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_Biola Youth Transformation: My Story_

For all of my academic life, I have practically lived off of great books as if they were food, poured my heart into writing, and energetically enjoyed discussing deep truths with friends and family. Essentially, I am a natural-born Torrey Academy student. My entire academic life was based around the principles which Torrey espouses. So it was no surprise when I took to the Torrey lifestyle wholeheartedly at the beginning of my sophomore year. When other students complained about the long, tedious readings or the difficulties in understanding Charles Williams, I thrived on the classic literature. While my fellow classmates often grumbled about the multitude of papers we were required to write, I relished the opportunities to hone my writing skills and gain feedback from more experienced writers. Though discussions were often fruitless and frustrating, I easily rebounded and came to every Inklings session with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. I thrived on Torrey Academy as a plant thrives on sunlight.

Over the summer between my Inklings and Foundations years in Torrey, I was privileged to experience Wheatstone Academy for the first time, which served to further strengthen my love for Socratic discussion. The friendships I formed both at Wheatstone and within Torrey provided me with a close-knit circle of fellow students who were as committed to pursuing truth through discussion as I was. Throughout an increasingly frustrating year in Foundations, this circle sustained me and kept me from disappointment with the state of my site’s class. Having provided myself with everything which I believed I needed to thrive intellectually, I began to disconnect from my Foundations class. Two years of frequent silences and lack of connection were holding back our class, but in my independence, I refused to recognize our class’s difficulties, as long as my own intellectual needs were provided for elsewhere.

At the beginning of my Faith year in Torrey Academy, our class was facing two years of apathy, hurt feelings, and frustration with our inability to have frequent fruitful discussions. As the circle of friends with whom I could discuss steadily decreased due to college or the busyness of life, my eyes were opened to the poor quality of discussion amongst my classmates and I which I had tolerated for so long. Struggling for the first time with my time spent in Torrey Academy, I was frequently disappointed, hurt, and even frustrated to the point of tears. Every time I came to class, I dreaded the futile attempts at discussion we would have, and suffered through the hour and a half of class until I was finally released, only to begin dreading the next class session again. Overwhelmed with pent-up agony and frustration, I finally gathered the courage to bring up the issue to our tutor, and ask him about transferring to a different site for the final semester. His words were blunt—I was as much to blame for the poor discussions as
anyone else in the group, and I was responsible for the well-being of my classmates as much as for the care of my own soul. I finally began to realize that my apathy towards my classmates was fostering resentment towards them in discussion. Through the pointed questions of my tutor and the frequently voiced frustrations of my classmates, I saw where I had abandoned my classmates and tried to pursue truth independently. For two years, I had been missing the point of Torrey Academy—to pursue goodness, truth, and beauty, not just alone, but in community. Finally, I was able to see how much I needed my fellow students not only in class time, but in life. My struggles with my classmates brought me to see the truth of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 13:2. “If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge...but do not have love, I am nothing.” Without true love and concern for those in my class, the intellectual knowledge which I had gained through Torrey Academy was essentially worthless. Because of a particularly difficult experience with Torrey Academy, I now desire to care about my classmates more than a perfect Socratic discussion and to pursue relationships more than knowledge.