

Be Still & Know

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” – PSALMS 37:7A

The Quiet Place.

Just saying it gives you a measure of peace.

“We all need a quiet place,” Richard Lunsford says.

“They’re hard to find. It’s hard to get by yourself...

Everybody needs some quiet time, but it’s hard in college.”

Students at Abilene Christian University benefit from the faith and foresight of Richard (’55) and Dema (Atkins ’57) Lunsford.

“Well, God,” one student wrote, “I am here again, as usual, talking to You. Not that I mind. I enjoy being with You. You could say I’m anxious, a little down, but I’m optimistic. You give me hope. I’m not worried because I’ve seen Your face, and I know You are here.”

Even students in The Quiet Place for the first time feel its powerful influence. “This is my first time to The Quiet Place,” another wrote. “I could feel God’s calming presence the moment I sat down. I am tired. The past few days have been so awesome that words hardly do what happened justice. God has convicted my heart of the urgent need there is to listen. We need to be quiet and let God answer our requests.”

Lunsford presented his idea for The Quiet Place to the university’s Board of Trustees during planning for construction of the Mabee Business Building. “They liked it,” he remembers. “They decided to do it, and it turned out beautiful.”

So beautifully, in fact, that The Quiet Place also appears in Abilene Christian’s Biblical Studies Building, which opened three years later in 1989. The Lunsford family, including Richard, Dema, and their five children, provided funding for The Quiet Place in each building, and Dema designed the rooms.

Lunsford’s idea originated more than 30 years ago.

“I was talking to a friend of mine about how hard it was to find some quiet time for myself,” he said. “He told me, ‘Richard, go out in a pasture and find a quiet place to spend some time talking to God.’”

Lunsford once asked his son, Holt (’85), home from college, “How do you find a place for quiet time?” In the dorm, there isn’t any quiet place. Everyone needs a place for devotion, prayer, worship and meditation. There just wasn’t one.”

Now in addition to being a popular place for ACU students and employees, it’s a favorite attraction on campus tours for visitors.

“People are impressed with The Quiet Place,” Lunsford added. “They see that Abilene Christian is trying to educate the whole person. ACU is interested in a young person’s spirit as well as his or her mind. It adds another dimension we emphasize that others don’t.

“When you find a student who knows their spirit needs feeding, and they see a school like ACU, they know this is the place for them.”

Visitors even return to add their petitions and thanksgivings to the prayer journals.

On Aug. 17, 2002, one mother wrote, “Dear Father, our last child we leave today in this place. You’ve prepared it for him. You’ve prepared him for the future. Oh, God, help him to choose good friends and good paths of service to You. Thank You, Lord, for the great blessing he’s been to our lives. May this ACU experience be the best part of his life and the beginning of a lifetime of living for You. Keep

him strong of body and faith. Thank You, Lord, for his precious heart and mind. Give him peace and confidence to learn and seek You even deeper. I love You, dear awesome Father.”

The Quiet Place in each building includes a foyer, pieces of art, a fountain, windows looking out into a small garden, and six individual



STEVE BUNMAN



STEVE BUTMAN

rooms accommodating from one or two up to six or eight people. Dema designed for each room a unique atmosphere with distinctive furniture. One has an old school desk, and one includes a cross made from mesquite wood by Lunsford and several of his children and grandchildren during one Christmas holiday.

The two featured pieces of art are “Come Unto Me,” a decorative glass window at the entrance to The Quiet Place in the Mabee Business Building, and “I Exalt Thee,” a statue in the foyer of The Quiet Place in the Biblical Studies Building.

“Come Unto Me” features symbols of Christ, including open, welcoming hands. The Lunsfords’ idea for it came from a similar stained glass window in a restaurant they visited. On a nearby wall, framed text refers to the symbols on the glass and says, “Jesus Is... The Rose of Sharon, The Bright and Morning Star, The Way, The King of Kings, The Alpha and Omega, The Good Shepherd, The Lamb of God, The Lion of Judah, The Lily of the Valley. And He bids all men, ‘Come unto Me.’”

A visit by the Lunsfords to the Nashville home of a friend, singer Barbara Mandrell, inspired “I Exalt Thee.” She owns a similar statue, and the Lunsfords asked the sculptor, Russell Faxson, to make a statue for Abilene Christian.

“It’s very appropriate,” Lunsford said. “It helps set the mood when you go to The Quiet Place.”

In the room with the mesquite wood cross, visitors read a poem, “He Grew the Tree,” donated by another Mandrell fan. Its concluding lines read, “He grew the tree that He knew would be used to make the old rugged cross.”

L.F. Perry from the Lunsford’s hometown of Olney, Texas, supervised construction of the soft overflow water fountains. William R. Waugh (’59) provided the gardens. The Quiet Place also includes prayer journals, prayer boxes, and framed pictures of Richard and Dema with an accompanying tribute from their oldest son, Raymond (’79).

Lunsford said members of the class of his youngest son, Will (’89), suggested the prayer journals. In each room students and other visitors may write their prayers to God. The previously blank pages are now filled with genuine, creative, intimate peeks into the lives of the students. There are prayers of confession, thanksgiving and petition.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything that reveals the heart of the students like those prayer books,” Lunsford said. “I just love to read them. We go over to Abilene every once in a while to replace them.”

One of the Lunsfords’ granddaughters, Cara West (’04), an ACU senior, also monitors use of the prayer journals to tell her grandparents when more books are needed.

Dr. David Perkins, associate professor of accounting and finance in the College of Business Administration, often uses The Quiet Place early in the morning to pray and read the Bible, and he, too, has been touched after reading the journals.

“When I first moved here I read some of the prayers,” he said, “and I was reminded that every student has a unique, personal situation – positive and negative. It was valuable to me to see that students aren’t just a name on a paper, but have a personal life. It’s a neat place to have access to for quiet reflection.”

Bryan Brokaw (’05), junior from Abilene, uses The Quiet Place for study between classes and for small group prayer.

“I love The Quiet Place,” he said. “I like quiet when I’m studying.”

Diane Best, an ACU employee since 1999, visits The Quiet Place on breaks from work to relax, meditate and read the Bible. “Once in a while I go and all the doors are closed,” she said, “so I know it’s being used by the students. It’s a beautiful place. We’re fortunate to have it in our building.”

The topics, penmanship, length and emotion of the prayers are as varied as the people on campus, who come each semester from across the U.S. and about 60 other nations. Several languages also are represented, and the prayers are

addressed to God,
Father, Master, Savior,
Friend, My Gracious
Lord, Hi Jesus, Hola
Padre, Pops, Most
Holy Awesome

Lord, Holy Comforter,
Abba, Lord Almighty, Most Precious Savior, Daddy, Lord and Provider, and Oh My God.

There are prayers of joy and pain, prayers of thanks and questions, prayers of sin and hope, prayers for family and friends, prayers of tears and smiles, prayers of debt and riches, and prayers of people alone contemplating their very existence.

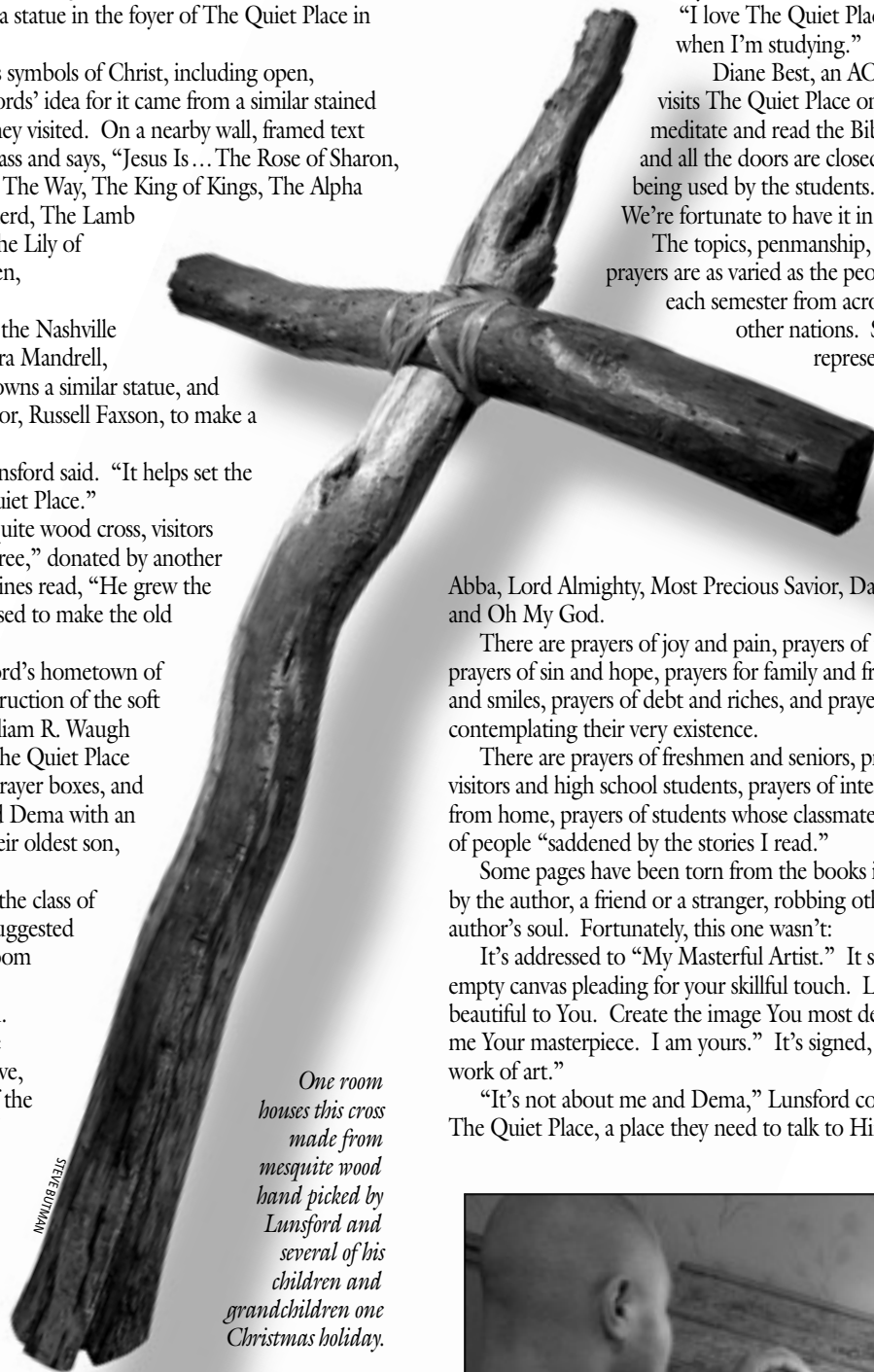
There are prayers of freshmen and seniors, prayers of Lectureship visitors and high school students, prayers of international students far from home, prayers of students whose classmates have died, and prayers of people “saddened by the stories I read.”

Some pages have been torn from the books in The Quiet Place, perhaps by the author, a friend or a stranger, robbing others of a glimpse into the author’s soul. Fortunately, this one wasn’t:

It’s addressed to “My Masterful Artist.” It says, “My life is but an empty canvas pleading for your skillful touch. Lord God, make me beautiful to You. Create the image You most desire for me. Make me Your masterpiece. I am yours.” It’s signed, “Your unfinished work of art.”

“It’s not about me and Dema,” Lunsford concluded. “It’s about The Quiet Place, a place they need to talk to Him.”▲

– GARNER ROBERTS



One room houses this cross made from mesquite wood hand picked by Lunsford and several of his children and grandchildren one Christmas holiday.

STEVE BUTMAN



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JASON JONES

“Thank you, Lord, for a place like this!” – Anonymous

Excerpts from prayer journals in The Quiet Place:

Lord, I love this place. It is one of the places where I feel You and Your peace... I always need you, Lord Jesus. Be with me. Make my decisions. I need that guidance right now. I love You for everything You've done for me. Reel me in, Father. Use a shepherd's crook if necessary, but pull me back in. I love and need You everyday.



Lord, you have always been there for me even during the times when I nailed You to the cross over and over again. May I always serve You and seek Your will for my life above all else.



Dear God, as I read through this book, I recognize some of the same feelings I have felt in the past. School started yesterday, and I know in my heart this is where You want and need me to be. Not in Hawaii, but here with You and Your people. Guide me in my ways, oh Lord, show me the way. I put my entire trust and faith in You. I give You my life. Mold me and make me into the Christian woman I should be.



Dear gracious and heavenly Father, please smother Your servant who has poured out her heart on the preceding pages in your loving kindness and give her the peace that only You can bring. Thank You for dying on the cross for her and my sins that they could be washed away... Please help me to find a church home here, Father. There are plenty of people who know the good Church of Christ churches in the community, but, Lord, You know that I am Baptist, and I ask that You would point to me the Baptist church that You would have as my home.”



God, are You listening? Do You still care about me? I have indulged myself in immoral ways and refused to face the fact that punishment was sure to come. Now I lie in the gutter with no one to lift me out... Please give me strength or comfort me with Yours. Lord, I can't stand on my own... My eyes flow day and night with never-ending streams of tears. Please remember me. I cry out for Your mercy. I need you.



Here I am, all alone in The Quiet Place, alone with You. Father, I know that You love me, and I know that You never give me too much to handle, but right now words can not express the pain I'm feeling. You've always taught me to lean on You and trust in You for everything.



Lord, I know that You hear our prayers and understand all of our cares that we can not even express in words. Please, Father, renew my spirit and fill me with Your knowledge. I know that You have great plans for me. Please build me spiritually so that I will be a worthy tool for You to use. Please show me the planks in my own eyes that I need to remove. I have decided that I need to focus on my relationship with You instead of being the social butterfly that rarely even talks to You at all. Please forgive me for all of the days that I have failed to worship and pray to You.



To my Father, You know I have never really written in a journal before and kept track of my emotions, but by reading this I have realized it can make

a deep impact. Lord, I have made some pretty stupid mistakes... Please pray for a close friend of mine. Lost her baby at 17 weeks. She is deeply struggling both physically and mentally. Depression weighs heavy on her heart. Their phone has been disconnected, thus making it more difficult to encourage her. Lord, comfort her and give her a peace that passes all understanding. Soothe her soul and mend her heart. Enable her to see past her hurt and look upon what an encouragement she can be.



God, You are so beautiful. Your radiance shines through this school so much. I see You in so many people here. God, I praise Your holy, powerful name. I almost can't believe that You, the same God who created the world and universe, listens to me and You care about the silly, petty things in my life... I know that You put me here on this earth in Abilene to glorify You. You did not put me here so that I can live my own life. You want me to serve You and to bring people to You. Please help me to realize this every day and in every situation that I'm in. God, You have blessed me incredibly. What more do I have the right to expect?



God, I'm angry. I have no idea what to do or where to go, and I have a hard time really talking to You about it so maybe I should just write. For three years I've been trying to figure out what to do. I thought I had figured it out when I figured out what to study, but I hadn't. I feel like everyone around me has some calling to some ministry or job, and I have nothing... Where am I supposed to be?



Let Your light be seen in my eyes. I love You more than words can say. My heart beats for You and the promise that You're coming back. I can't wait. I pray for the future and all that lies ahead. I can't believe You love me for me. You are amazing, and I am truly blessed. Words are not enough to tell You how I feel so listen to my heart.



Father God, so many things are on my heart and my mind that I don't know where to start. This semester has been so long and hard. I've been so sick that it's been hard to do anything. All I want to do right now is cry because I feel like such a failure. You know everything that's happened, and You know how betrayed I feel by my friends right now. It seems like You're the only One who wants to spend any time with me... Please give me a love for school. ACU is great, and I know that You are the reason I'm here so please let me enjoy being here.



Dear Lord, I know it's been a long time since we've talked. But please hear my cries for help. I am so confused. I want to start school here in the fall. I think I'll have a great time.



O God, I love You so much. Thank You for loving me even when I walk all over You. Thank You, God, so much for Mom and her wisdom. She is truly an angel sent to me. She has always told me other people have the same problems I do, and after reading all these prayers and hurts, I believe her. God, You have given me such a passion for family and children. I pray, God, You give me patience and wisdom to wait for the one You are preparing for me... Thank You, God, for being my Father when mine has failed for the last 19 years. I know that Your love exceeds his, but, God, please let him love me like I so deserve. Please help me to not carry this bitterness any more. It has completely worn me down. Please help me to be confident in Your love.

[ADDED BY OTHERS:]

I prayed for you.

I prayed for you and your father. God loves you.



Mom and Dad are pretty harsh these days. They're more concerned about my financial situation that I am. And, of course, hearing about it every day makes things worse. I'm very close to broke. I might have enough \$ to pay my rent by March 1. Who knows? But then I have to pay the credit card bill, the electric bill, the speeding ticket I just received... Is this the price we pay to be human?... So, God, I know You're out there. I do not test Your power, but I beg you to give me comfort. Protect me.



God, I want to start off by thanking You for the many blessings in my life. You are an awesome God. I love You so much. I also want to thank You for the wonderful roommate I have. We have become close friends, and we are helping each other grow spiritually together. I have a lot on my heart right now. I am missing my Mom all the time. Nov. 20 will be seven months since my Mom was killed. I know she is in a much better place. She is with You, but I want to talk to her so bad. I know she can hear me, although a lot of the time I want to hug her, hear her voice, see her wink at me and say, "I love you," when I walk through the door.



Father, You are so incredibly awesome. I give You all praise, honor and glory today and forever. You have lavished on me so many great things and people. You have loved me forever and always will. I just humbly bow down to you, Lord. Thank You for showering down on me with Your spirit... Thank You for this place, this quiet place, where I can come, just come to You. I love You so much.



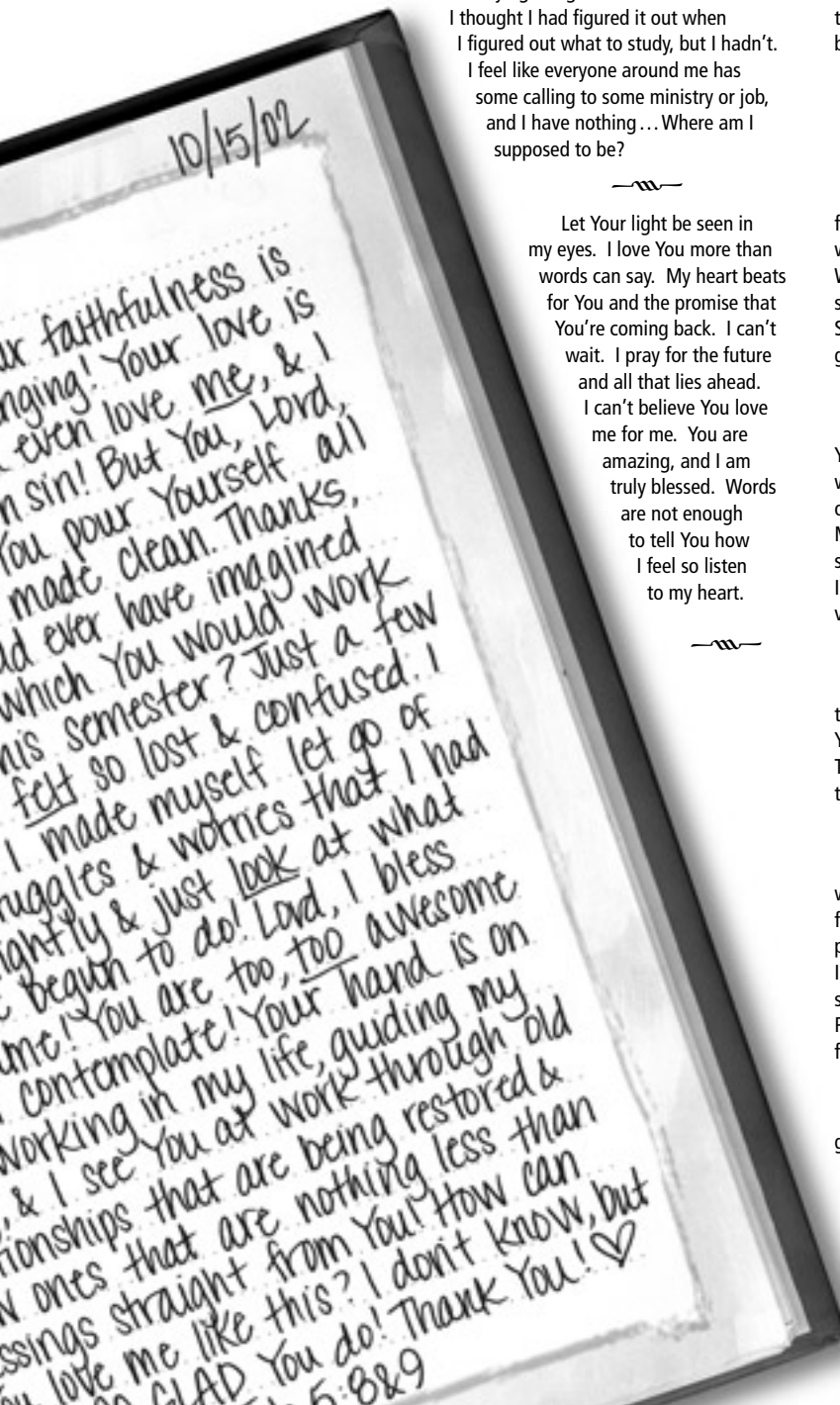
Dear Lord, I come to this room in search of peace. I am feeling small and weak lately. It feels as though I am caught up in something that is moving too fast, and I can't keep up. I was so overwhelmed I didn't even know what to pray for. I picked up this journal and read some of the prayers. Now I think I know what to pray. Lord, You have provided Your concern for even a small sparrow. There are so many of us who are feeling small, lost, weak and afraid. Please help us find strength to endure. Help us to remember to turn to You for guidance and for love.



Dear God, I pray that you will watch over me and my wife as we are about to graduate. I'm anxious about the future, but at the same time am very nervous and scared. Please watch over us and bless us as You always do.



I ask that You speak through me this summer as I go to lead young ladies to You. As I lead devotionals and live with them daily, I ask that every one of my actions be encouraging and something that these girls need to see. Let me be a living example to them. Speak through me every day.



Father God, I was just out skating, trying to get better at it, when I fell and decided to come in here. One small room, one small man, and one great God. Lord, I'm a little scared. I don't seem to care about some of the important stuff in my life. You brought me to ACU and have provided for all my needs. I feel that I'm letting You down. Please bring me peace, direction and purpose. Don't let me waste or throw away the gifts that You have given me.

Lord, two down, one to go. I'm working on it. Help me.
[ADDED BY ANOTHER:]
You can do it. Look how far you've come. Keep on going.

Dear God, thank You so much for today and the cool breeze. I love this time of year. God, the semester is winding down, and things are coming to a close. Please, God, give me strength to finish strong, and please, God, help me to attain my goals for the semester. I have tried to work so hard this semester.

Dear Lord, as I skim over some of these, I realize I'm not the only one who feels troubled. Lord, I miss my family and friends back home. I miss them and high school where the teachers tolerated my nasty habit of procrastinating. Please help me accept that I've moved to a new stage in my life.

Good morning, Lord. Well, the unimaginable is going to happen in just under 12 weeks. Graduation always seemed so distant, and now my future is staring me in the face. It has been an incredible four years though I could never have imagined all the things I have been a part of. I also could never have imagined all the friends I have gained and lost during this time. Dear Lord, please help me to keep these memories special, and please put Your guiding hand on all of my friends. Also, no matter what happens, after I become an alumni please help me to remember I am on this earth to serve you.

Thank you, Lord, for this beautiful day.

Well, I thought this book was filled, but I see God left some space for me. First of all, Lord Jesus, I thank You for the many blessings You have bestowed upon me. Thank You for hope, strength, love and endurance. I could praise You all day for every blessing I have received. Lord, now I come to You for help. I know I just got here a day and a half ago, but I pray for happiness, friendship, success and love... Please let good things come out of being here at ACU.

Oh God, I've never known a peace like what I'm experiencing now. It's been so long since I've felt close to You as if You were standing beside me.

Sometimes I want to look up to You and scream, Lord. I just want to yell out one word: Why?
[ADDED BY ANOTHER:]
Be patient. This moment will pass. True joy is found in God, but that comes with pain, too. Hold on. Live for God. Peace is ours.

And, Lord, while I'm lamenting, what is the deal with the radio stations in this town?

Dear God, what a beautiful day, even though it's freezing. Lord, did I tell You how incredibly happy I am to have You in my life, to be living every day for you? Thank You, Lord, for loving, blessing and taking care of me. Thank You for making me who I am... God, I know You have such big, incredible plans for my life. Please, God, show me what they are.

God, as You know, I am having a hard time today. My heart aches as I worry about my future. Please ease my stress.

I want to know You. I want to see Your face. I want to know You more. I want to touch You. I want to hear Your voice. I want to know You more. In the secret, in The Quiet Place, I'm waiting. I'm listening for Your voice, pushing every hindrance aside, outta my way, cause I want to know You more.

Father, sovereign Lord, almighty God, there are so many things that I feel need to be said. Where do I begin? I'm finding myself wanting to be eloquent and poetic because I know that others will read this. But I really feel awkward and inadequate. I want so much right now to be what You want me to be. I want You to be proud of me. I want You to smile when You think of me.

I don't know why I'm writing in this book. I came in here to do chemistry homework, and I really don't know what I hope to get out of this. I just feel I need to express somehow. I'm very tired to the point of breaking.

Oh, this is such an awesome place to feel Your presence. I am here just visiting, but I feel like You showed me it for a purpose. I have slowly lost You in my life, and now after reading these stories I am coming back to You, Lord. I pray for all those who are suffering and that just need Your love. Help them to know You are there, and You can do anything that is in Your will.

Wow, God, I've never written in a book like this where other people can come and read my prayers, but I have been encouraged by the prayers I have read. So maybe there is someone who will be encouraged by my prayer. I have only been here at ACU for three days, and I leave tomorrow - I'm just visiting - but I want to be here... It's so incredible to see Your amazing love through the students here, and I want to be a part of that.

And then as I walked across campus in the fresh snow, I knew that You are the God You've always been, and it's OK to hope.▲



Amen