

# *crossculture*

Asian Intersarsity Christian Fellowship

December 2008 | Issue 2.4

*Where are you going?*



# STAFF CORNER

## Renewal through Prayer

by Sara Wolfgram, *AIV staff*

ABOUT FIVE MONTHS AGO I WAS starting at the budget I needed to raise by this September and began to doubt the likelihood that it would all come in before school started. I doubted that people I knew would be willing to give; I doubted my ability to do the work needed and most of all I doubted God's ability to provide.

It was around this same time that I began meeting with Dolores. The purpose of our meetings was clear from the beginning. Dolores is a woman of great faith and prayer. She agreed to be my prayer partner and meet weekly to pray for my funding.

At first, it was a struggle to meet with Dolores. She saw through my superficial confidence and platitudes to where my heart was, struggling to believe and pray with faith. What I thought were going to be relatively easy prayer and accountability meetings turned into uncomfortably honest encounters with God as He broke down my hardened heart, exposed my shallow faith, undisciplined life, and stretched my dependence on Him.

Over these past few months, prayer has opened my eyes to God's activity in the world around me. When

I doubted that God had heard our prayers, He surprised us in big ways and has taught me God's desire that we have the patience for Him to work. More often than not, God is much slower to answer the prayers we desperately desire, but this does not mean that He is not at work to bring them about.

Even more broadly, these five months of prayer have awakened my heart, mind and actions to the essence of prayer to any follower of Christ. It is not because "prayer works." We often turn our faith and all that follows into a commodity to be marketed. Prayer then becomes a means to an end; a way for us to get

the things we want when we want them. Instead, prayer should be a way of life, and as I once heard it expressed, a Christian's default language.

I cringe to think of the ways I have reduced prayer to a ritual that formalizes the end of a meeting, a small group, a large group, you name it. We barely think about it and – I venture to guess – barely think about what we are praying about, who we are praying to...why we are praying at all.

I have been recently encouraged to see prayer increasing in individuals' lives and even corporately, and at DPMs. I believe that God has begun a process of renewal in our chapter that begins with the individual. As Dolores and I were praying, she spoke prophetically about God's work in AIV. God will bring renewal in the form of changed lives, prosperity and fruitfulness.

Prayer is at the heart of this. What would it look like for us to pray daily for one another? For our campus? For our family and friends? For the

world? What would it look like if our "ranting sessions," accountability relationships and discipleship became centered on prayer? They are not simply your accountability partners, but your prayer partners. You get into one another's lives not to blow off steam, but to know how to pray for one another in a more fruitful way. Why? Because we acknowledge that the LORD is the One who is in command of our lives and most capable of carrying our burdens. There is a joy, an excitement and a new dimension of being human when we come to God in prayer.

I am praying for us all to become people of prayer. As you have time this winter break, take some time to reflect on how you pray. \*

There is a joy, an excitement and a new dimension of being human when we come to God in prayer.

**Q**uestions to help your reflections on your personal prayer life:

**Describe the ways you pray.**

**How do you pray?**

**Why do you pray?**

**What do you pray for?**

**When do you pray?**

**In what ways has prayer taught you more about who God is?**

**What is the relationship between how you pray and where your heart is with God?**

**What next steps can I take this month in the area of prayer?**

*"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you to truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

*- Matthew 6:5-6*

*Front cover by Cindy Chen, Senior*

*Back cover by Letao Zhang, freshman*

# Giving to Caesar

## On Personal Integrity

by Lily Li, *junior*

ONE DAY, JESUS WAS SPEAKING (IN PARABLES) TO HIS FOLLOWERS again. And as expected, the Pharisees showed up. This time, their trick was about taxes. See, if Jesus admitted they were supposed to pay taxes to Rome, then he would uphold the Roman rule, but if he said they shouldn't pay taxes, then he'd be guilty of treason. What would Jesus say?

So how does this apply to me, a college student? I pay taxes to the US government on my paycheck. I pay taxes to the Michigan government when I buy non-food items from the store. AND I even give 10% of my income as a tithe to the church. So I'm good, right?

Well, my challenge to you is that you may be overlooking a key phrase Jesus says. He doesn't say "pay your taxes because you should." Rather Jesus is careful to state that you need to give a man his dues. I believe this means respecting one's intellectual property, too.

So all those songs and movies I've pirated are not just illegal, but also dishonoring to God.

Now, I realize that sounds really harsh. My point is not to condemn everyone (since I also have my share of illegal material). But rather, I want to create a dialogue (even in your heads) about honoring our fellow man's copyrights. AIV often uses alcohol and underage drinking as an example of how challenging it is to follow the law, but I think copyrights provide a greater challenge not

only to follow the law, but also to respect people. So ... think about it (1 Peter 2:13-17). Come talk to me if you disagree (e-mail: zhili@umich.edu, or find me for coffee sometime).

Before I conclude, I want to recognize a few other things. First, we often use the excuse that we don't like the lifestyles

of the people to whom that money would be going. We want to "stick it to the man". I think a much better way to "stick it to" the stars would be to not watch/listen to their work. Don't like Britney's choices, for example? Choose not to listen to her music. It's much more effective.

Second, we claim that stuff is expensive, and we are "poor college students". Yes, many of us wish we had more money, but remember how blessed we are. And honestly, if we stop wasting our resources, we can stop making excuses. Imagine how much money you would save if you stopped eating out!

Finally, because copyrights are a human invention (just like taxes), it must be upheld by the government. But if the government does not recognize the works of artists, then I personally don't believe we are required to, either. This means, shows and music from China are fair game. \*

**But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"**

**"Caesar's," they replied.**

**Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."**

**When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.**

**(Matthew 22:18-22, NIV)**

## interVarsity purpose statement

*IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE, GRACE, AND TRUTH:* The Purpose of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA is to establish and advance at colleges and universities witnessing communities of students and faculty who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord:

Growing in love for God,  
God's Word,  
God's people of every ethnicity and culture and God's purposes in the world.

# On Leadership

by Donica Liu, *senior*

IMAGINE THAT YOU COULD HOLD THE attention of 70-80 people for five minutes. What would you say? What would you do?

If, more than anything else, being in front of others sounds like a scary prospect to you, I completely understand. I'm naturally a shy and quiet person, so I prefer not to be in the limelight. This past summer, before my senior year, I got really excited whenever I thought about leading worship for Intervarsity—I was glad that I would be able to use my love for music and for corporate worship to serve the fellowship, but I wasn't excited about the part where I had to speak in front of others. I didn't think I'd know what to say to guide others toward a more meaningful worship time anyway.

This past summer, I also tried to follow the presidential campaign on TV and watched as Obama inspired the nation to believe in the possibility of change and the power of unity. All political arguments aside, one has to admit that Obama is a visionary who was able to instill that vision in others all around the country. It really amazed me that he was able to revive American pride through his words and actions, which can be appreciated when considering that a lot of people living in our country haven't been proud to call themselves "American" for a long time. Which made me think: if Obama is able to get people excited about being American, why can't I use my leadership position to get people excited about God? I know that, with God's help, I can.

Leadership—it's a high calling and a great privilege. In the end, what I like most about it is having the chance to affect change and help make things better. In Matthew, chapter 16, Jesus tells Peter that he is going to be the rock of the church and that he is being

given "the keys of the kingdom"<sup>1</sup>. This is the verse that really makes me excited about leadership, because I imagine that God is literally handing me keys and that I could open the door—to a relationship with God, to receiving

**I'd like to see the word 'leadership' take on a positive connotation again instead of a negative one.**

comfort and love, to new and eternal life—for another person.

During my freshman and sophomore years as a college student who was involved with Intervarsity Christian fellowship, something I badly wanted the opportunity to do was to serve on Core<sup>2</sup>. I thought the upperclassmen who were in Core at the time were a great group of people who did exciting work to guide the fellowship, and I wanted to be a part of that<sup>3</sup>. Excuse my cheap labeling, but I consider that period of time to be the "golden age" for our fellowship in a way, at least to me. The small group ministry had just branched out to all the dorms, there was a strong junior and senior class who ushered us in and were willing to spend time discipling us, and people were interested in developing new ministries such as body worship and contact evangelism, among other things. A couple of years ago, people actually wanted to become leaders in our fellowship. I'd like to see the word "leadership" take on a positive connotation again instead of a negative one.

I'll admit that being part of the leadership team for Intervarsity hasn't always been joyful, fun, or easy (duh). But sometimes it's disappointing to see how people commit themselves to the

fellowship when everything's going well but run away at the first sign of trouble, when the fellowship most needs support and growth. Or how faith is lost so quickly in God's working hand and his timing. Despite the times I've been turned off by Intervarsity due to its organizational and community issues, it's something I've personally decided to commit to because I can honestly say that it has changed my life. We tend to return to things that do this for us (worship is another example for me). Intervarsity is not another group to tack on to my list of extracurricular activities. It is the body of Christ that needs to be cultivated. In a student ministry like the one we belong to, I don't see that happening without students who are willing to become God's hands and feet.

I'm thankful for all of the ministries we have in our fellowship and for the individuals who are committed to them. For the small group leaders and coordinators, who spend hours studying the Bible and thinking of ways that they could help us understand God's word better and hear his voice speaking to the circumstances in our lives. For the large group team, who still see the importance of gathering all together. For the prayer ministry, reminding us that miracles can only happen through God. For the invisible ministries, such as the setup team, without whom large groups and worship cannot happen, and for all others who work so hard every week to help others grow in knowledge of the Lord.

I am praying that God will continue to help us make a bold transition from people who receive to people who give to others, from people who were cared for to people who care for others, from followers to leaders, and from sheep to shepherds<sup>4</sup>. *Whether or not* it is a comfortable time to do so. ✱

## Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of death will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven..." [Matthew 16:18-19]

<sup>2</sup> Core is a leadership team that oversees the various ministries of the fellowship.

<sup>3</sup> Due to various reasons, I never actually ended up serving on Core. One reason is that I'm coordinating the worship ministry now, which is equally as exciting!

<sup>4</sup> Even if we don't feel like we were cared for/shepherded by/received from others, we remember that Jesus did a great act of service for all.



T

**“She was my whole tower”  
A dream about what I know I don’t know.**

She told me I needed to go. I should have left yesterday but  
There were pomegranate stains on her shirt, and it smelled fresh,  
Like blood. When I traced it with my fingers, the red liquid latched  
On to my skin refusing to be washed away. Refusing to leave.  
Even tears came out red and filled my mother’s eyes with the color of love.  
It scared me and my bones began to grow backwards.  
The proof of kinship  
- no, the evidence of life

- no, the traces of death

- touched my hands and

I knew that I couldn’t leave.

O

I looked down, and at the foot of my bed there laid  
A pile of small bodies still and silent, rocking  
With the angry pounds of something from beneath.  
I tried to shut my eyes but what I saw  
Shouted so loudly it made my pupils dilate.  
I cried so much, my throat hurt. Crushed and broken,  
She was my whole tower. She had left too soon, and  
All I could think about was myself. The earth had been turning  
Inside out for quite some time now,

But the disaster felt like only a second.

W

Disasters often leave no time for survivors.  
They like to play with the slowness of speed.  
It ensures the kind of panic that resonates even at times of rest.  
The kind of panic that’ll pick up its pace in an instant of peace, or  
During moments of a dream- like this one. It shames me to say,  
But I was attached to it and I am a part of it.  
Disaster is me.

But what I knew I didn’t know, was what could have been.

What could have been.

E

When the ground began to move again, I finally felt air  
Enter my lungs. I was still ugly and covered by the entrails of sin.  
But someone was digging the rocks away. I didn’t want  
To be saved. And tried my hardest to melt into the bed.  
I wanted to stay and blend with the bodies, mix with the blood.  
But the hands of something larger lifted me up, out of the cold grasp of death.  
There was a dry layer of crust around the corners of my eyes that I couldn’t wipe away.  
It was a sick security blanket that prevented new floods from pouring out of me.  
I feared that when I was clean, I’d have nothing to keep my pain contained.  
I feared, like babies fear, that when I let go, I’d be alone and broken.  
I reached for something I couldn’t see,  
And in a frantic breath,  
I sat up.

R

Although fear still beats alongside my heart,  
I was awake. My mother had covered me  
From what could have been.  
Though, remembering made it happen  
All over again, forgetting wasn’t an option.  
I know that if it weren’t for her, my crumbled tower,  
I would not have lived and  
I would have known,  
What could have been.

# Starboard,

## I'm All Yours

by Josh Shyu, *senior*

Aye, aye, aye, captain  
Steer us towards home  
It's been a rough year out on sea  
And no one's heard my S.O.S. calls

I'll be the oar, you be the rudder  
Let's fight off invading ships  
You are the North Star  
You are the "Land ho"  
Mate, you say, we've been at sea for too long  
Here is some fresh water, here is some relief.

Let's push against the tides  
While seabirds as angels fly around us  
When this great flood's over  
Everything will be anew again  
I will finally breathe again  
With my loved ones around me.

The Lord giveth  
The Lord taketh  
So take all of me  
I am not the result of hard work, but of your blessings.  
This weak throat will sing for you  
Because you gave it voice.  
These frail hands will fight for you  
Because you gave them strength  
You gave me eyes to see your beauty  
And I'm stretching my eyelids so wide it hurts,  
But I still can't see all of your glory.

Lord, when the trumpet sounds,  
I want to be deaf with your holiness  
I want to be paralyzed with awe  
I want to be blinded by your light  
I want to be drowned by your love.

I've spent my life searching for the next plateau  
But nothing makes my blood rush like you.  
I've spent my life searching for understanding  
And nothing makes my soul calm but you.

It's been a few years wandering in this desert  
And my throat is parched and dry  
But one day you'll take me to the promise land,  
And these tribulations will all be worth it.

With my fathers and ancestors behind me, I will  
praise you.



## our prayer

It is our **hope** for this upcoming *Christmas Banquet* that God will give you **someone** to bring; that, regardless of their circumstances, they may be led by your **humble** hand to share in our *abundant joy*. Through the **food, fellowship, testimonies, and your kindness**, may they experience God's rejuvenating spirit of **generosity**. The chief end of outreach is no different than worship or prayer: God's glory. *It isn't just for "them."* And who among those of Christ does *not* need to be constantly reminded of His **refreshing** love? So, because He has given us this *new life*, let us **set aside our worries and share His joy with those around us!**

## REFLECTIONS ON

## COMPELLING

---

 by Zhongnan Xu, *sophomore*


---

“WHOA, YOU [NICK] GO TO HOPE COLLEGE? That’s where Sufjan Stevens went! Have you heard of him?”

This statement pretty much expresses the general outlook I had when I went to Compelling. Looking into my backpack, one would notice a common theme of the T-shirts I brought: Day One was Boards of Canada; Day Two was Wolf Parade; and Day Three was Sufjan Stevens. On Friday night, instead of going out with much of AIV, I sat in the lounge with my Zune and guitar, jamming to newfound bands, hoping somebody would come by. Nobody did. However, Saturday night it paid off. While playing some worship songs with fellow AIV members in the middle of the hallway, many other IV members, coming off of their corporate prayer time, joined in on the praise, and, according to another IV member: “This is what Compelling is all about.”

I am getting ahead of myself. My name is Zhongnan Xu, and I am a sophomore in chemical engineering from Portland, Oregon. I love music – finding it, making it, and, of course, listening to it. I love seeing how artists play with sound, risk everything by trying something new, and end up with something so honest and daring it begs to be called “original.” Yet probably more than that, I love sharing it. Nothing excites me more than a conversation about a shared passion for songs or artists, where the talk itself brings to light more about the nature of this

love.

But this is not an article about my obsession with music. Saturday night after some amazing improvised worship, I got to sit down with Nick. He is a senior from Hope College. If you were wondering, he answered yes to the question posed above. Immediately, names like “Beirut,” “Rogue Wave,” “Destroyer,” and “Sigur Ros” broke out into the air. One couldn’t help but notice the electricity that came from this sudden breakthrough.

**His complete transparency and love of the Lord floored me.**

Yet, however excited I was about talking about music, I noticed that Nick wanted to talk about something else more: God.

He could not be stopped. After hearing a few sentences, one could see the reservoir was boundless – and outpour could not be halted. He lived and breathed His Word. I’m not exactly sure how topics such as missions, Christian events, Bible verses, godly relationships, arts and worship came up, but Nick couldn’t help sharing every place in his life where God had a hand.

He showed us his heart for missions, and everything he learned while doing missions in Mexico. He told us

his fears that come along with it. He shared his last relationship, and how ending it was the “hardest moment of his life.” He told us about his summer experience, taking a month off for a Christian retreat that showed him more and more sides of God. He told us about a class about worshiping through the arts, and how he had to write a worship song that he hadn’t even started.

His complete transparency and love of the Lord floored me. He gave and gave, and asked for nothing in return. He did not demand a life story from us, yet would lay his out for us. If we were willing to share, he would hang onto every word, storing it in his heart. Only right before leaving did he ask us for our names, as if that were the least important thing about us. He said that the thing he loved most about conferences was that he could see how “God was working in everybody else’s life” – and I only wanted to find somebody to talk music with.

I will remember this Compelling conference not because of bonding with AIV, participating in an amazing Philippians track, or the messages from the pastor. I will remember Compelling because of that conversation with Nick. I will look for more at future conferences. Nick, if this ever comes into your hands, I hope to see you soon, even though it’s your senior year, and God bless.

\*



# THE BONDS OF BROTHERHOOD



by Andrew O'Brien, *junior*

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO WRITE THIS article, I was hesitant and a bit apprehensive, maybe even a little scared. To write this article was to share with you a different aspect of my life, a part that I've tried to keep distant and separate from my spiritual life. However, that is the idea – to shed light on what it means to live in a fraternity house while residing still in the House of God. It has challenged me to dig beneath the surface, beyond the parties and past the stereotypes that the media and even personal experience have reinforced. This article has given me cause to explore my fraternity's origins and history, and examine the people currently dwelling within its walls, including myself.

Sigma Phi Epsilon was founded by twelve young collegians; they longed for a fellowship based on Christian ideals that their current campus at Richmond College in Virginia could not offer at the time. Carter Ashton Jenkins, an 18-year-old son of a minister, described the need of a new fraternity as such:

"This fraternity will be different, it will be based on the love of God and the principle of peace through brotherhood. The number of members will be increased from the undergraduate classes. We will change the name to Sigma Phi Epsilon."

– *Carter Ashton Jenkins, Founder of Sigma Phi Epsilon*

Looking to encompass a God-centered focus, the fraternity has chartered three ideals and principles – Virtue, Diligence and Brotherly Love. Throughout the years, unfortunately, Sigma Phi Epsilon, as well as the rest of the fraternal community, has fallen away from their God-centered purpose. Yet, currently, the ideals of virtue, diligence and brotherly love still reign.

I know that it is common to be walking down State St. or Washtenaw Ave. and hear the loud music, and see the flashing lights or weave through the long lines of students waiting for a "frat" party. It

seems that these sights presently portray the fraternities on campus, including my own. Some of you may have even seen me at such events, or spotted me on our porch for football Saturdays. However, fraternal life exists outside of these things. Everyday I experience the strength of our brotherhood, whether it's studying together, sharing a meal, or even just taking the time to discuss current concerns, or even praises, and providing a safe, comforting place to hear and be heard. I have met some of my greatest friends, initially stemming from our only common ground being three [Greek] letters: Sigma, Phi and Epsilon. I have grown together in love and trust with these brothers, creating bonds that will surely last a lifetime. But I cannot deny that our fraternity exists in a place of moral darkness, where actions of promiscuity and drunkenness take place between the times of virtue and brotherly love, and therein lies the conflict: How do I maintain a balance between the fraternal life of brotherhood, the social outlet, and the spiritual life that God calls me to live?

I can say with confidence, that living this way has not been easy. It has taken its toll on me spiritually, morally and emotionally. I am constantly torn between my love for my brothers, my love for my friends and my love for God. I have watched myself fall away from God and then struggle to crawl back towards him. Like a father loves a son, I have been welcomed back into His loving arms again and again just to slip another time. Knowing this, it is logical, even sane, to ask, "Why do I continue to stay in the fraternity? Why I do place myself in a situation of such personal turmoil?" In spite of my own tribulations, I am not callous to the needs of my brothers. Though subtle at first, their calling and cries for God have become impossible to ignore. God made Himself present again to me during our Big Brother, Little Brother night.

During this evening, those of us without little brothers were assigned one;

it was then our duty to foster relationships, and then guide and mentor these new brothers into the secrets of our fellowship. On this night we celebrated the initiation of a new brother into our family. Just when our festivities were at their prime, when we were in a time not conducive to God's ways, my little brother turns to me and says, "Andrew, I want you to take me to mass with you. I haven't been since I've been in college, and I feel bad." This is not the only calling of its kind.

At the beginning of the year a pledge brother of mine confessed to me, "Yo, it seems like I don't have time for God anymore; I'm just too busy." Another said, "Do you go to mass every Sunday, because I would go more often if someone went with me."

Now here is when this article takes a turn – I need your help, AIV. Earlier I posed a question: Why stay in a place that is not in line with God? It's simple: God is working in the spirits and on the minds of those in my fraternity. He has placed a mission on my heart to act on the love for my brothers and to reach out to them and comfort them to the best of my abilities. I see it as such: another light does no good in a well-lit room – it is in the dark in which it shines the brightest, where it reaches the most places, and expands into every corner. As written in Luke, even Jesus himself "came to seek and save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). But I have to admit to you that at times it feels like the blind leading the blind. If any of you feel so compelled to give of your knowledge, your experience, or even your time, as "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37), please see me, e-mail me, call me, and most importantly pray that the love God shares with us can be a beacon within the walls of Sigma Phi Epsilon. \*

## CONTACT INFO

Andrew O'Brien  
West Quad Small Group Leader  
alobrien@umich.edu  
989-390-5924



# Shivers of She

by Stephanie Chang, *freshman*

Do they know me?  
Do they hear me?  
Do they all see  
That I am not free?  
That I am not complete?  
Mask.

So I guard me.  
Things weren't supposed to be,  
That I should be,  
So in need,  
And far from what they expected to see.  
Shame.

"Oh Father, Oh Daddy,"  
I cry and I plea.  
Where can I see,  
The now foreign beauty  
Of your grace, I need?  
I cling.

Oh how untimely,  
That this AIV,  
Wishes to know me.  
But oh, the bondage of my body!  
The smiles and bubble tea,  
Almost makes me think, that maybe,  
Just maybe, they desire to be,  
More than just mes amis\*,  
Could this be my family?  
I hear, "Discipler, Disciplee."  
Oh Daddy, I'm so hungry,  
For a place of heavenly.  
Oh Daddy, I'm so thirsty,  
For a place of divinely.  
Dear God, I seek Thee.

Oh Father, Oh Daddy,  
Don't let this be,  
Another place so easily,  
To fly and to flee.  
And to pretend to be,  
A vision of perfect me.  
Please don't let it be  
Easy  
For me  
Please  
Let it be  
A challenge to my insecurities,  
And that I may grow deeply,  
In my Christianity.  
Hope?

"Hi. Nice to meet you. My name is \_\_\_\_\_"

\*mes amis = "my friends" in French



*Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. 1 John 3:3*