

Leaving You with a Few Last Bird Chirps

Lucy White

Last week in Chapel, before Pastor Shauna McGee spoke, she asked us, "Can I be myself?" Her question is powerful. College graduation awaits me in a few short days, and there are so many future things I should be thinking about, yet this is the theme I'm stuck on: finding freedom in my own skin. For a recent assignment, I met with a professor. He asked me in the middle of our meeting, "Lucy, do you know that you're different?" Stunned at the unexpected honesty, I shrugged vulnerably, and answered yes. My following question to myself was this: "Am I okay with that? Do I embrace that?"

I have spent the end of

my semester delightfully reflecting on all that has taken place on this small mountain campus. It's entailed hundreds of limit-pushing soccer practices where endurance and strength have been tested. It's been meeting people completely different than myself, and learning how to celebrate life with them. It's been letting my heart be broken, so that it could be built back the right way. It's been finding a new and fuller way of loving and receiving love. It's the joy of living in community together that's tucked away. It's sitting on the library lawn, Sunday afternoon four square games, mountain exploring, fireside chats, Pan Day, not to men-

tion engaging academically together... when we have time, of course. Montreat has been a transformative time for me, and that is why I write to you now.

Through my four soul-scratching, blood-pumping, and heart-stirring years here, I have determined through resounding realizations that the best we can possibly be is simply who we were created to be, with all the complexities and abnormalities included. I can't help but wonder what would happen if we all released control in trying to create what we think is the best personality. What if we laid it down at the feet of God and said, "Yes. Here you are. Your original creation, we

give back to you. Show us how to love others. Illuminate us." Personality isn't who someone is; rather, it is a splash of color on a canvas that speaks to those who take time to admire the painting. It is how we interact with the world. Someone once told me, "There is no harmony when everyone sings the same note." If that is true, and we know it is, then let's all sing our own notes freely, and dance wildly to the beat of our own drummers, sharing our similarities and celebrating our differences. There is restoration and a new start available to those who have tried to be someone they never were, and there is forgiveness offered for those of us

who have criticized our peers as they struggled to know who they truly are in Christ. I have a lot of love for this place and you people. Thank you for speaking truth. Thank you for adventures and laughs. Mostly, thank you for giving me the freedom to be myself. I hope I have extended the same to you.

God is such a great artist; the best, in fact. It's hard to hand Him the paintbrush, but when we do, it's always beautiful. Be thankful and enjoy every color you receive. And so I leave you with a love commandment from Him, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

Culture

Nathan H. Adams

This is something I wrote for a conversation on facebook. I have submitted it to the Whetstone with minor edits for clarity.

I really feel like God is a whole lot bigger than we often give him credit. God is the fount from which all things beautiful and good flow. Now, let me expand on what I mean by beautiful and good. I mean, basically, anything that expresses love. For me, pop music enlivens my soul and makes me feel alive. It excites me, it takes my soul to new heights, and it helps me feel like a worthy part of the universe.

Alternatively, a lot of Contemporary Christian music makes me feel belittled and worthless. Why is this? The reason is that the language of that culture (aka Christianese) reminds me of a very emotionally abusive past where the church is concerned (and just so that I am very clear, I am not talking about

"bad" churches, I am talking about churches, period).

Now, for me, the music of the Christian culture does not communicate love to me; it communicates pride and presumption. However, secular music filled with lyrics about all sorts of things, to me communicates love, acceptance, and joy.

And why shouldn't it?

It was written by people who are just as worthy as any Christians, it is filled with their concerns, their fears, their joys, and I think it is just as worthy.

Now, does that mean everyone has to listen to pop music? No. For some people it does not communicate love, and for them, it is not edifying. That's fine. But culturally Christian music does not edify me.

I guess what I'm getting at is that in the end, God is God, and we are humans. And when we, as humans, come together as a group for

some reason, that creates a culture. There is a Western Christian Culture. I think many people have confused the tenants of that culture (hair length, appropriate subject matter, etc.) for finite laws of God. I do not think the Christian Culture is in any way better, nor has it any more together than any other group on earth. We are people, and liable to stupidity. The Christian Culture in the west is prideful, exclusionary, and judging. All of these things are just as bad as sex, drugs, and rock n' roll.

The real litmus test is love. I have friends who do not ap-

preciate the "f-word", so I try not to say it around them. But I have friends for whom, at the right time, when they are down, nothing could be more loving. It can be used to convey simply and beautifully, "I know your pain, and I empathize so deeply," in a way no other word could.

I do not believe it is what we say, or what we talk about; it's all about how we say it, and the spirit in which it is said.

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