

# Spirit of Joy, Spirit of Hope

In my walk of faith, I often feel stagnant. I find myself simply going through each day, doing what I have to do to stay afloat. Finish an assignment. Study for a midterm. Go to church. I settle into a routine, a cycle where I'm going, but not necessarily going anywhere. I grow apathetic towards people and before I know it, I've grown apathetic towards God. And as I introspected, I realized that key components of faith were missing: joy and hope. Joy that I am a child of God. Hope that he has a perfect plan for me. This joy and hope have a common source: the Holy Spirit.

As a Guide, the Spirit reminds us what Jesus has commanded us and leads us closer to God. As a Comforter, it is God's presence with us and sustains us through times of weakness. As an Advocate, it testifies that we are indeed God's children. This Spirit is in all of us, and it is in our fellowship. But we must break down the walls we've built up, let go of our own will so we can be led by the Spirit and in turn, bear fruit.

Therefore, it is my vision that CCF will be a fellowship filled with joy and hope through the Holy Spirit. Then, as they overflow we will necessarily pray earnestly, worship authentically, and love others deeply. And as we live out our lives with this hope and joy on display, we are transformed daily to be more like Jesus.

## **Upward**

*"I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong."*

– Ephesians 3:16-17

Joy is gained when we find total satisfaction in Christ alone. Since our God is an unchanging God, when we hold on to him as our one desire, we will have hope and joy that, too, will be unchanging. This joy is steadfast, independent from the ebb and flow of our lives, and is a foundation within us that persists through all circumstances.

Over the past three years, I have had the privilege of witnessing culture building initiatives start in CCF. A greater emphasis is being placed on living prayerfully, and we are seeking to worship God in everything we do. In this process, we need to remember that these cultures are only strong if their foundation is strong. If we do not have unyielding joy in us, how can we be sure that that which we are building will stand firm? It does us no good to pursue prayerful and worshipful living if we do not first have Jesus as our all in all. And so, we must first be filled with joy through the Holy Spirit, so that when we pray, we are not merely saying the words, and when we worship, we are not just singing along.

## **Inward**

*“Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.”*

– Philippians 2:1-2

What joy it is to have fellow believers to share in our faith! For many years, the fellowship has committed to building tight-knit family of brothers and sisters, and extending this family to newcomers. However, we cannot take this sense of community for granted!

True fellowship is in the Spirit. And while we gain joy through the Spirit, we reinforce it through each other. We find strength in being not just a group of individual believers in the same place, but being believers together. Praying as one, worshipping as one, moving as one. This synergy comes when we recognize that we are united only through having Christ in common. And being in Christ, we join to sing a chorus that is more glorious than the sum of its parts.

It is important that every leader and member of the fellowship has their own vision, but let us align ours to a central vision for CCF. God has not placed us here to simply live out our own visions, but to work together with a united purpose. It is my earnest hope that through every Investment Group, ministry, retreat, or Large Group, we will grow in our understanding of our united vision. No matter our level of involvement, we are not merely participants, but integral pieces in the greater movement here at CCF.

## **Outward**

*“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

– Colossians 1:27

Since our hope and joy are from the Spirit, how can they be kept to ourselves? Often we divide fellowship activities into community and outreach, when these are really one and the same. We limit our sights when we see outreach as merely events that the fellowship hosts. I am encouraged that CCF has treated outreach with a greater urgency, and expanded our perspective to discover how it can manifest in our daily lives. As we strive to do more, we must not forget that it is by no ability of ours that God makes his name known!

Transformed by the Spirit and putting our great hope on display, we can truly be ambassadors of Christ. For we are merely his hands and feet, doing his works while he moves through us. God does not need us to host more Large Groups to invite our friends or more outreach weeks. Instead, he calls us to have hearts to see the kingdom grow. Not going through the motions and reaching out because we know we should, but doing so because we are so full of joy through the Spirit that we cannot help but share of the hope that we have.

Brothers and sisters, we are all parts of the fellowship God has built, and through him, we are called to do great things! So, let us surrender entirely to be led by the Holy Spirit, and together discover the steadfast hope and joy found in having Christ as our one desire. Let us spur each other on, and with one spirit, one vision, live out God's great plan for CCF!