In high school, I felt very lonely. All my friendships seemed to be based around clubs or classes, and as soon as those would disappear, so would my friends. My only genuine friend was my best friend Ivy. I shared everything with her: my interests, my thoughts, and my emotions. In my insecurity, I believed that if this person who knew everything about me didn’t think I was special, then how could I be lovable? She became my happiness, and people aren’t meant to be our happiness. Despair would overtake me whenever it seemed that her love for me had waned, whether it was her becoming closer to other people, or just her being too busy to talk to me. One especially busy summer for her was the nail in the coffin for me. If she couldn’t make time for me, then she obviously didn’t care enough about me. With this self-centered mindset, I cut her out of my life.

I came to college hopeful that here, I would finally find someone who would care about me. Here, I would finally be happy. A person in my first college lecture invited me to JCF, where I found a family. In this family, I found older brothers and sisters who gave their time, money, and energy to me that I didn’t deserve. I never had anyone say to me, “Hey, let’s meet up,” and dedicate time to building a relationship with me, but I had more meet ups in fall of my freshman year than I had in my whole life. In this family, I found brothers and sisters about whom I thought, “We would never get along, we’re just too different,” but they would say to me, “Hey, let’s try.” In awkward silences and forced conversations, I found so much love because we had nothing to offer each other, but we still tried. In my family group, there was a sister who probably thought I was the most annoying person in the world (she might still think so), but she gave me a box of candy during finals week, saying, “You’re my freshman, and I care about you.” When they preached to me about a God who loves, I could already see how beautiful He was, but I could also see how imperfect I was. Where I only loved “deserving” people, God loved indiscriminately. Where I loved because of what people did, God loved because of who He is. Where I turned away from the people that hurt me, God loved us so much that He sent His son down so that we could have victory through Jesus.

After months of the Spirit working in me, I was finally able to forgive Ivy. In seeing her again, the insecurity that used to scream in my ear about how I wasn’t beautiful, about how I wasn’t lovable became a whisper, and for the first time in our relationship, I felt free.

Some of you guys might have come to college with the same mindset that I had: that here, you’ll finally be happy. Maybe you’re looking for the right friends, the right job, the right girlfriend or boyfriend, or simply the freedom of being away from your parents. While you might find those things here, I’d like to tell you that the happiness you’re looking for is found at the cross, where by the blood of Christ, we’ve be promised a life eternal by a God who’ll never leave us alone.