

I wonder how many times I have either heard the words “Christ has the power to transform lives” or seen them, and took no notice. I am sure I have sat exactly where all of you are sitting and heard someone, whether it was Corey, Christine, or some other pastor, say that exact phrase. And yet it never really sank in, until, oddly, Thursday night. My lacrosse team lost a heartbreaker in overtime, and after the game I sat for a while on the trunk of my car, gazing upon the lighted football field at the high school’s West Campus. This was the moment that I realized that my high school experience was over. Sure, there’s still graduation next weekend, and work trip following that, and obviously I don’t leave for college until the fall, but somehow, as I looked on that field, a place that I have held so many fond memories playing a sport I love, I could sense the closure. It was almost painful to turn my eyes away, but I eventually packed up and went home.

I’m sure my family and friends are rolling their eyes as I say this, probably wondering how on earth I could relate church and religion to a lacrosse game. But the time I spent after the game served as a special moment of reflection for me. Had we won the game, I would be playing for the state title right now with my team, something I dreamed of since before I even entered high school. Half jokingly, my mom told me after the game that it was good that I lost so I could give this reflection (probably not the right thing to say at that point in time). But then it struck me. I thought for a second how to begin this reflection, and the words “Christ has the power to transform lives” was the first thing that came to my head. He truly has transformed mine, especially over the past four years. I thought about how much different I am now compared to as a freshman, and

couldn't even begin to imagine how I got to where I am now. Perhaps other people could feel a closer connection to this transformation due to some tragedy or life altering epiphany, but Christ has his way of transforming all of our lives, even if the change is incredibly subtle. The fact alone that he has guided me to become the person who I am proud to be today as I stand before you is, to me, something very special. We all feel the connection with Him at different points in time, whether its working on a roof on work trip, connecting with someone that you have never before done so, reaching out to someone who needs help, or someone reaching out to you; we all know the feeling. I can remember over the course of these last four years sensing this link between Christ and myself so many times, even for fleeting moments, with in this church and its functions, and I will remember these things for the rest of my life.

The most powerful of these connections came on my first work trip, when we traveled to Ocean Springs, Mississippi, to help with Hurricane Katrina clean-up. Entering the week with freshman naiveté, I was shocked by the mass destruction and devastation of the property, homes, and lives of the local people. Seeing a boat just sitting on a plot of land washed up from the waves during the storm, having been there for who knows how long because no one had the means to move it is one extremely vivid image in my memory. I felt so empowered to be a part of the effort to help this cause and the feeling of fulfillment was both unprecedented and to this day unmatched. The light of Christ was visible in every face of the workers and those being helped alike, and I can't imagine experiencing such a powerful scene ever again.

The power of Christ can also be conveyed through music. I have had the pleasure of illuminating the words and message of Christ and the Lord through Eggs Benediction over the past few years, which in itself has allowed a connection with Jesus and me to become established in its own way. I don't think I can even count the times I have gotten goosebumps playing songs that I could feel Christ not only in the other band members and myself, but in the words and notes circulating throughout the church. I have cherished every moment with this group and feel a much fonder affection towards Christian Rock music, as it carries the memories I have experienced playing the tunes.

I suppose the real intention of a reflection is to "look back" on my church experiences, at the ways Christ has affected me. And to some extent I have deeply thought about this, and this reflection has helped shape who I am and want to be. However, with Christ, reflection not only entails looking back on what he has done for you or how the past has unfolded. He calls for you to look into the future, to see what you can do for the world with the help and guidance he has given you. When he transforms your life, He does so to prepare you for your role in the future. Thus, even though I can't rid my memory of the final goal of overtime on Thursday, watching my fellow teammates' heads drop and shoulders droop in defeat, Christ asks us to embrace the situation, make the best of it, and he will guide us and transform us to fit the role that He intends us to play in the arena of life.