

Faith uninterrupted

Finding perspective beyond the four-year window

Jeong Hyun '01

My exhaustive search for a college culminated in deciding Carleton was the choice for me because I received one of their brochures in the mail and loved their football uniforms. It may have been one of the dumbest reasons to choose a school in the history of our country's noble educational system. Despite my best efforts, however, I somehow ended up at the right place at the right time.

When I reached Carleton for my first term in 1997, there was only one Christian group on campus with a grand total of five members and it was dying quickly. One of my football teammates, Brandon Yerxa '99, had tried to start a Bible study among the football team, but the results were mixed and the last meeting of the year consisted of just the two of us and a bag of chips. We vowed over the salsa that we would pray during winter break and see what happened when we returned to campus.

Our answer came almost immediately. The first day of winter term my freshman year, we met Mike Binder '00

for the first time in what can only be described as a divine appointment. The three of us sat on the couches in upper Sayles to talk about starting a Bible study among the athletes at Carleton. I can still remember the excitement in our voices and the gleam in Mike's eye as we spoke about our vision for engaging the campus with the Bible in order to open authentic spiritual dialogue. Out of that meeting, Carleton Bible Study Fellowship was formed.

After graduation, Mike and I still met with a group of people around the Twin Cities for Bible study. One night as our conversation drifted toward Carleton we found ourselves wondering exactly what we accomplished through Carleton Bible Study Fellowship. We met as a group every week, but did anyone's life change? How many people actually grew to know Christ?

We realized that night that we lacked perspective. And then we returned to campus for a Carleton Christian reunion in 2005. The event was incredibly well organized. A surprising number of participants enjoyed a beautiful weekend listening to speak-

ers, panel discussions and music from Mustard Seed and eating an obnoxious amount of food.

The highlight, however, came unexpectedly during an impromptu gathering of alumni in a quiet room at the Hvasses' residence during the last night. About 20 of us crammed into every nook and corner and started sharing our experiences from our time at Carleton. It became clear almost immediately that something incredible was happening. We figured out that the alumni were spaced in time just right so that there was an unbroken chain of stories from the late 1970s until the present day. Starting with the oldest alum in the room, each personal testimony interwove with the next class until we heard the whole story for the first time of what God had done at Carleton throughout the years.

We tend to see things only from our own perspective. In my mind, Carleton started existing because of a brochure sometime during my senior year, and concretely so, only when I first stepped onto campus in the summer of 1997. Never mind that the school was

founded in 1866 or that generations of students had communed with the cows, Lyman Lakes and Malt-O-Meal before me. It was even more jarring when I came back for the first time after graduation and saw all the new students walking around. You would think they would just shut the whole place down after we left. However, every now and then, the veil lifts and you see that you are part of something much bigger than yourself. That night, gathered in the room at the Hvasses' house, was one of those moments.

It was a conversation that became a revelation. The time came for

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me to tell the story of my four years, from the formation of our group to the transition to all that came after. I had told the story before, but this time it was framed in a way I had never imagined. What had just been my little personal journey was so much more than I had ever dreamed it could be.

There was palpable emotion from the alumni who had come before us. For the first time since they left Carleton, they understood that their work had not been in vain. The prayers they had given to God each morning were the foundation of all that had come afterward. "They did not receive the things promised" (Hebrews 11:13) and graduated before all the things they had prayed for came to fruition. But, in faith, they persevered and kept

their trust in God through their present circumstances.

In retrospect, we were not exactly an inspiring answer to prayer when we first stepped on campus. I came to Carleton because of a stupid brochure. Mike came to Carleton to score 25 points a game playing basketball. We were both pretty immature. Trust me when I say that God used us in spite of ourselves. We recently reflected and came up with an extensive list of all the things we did wrong and would do differently if we had the chance again.

We screwed up relationships, we had only a surface understanding of the Bible we were teaching, and we had all these plans for a praise band, small groups and a Christian house that never materialized, at least during our years. We did way too much planning at the last minute, and most of the time we had no plan at all. Yet God moved at Carleton because it was never about us. It was all about God and all the saints who had come before us and after us. Ultimately, the torch was passed to new leadership to carry on a work that extends further than one person could possibly fathom.

If I could give one piece of advice to the current students on campus from my experience, it would be this: Don't get caught up in the results. Car-

ton tends to attract a certain type of achiever who is obsessed with getting results and obtaining a certain level of success. This attitude can very easily carry over to ministry. Out of a heart of good intentions there is such a desire to see God move and lives changed that it can be very easy to get discouraged if only a few people show up to an event or when there seems to be little change in the people around you despite your prayers.

Yes, do ministry and live your life of faith at Carleton with passion and intensity, but in the end, you have to leave the results to God. He was on campus

before you were here, He is on campus while you are here now, and He will be there long after you are gone. Trust that He has the campus and the people on it squarely in His heart. In addition, God was with you before you went to Carleton, He is with you right now and He has an amazing plan for you after you leave. ♦

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