him. He delights in taking walks with you and share with you His masterpiece of creation and His orchestral arrangement. Don't you want to know Him, *all* of Him?

Get to know the people around you – really get to know them. Don't **just** know their Facebook profile or hold on to some pictures you've taken together. Perhaps the next time you write on someone's wall, you should e-mail them or call them out to coffee instead.

Get to know our Heavenly Father, really get to know Him. Don't limit yourself to how you spend your time with the Lord. Take a walk in the park, and enjoy the beauty of fresh snow and the symphony of creation's sounds. Know our Lord to the fullest, all of Him and His love for you and me.

Personal Thoughts and Notes

Merry Christmas!

