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 couldn’t love me, then how could I be lovable? She became my happiness, and I saw how people will always fall short. 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. Finally, she became too busy to talk to me, and I was convinced that she didn’t care enough for me to want her in my life, so I cut her out of it.

I came to college hopeful that here, I would find someone who would care for me the way I wanted. Here, I would finally be happy. A person in my first college lecture invited me to JCA, where I found a loving 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,” dedicating time to building a relationship with me, but I suddenly found my lunches and dinners filled with people wanting to know me. 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.” One sister who probably thought I was the most annoying person in the world gave me a box of candy during finals week, saying, “You’re my freshman; I’ll take care of you.” I didn’t just see how they loved me, but how they loved the people around them: in the doors they held open and in the effort they put into cleaning the table before leaving the restaurant. Another sister told me how she always kept five dollars in cash in her car, so she would always have something to give. In their love that they preached and lived, I saw how imperfect mine 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 was unlovable 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.