High school was a lonely place for me. I bought into the competitive environment where if you studied hard and long enough and did enough extracurriculars, you would get into a good college and your future would be secure. I didn’t make time for friends, and my friends didn’t make time for me. I had a lot of friends of convenience, like track friends and AP calc friends and band friends, but very few people were simply friends. This brought a deep loneliness into me, and with a deep loneliness came the belief that my relationships would fix all the unhappiness that I had. With the friends I made through my life, I became as loving as I could because spending time with them cured the small loneliness that I had. For the short moments that I was with my friends, I felt whole, and when I was alone in my basement with nothing to do besides search the internet, I was empty. Did I love my friends? Yes, I did, but only because they made me feel not empty. My greatest opiate was my best friend Ivy Chen. Throughout high school, she was the one constant friend in my life. I loved her for it, but my love had limits. In the summer before college, she became so busy with her job that we couldn’t talk any more. I became so embittered with her because she wouldn’t make space in her life for me, that we didn’t talk for almost a year.

Coming to college, I was hoping for a clean slate and for new friends, and God provided. A random guy in my lecture invited me to JCA, and I found the friends I was so desperately looking for. Not only that, but I found a community and a God that loved in a way that was so different from how I loved. At the same time, a lot of friends from home confided in me about brokenness in their lives, whether it was through a bad relationship or a family sickness or a simple lack of direction. For these people whom I loved, I prayed deeply. I wanted to go to morning prayer just to pray for my friends. I listened to a lot of sermons too. I thought I was doing all that I could to love and be loved.