

Cornerstone University Chorale East Coast Tour Students' Reflections March 2015

During this amazing experience I have learned so many things. I have seen changes in me, received revelation from God's word through the Holy Spirit, and have been blessed by many of the lives involved on this trip. It is encouraging to know that "God doesn't need a lifetime" to change, purify our hearts, and to cultivate a likeness of Himself in us as His workmanship. I have seen the evidence of that in several of my Chorale family members over the past few days. I have been reminded that it takes daily surrender and willingness to be taught, led, and driven. God gave me time to process relevant lessons in my life, to release things I was holding on to, and to know the truth that I am a new creature in Christ. I have a new-found strength, confidence, and rest in Him. Praise God.

My heart was overflowing, literally bursting with joy, the other day as I sat with the members of Chorale on the bus and listened to "sharings." We had just witnessed the Lord's work in the church in which we had sung. The Chorale is truly a family, and a close-knit bond through God holds us together. So much love! I admire and care about every single person in this family.



Singing and pursuing music was becoming academic for me, but to see how music that we have known since September touched our lives and the lives of those we sang for was truly inspiring. God showed me that I am right where I should be, and that music isn't just an academic major, but a life-changing passion that God has placed in my heart.

This Chorale tour has taught me that life isn't all about me. It has shown me that serving Christ comes with sacrifices. Only through giving up your selfish desires can you truly grasp the meaning and pure joy that comes with serving others.

It amazes me that, though the reason we went on tour was to minister to people, we have been ministered to by the host churches, host families, and each other.

I needed this tour for a change in my life. Ever since a bad break-up last year, I walked away from nurturing my relationship with God and looked for fulfillment in things like success and attention. My diet and physical life became unhealthy, which in turn affected my mental and spiritual health. I found happiness in unhealthy habits. Sick of that lifestyle, I prayed desperately for some motivation to push me back to desiring God. The night we sang in Hershey, PA will forever leave a brand on my heart and my life as God showed up in a powerful way that was indescribable and uncontainable. The truth in the music we sing has kept my dying faith alive and restored the joy of salvation within me.

The one thing I learned on tour—no, the transformation that I experienced—is incomparable to anything in the past. Although this happened near the end of tour, I know that God had been doing some behind-the-scenes work from the start. During our last concert, God's love and mercy flooded over me. I felt radical love and true peace. It was supernatural. For the first time in four years, that I can remember, I cried. Yes, it is difficult to sing and hold back tears at the same time. I always knew and proclaimed God's unconditional love. But I often felt empty. I knew I shouldn't, so I lied to myself with Biblical truths. That evening, God placed his hand on my heart, covering the cracks and imperfections, showing me that He loves me in spite of these cracks. Unconditional love finally clicked. I was accepted by God. I was His. I didn't know this was something I needed; I could never put my hand on exactly what was wrong. But there it was. Finally, after almost two decades of life, I have found confidence in Jesus Christ. Finally, after thinking I had found the solution, my pride was crushed and my feeling of inadequacy released. As I stood on stage that night, tears spilling from my eyes and surrounded by people who love and accept me, I found Christ. As I write this, I can't help but well up with tears of thankful joy. This tour made it possible. This tour was the catalyst. I'll forever hold on to the memories from Chorale Tour, 2015.



For a long time I have been praying for the desire to give myself fully back to Christ. My desires have belonged to the kingdom of this world, and I knew the first step back to the Father would be having the desire for him. I had the overwhelming need to quiet my soul on this trip and allow God to speak to me. My quiet times were moments of wrestling with God in which I was brutally honest about my evil desires and shortcomings. On several days I had a morning and an evening quiet time because I needed that fellowship with God. One night, despite my exhaustion and the requirement of Dr. Walters to “get a good night’s sleep,” God was saying, “We need to talk.” That night the Holy Spirit placed in me a desire to return to obedience, but he also started showing me that the grace of Jesus is for me too. In one of our songs, *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day*, Jesus says, “My love, my love, my love. This have I done for my true love.” God revealed to me that my running from him and lack of desire to communicate with him was due to my feelings of inadequacy. I knew that Jesus atoned for sins, but Satan took that knowledge and warped it so that I believed my sins were too bad for Christ’s forgiveness. Though I had come to believe that I was unlovable, Jesus said to me, “No, no, no. Where you fear failure, I will provide you with success. When others turn away, I will not. All the places you can’t find love, I’ll be here with all the love you need.” God spoke this truth to me through his word and the actions of those around me. On this trip with Chorale I discovered a desire and thankfulness for God.

This tour was a lot like a mission trip. We did not do the physical labor people often associate with these trips, but we did intentionally spread the gospel to needy hearts, which is at the crux of every Christian mission. And, in turn, we have been blessed by those with which we came in contact.

I knew God had led me to Cornerstone University, but I didn't know why until this tour. I rediscovered what it is like to praise God through artistic excellence. Being able to worship with all of Chorale, knowing that all of our hearts have become one in worship has truly encouraged me and reminded me why God has called me to where I am.



The experience I had on tour was one I will cherish forever and surely never forget. It's amazing what God can do with your heart when you just let Him be in control. Often times, I think that I'm doing pretty well, living the Christian life correctly. In reality, I'm just going through the motions as a mediocre Christian. Tour has shown me that there is so much more to being a Christ follower. I found myself judging others, gossiping, and having a bad attitude throughout the beginning of the trip. I was specifically annoyed with one or two members in particular. Little did I know, there was a lot going on behind the scenes. I now view these specific people in a different light and it's so much easier to get along with them. This tour gave me the opportunity to meet new people like the couple we stayed with on Cape Cod. We had a great talk about gossip and how toxic it can be to any relationship. I am now connected with them through Facebook and am looking forward to staying in communication with them. I'm very thankful for this chance I had to not only see amazing places like New York City, Boston, West Point Military Academy, and Pittsburgh, but also to meet followers of Christ all over the East Coast.



For the past couple years I felt as though my heart had turned to stone. I would walk through day after day, see everything in two dimensions, and wonder if any of life was real at all. I questioned existence, and was searching for relief in a sea of a life gone wrong. I know I'm saved and I know Jesus is the Lord God, but for a while I was lost—barely holding on to the faith. It's easy to be skeptical when you see the hypocrisy of this world and the negativity of all the events of life that go wrong, but it is much harder to do something about it. In one of our tour songs Credo sings, "If you

want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change." Tour was not only a way to reach out and minister to people, but it was also a means of God ministering within my own soul, healing my struggles and problems. Tour was like waking up from a long slumber, and it's good to be awake.

Tour was exactly what I needed. I was taught more than I could have hoped to teach anyone in the audience through our music. I went expecting to change other people and I was changed myself. God has been teaching me to be “an instrument of peace” and to never fear. Never. He has taught me to ask him to satisfy the longings of my soul with Himself. He has taught me the importance of daily prayer and scripture reading. Every morning! He has taught me how serving is the only way to lift oneself up. He has taught me that choral music can be a ministry and can inspire shouts of “amen!” from the people. He has taught me to be humble, for pride is my closest enemy. He has taught me that joy can be expressed in every situation, all the time, because the joy of the Lord is my strength—it is not dependent on circumstances. Through the stories of others, he reminds me that his timing is perfect.



The host families showed immeasurable generosity, the music was a balm to my soul, the sights of gorgeous mountains and valleys made my heart sing, and the testimonies, laughter, and stories we shared will stay with me forever.

One of my favorite parts about the trip was being able to share the gospel through song. This concept hadn't quite made sense to me before this trip. I had never thought of a concert as a worship experience. Several people commented after nearly every performance, “Thank you for the worship service you have brought.” Those words meant a lot to me and also taught me that the powerful stories and images of our music prompt worship.



During tour, God blessed me in ways I never would have imagined. I am thankful that He gave me the opportunity to go on tour and sing in churches with rich history and beauty. I am thankful that he allowed me to get sick so that He could show me His great strength through my weakness. I am thankful that God placed me in Chorale and granted me the privilege of making music with such an incredible choir. I'm thankful for the friendships that have blossomed during this past week, for people who love me, encourage me and are my family away from home, for everyone's openness and honesty that was displayed during “sharings.” Most of all, I am thankful for a group of people whose love for God is so tangible that it drives my desire to know and love Him more.

I'm an odd combination of inner conflict. On one side, I'm proud. I struggle with being caught up in the compliments of others. On the other side, I'm terribly insecure. I worry if I'm good enough, loud enough, soft enough, if I work enough, smile enough, am humble enough. I'm in this weird balance between crippling insecurity, and shocking pride. My experience in Chorale is teaching me about humility, and humbling myself before Christ and before others—through the example of Chorale members, the music we've sung, and through receiving the encouragement from this Chorale family to try again when I've fallen short. I would not have the relationship with God that I have now if it were not for Chorale.



I could not be more proud of this group and to call them my family. They are open, honest, humble and passionate about Jesus.

Something happened that caused me to finally come face to face with God when I had been ignoring Him and hiding from him in my sin, subconsciously and consciously. I was finally honest with God during the prayer time before one of our concerts. He prepared me for worship with a clean heart. As we started singing I realized I was finally praising God in the way he wanted me to. I enjoyed each song's message to the fullest, enjoying every moment, every note. I thought, "I could

continue singing like this, with this kind of spirit, until my voice was completely spent and I would want to do more." When I asked God to take the log out of my eye, the fog of my sin, that had been putting the Holy Spirit within me in shackles, was lifted. I never felt more physically and emotional healthy, vocally strong, or mentally focused. It was a concert I will never forget.

Through this tour I have matured in my understanding of what it means to worship God through music. Subconsciously, I have thought that one cannot be deeply moved by God's presence through choral music. However, through this tour I have experienced God's presence in specific ways. I have seen that worship is not related to musical style. I am truly grateful to have been a part of this experience.

Each day on tour we read a devotion written by a member of Chorale. These devotions really spoke to me. I have been struggling with feeling insignificant and unable to do what God is calling me to do. The tasks He has been giving me seem impossible for me to accomplish. Many of these devotions became reminders that He will equip me. He will work through me as long as I am willing to let Him use me. It is my job to shine for Him. Where He leads, I will follow, and He will qualify.

