

## **When the Music Fades**

**By Elyse Thornburg**

“Oh no,” I complained to my friend as I walked down the steps to spend my entire Saturday in the library, “I forgot my headphones.” The thought of four hours in silence was enough to send me back across campus, up the elevator, and into my room to grab my sanity-saving ear buds. Walking back down the stairs, I plugged into my Mac and began blasting some John Mayer.

My life has become a musical, and unfortunately it doesn't co-star Zac Efron. Audio is constantly streaming when I am alone, which is often followed by blasting tunes in my social environments. During the rest of my waking moments, I am singing, humming, or trying to beat-box at the expense of my friends' ear drums.

Apart from structured melodies and lyrics, my life contains many other sound effects that keep this musical afloat. Since I live street-side, sirens, horns, and shouting ex-boyfriends make regular appearances, as well as the sounds of girls' laughter, squealing and sneezing that are normal aspects of dorm life. With the brilliant invention of Skype, I can now video-chat with my peeps at any time, and being able to watch TV and listen to podcasts on the Internet is helpful, just in case the previous are not sufficient in filling the voids of silence. Saturated in noise has become my comfortable existence.

This being said, one weekend I found myself in an awkward situation. My roommate was gone for the weekend and our room was... quiet. Deeming it an opportunity to spend some much needed time with God, I began reading my journal entries from the past year. Cries of confusion, struggles with necessary refining, shouts of thanksgiving, and relationship lessons filled the pages. I became distraught by the fact I had written only once since beginning Moody, and it was

a shallow, “I feel like I should keep a diary to show the grandchildren” entry. Why, in the midst of great teaching and solid community, did my spiritual life seem to be coming to a halt? The excuses were there: the overwhelming aspects of starting over, a natural valley following my summer “mountain top” experiences, or possibly even a brief dip into depression.

While pondering which excuse to dwell on, I flipped to July 30th in my journal. I had written about a conversation I had with my close friend Ian. We had talked about relationships, mission work, my going off to Moody. However, one thing stood out. Ian said, “Elyse, you know when you are most you?”

“When?”

“The days you would go out walking by yourself. You would come back confident in who you were and who God was.”

I remembered these times Ian spoke of. I had creatively called them my “picnics with Jesus,” afternoons during which I would pack my Bible and a blanket in my bag and walk through the English countryside surrounding the Bible school where I worked. I had no agenda and found time to stall by the streams, pause to watch the lambs, and sit for hours by the lake, observing the swan with her babies. Following my busy week of responsibilities, I would allow the Lord to restore my soul, give me rest, and simply “be” in His presence.

Reflecting on this quality time with the Lord, I realized the key ingredient: silence. I serve, love and fear a jealous God, and on these occasions He did not have to compete with an iPod, cell phone, or roommate. He had my full attention. A wise man once told me, “What God gives as a blessing, He’ll curse as a substitute.” God has given me these gifts of music, people, and technology; however, I have abused them. I let them become idols, using them as replacements for being alone with my Savior. Noise, I’ve learned the hard way, is not a negative

thing when used to glorify God. It is, however, detrimental to a spiritual life when used as a substitute.