

Student Testimony

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I've been asked to share about the daunting question of the role Bethany has played in my life during the past two years that I've spent here. These types of questions always catch me off guard, because how do you summarize the growth, the learning, the transformation, friendships, passions... the list goes on, of all that is gained and experienced here in just a few concise thoughts?

Bethany's motto is "Nurturing Disciples and Training Leaders to Serve". Now if you go on the internet, and search the images on Google for the word nurturing, the first 11 pictures show people with their hands cupped with dirt and a very small seedling taking sprout right there in the palm of their hands. Now, I've never experienced growing a plant in my hands, in honesty, it seems a little impractical but maybe for those of you that garden, this might be quite a powerful image, so feel free to use it. Instead, when I think about how Bethany has "nurtured" and "trained" me through my time here, I love the image of a campfire. In a similar way to how you gardeners carefully do gardening stuff to take care of a budding plant, campfires also require patient and intentional care in order to grow.

Through my time spent at Bethany, God has been at work stoking my fire for him, his people and his church. Looking to this past year, God's handiwork has been evidently present in my life. I remember arriving at Bethany last fall for the beginning of the Student Leaders Planning Week. And as I remember that first day back, I also remember how I did not really want to be at Bethany at that point. After a long summer filled with various responsibilities and as a result of many accumulating factors, weariness and apathy had become significant characteristics in my daily routine and being a "Student Leader" or really doing anything for the Lord was no longer among my priorities. Coming into this school year, the zealous flame that once motivated my desires for a growing relationship with God had dwindled to mere embers.

As a result of this, throughout this season of my life God has reminded me that he is the God that redeems broken people and broken situations, that he makes new out of the old, fills those who are empty, refreshes the weary and is continually at work nurturing fading embers into roaring campfires.

One particular attribute of God that has stood out to me is his faithful provision. As God (and others here at Bethany) have walked alongside me, through both the inner struggles that I arrived with in the fall and the struggles that have happened here at Bethany, God has faithfully been mending that which seems broken. This realization is one of the largest takeaways that I'm leaving Bethany with: God truly works through situations that seem irredeemable and hopeless. Sometimes it's easy to notice specific occasions where God's presence is evident, however through this past year I've come to trust that God is constantly active, and whether we notice it or not, God is always at work, even in the dreary, the mundane and the unplanned.

As God has been mending the brokenness that I entered this year with, I have begun to trust that he is in control and have started to understand that I won't ever be able to fully understand what He has in store for all of us. But what I do know is that God provides, and is good, and faithful, loving and active

and through this year I have been reminded of these truths over and over again as dwindling embers have once again been fanned into flames.

Through my time at Bethany, in addition to having grown some height, some weight and some tragic attempts at facial hair, I've most importantly grown in my relationship and love for Christ. In addition to learning life-changing insights about the Bible and the world around us, in addition to being transformed from apathy to empathy and into a servant of Christ, in addition to building treasured friendships that have shaped me, in addition to developing passions that I had previously never yet explored, in addition to all these, I have been nurtured and trained into a disciple of Christ and leader for his people.

Both by the incredible staff and faculty that have invested into each one of us and by God who is faithfully at work revitalizing fading embers, through my time here I have gained so much that so few words have a hard time describing it. So thank you Bethany, for providing an environment for God to nurture and train me (and generations of others) into disciples and leaders who are "on fire" for Christ. Through being involved with this place, my desires for a deep, life-long relationship with Christ have been thoughtfully and intentionally nurtured into a zealous campfire that is much larger than expected and ready to spread to others, I am excited to continue to grow, learn and serve our God who has faithfully provided and will continue to do so.