I stepped into the room. Fluorescent lights blinked above, illuminating the room that would otherwise be dark, due to the overcast day outside. Other teens, their parents, my Mom and I sat in rows under the vaulted ceiling. We waited for the orientation meeting to start. The papers of my packet flipped against my fingers, as I skimmed through the information. My awe of the Torrey Academy program, and its requirements, continued to grow as I read about the school year ahead of me. Signing the Student Consent-to policy had scared me enough. The thought ran constantly through my mind, “What am I getting myself into?” I doubted my ability to complete the enterprise laid out for me. But, as the meeting went on, I was encouraged and gained a small dose of positivity, while the nagging thought remained. In fact, it never left me in the weeks ahead. Only after the first quarter, did it begin to abate. Truly, I had just cause to think such a thought. “Am I really capable of meeting these requirements?” The answer: No.

As I began my first year of Biola Youth’s Torrey Academy program, as an Inklings student, I knew it was going to be hard, but my expectations became a stumbling block for me. It was hard. However, my doubt of other classes had challenged me, but none had been anything like this. It required me to write a précis! A Term Paper! Class Summaries! Torrey Academy was vastly different than anything I had ever attempted before. Let alone a different animal, it was a different species. I anticipated that I would do well from the start, even though the program looked overwhelming. I was confident that I would be able to Yet, even as I recognized the disparities, I expected to do better than I actually did at the beginning. I expected that my first two assignments would do ok. Maybe not great, but not horrible either. I was wrong. Even the re-write of my first assignment didn’t earn a “D.” My first two assignments earned failing grades. I had to step up to the task.

Torrey Academy challenged me to my core, in all that I did. In my work, in my efforts, in my beliefs, in my thought life, in my faith. What I thought was an acceptable paper before, became a messy, illogical and cringe-worthy essay. I needed to improve my writing and communication skills. I had to step up. What I had believed to be good comprehension was merely passive attitude toward books. I needed to converse with these books, not just consume them. I had to step up. I believed that ‘X,’ ‘Y,’ and ‘Z’ were true, but I didn’t know why. I needed to provide a reason for the thoughts and hopes that were mine. I had to step up to the task. The questions my tutors asked of me were the instruments used by God, through Torrey Academy, to ask me what I would do with the
opportunity given to me. Much has been given, and much is required. But, in those requirements, in their challenge, I found that it was

    When I began the program, I was unprepared for Torrey Academy. At first, I was unprepared because I underestimated my ability to participate in the program. Later, I was unprepared because I overestimated my abilities. So much of my career in Torrey Academy has been about learning how to learn, and understanding who I am. The first quarter of my Inklings year demonstrated this. However, with time things are made perfect, as is the case with my Torrey Academy career. While it was not what I expected, and I was not entirely capable of handling the class, but with time, the program itself became the method in which I learned how to learn.