Finding Families

Tour de Filth

Street Eats
In third grade, I tried to run away from home. I was in trouble for some reason or another, and since I was the only child in the family with light-colored eyes, I patched the two together and came to the conclusion that I was adopted and my family didn’t really love me or want me around anymore. I packed my pink Lion King suitcase and started heading down stairs. My mother stopped me on my way out the door and handed me a piece of paper—my birth certificate. There in typewriter ink were her name, my father’s name, and my name. We sat down and went over it, and I eventually unpacked the pink suitcase.

I realize it's not always so easy. The birth certificate can serve as proof of disconnect as much as a proof of relation. For some, the names of the people on the paper don’t match the names of the people they live with or were raised by. Others wish the names on the paper were different than their own. And still others don't even have a birth certificate to prove anything.

The hard evidence of our relation to another set of people isn't always so file-able.

We ultimately call people “family” because of intangibles—people who understand the circumstances we’re in better than our own biological family might. Sometimes a group of friends feels like our closest family. Sometimes a sports team does, or a discussion group, or a magazine staff. We move in and out of these “families” with changing seasons and situations, sometimes on purpose and sometimes not.

In this issue of The Point, we look at families in light of this motion. We talk to individuals who’ve moved away from their biological families, and individuals who’ve moved towards people they share no blood with—all for different reasons. Examining the idea of adoption not only as an ideological movement but also as a physical movement helps us locate ourselves. When we “adopt a new way of thinking,” we don't just take on new information—we actually move from one mindset to another.

When we pay attention to these motions, we learn our place in the world. We know how close we are to some people and how far away we are from others, and we know how far we have to go to reach all of them, if we want to. We see the things that stand between us, and the things that connect us. And then we know which ways to go.
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A Muddy Memoir
by George Garcia

Finally, my three weeks of training—a dozen three-mile runs, dozens of hours of basketball, and multiple cans of Campbell’s Chunky Soup—would be put to the test. I had arrived at the 2010 Irvine Lake Mud Run, ready for the physical adventure of a lifetime. I began to stretch, hoping my legs would be warmed up enough for the 3.8 mile run. After we posed for pre-race photos, the announcer called all the participants to the start line. He must have promised that the race would start “in 10 minutes” at least five different times, leaving me and the other runners in the first wave waiting in eager anticipation.

At last, the announcer started the countdown—ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, RUN!—and the first wave was officially on its way. Immediately, I felt the pain of my two-week break from running (thanks to a cold), and after the first small hill, my lack of training immediately kicked in. I decided to pace myself and use the first mile to warm up.

As I turned into the first straightaway (my first chance to gain some ground) I faced a difficult decision. All week, my friend Alyssa Calimpusan, who was also tackling the Mud Run, had been trying to persuade me to run with her rather than aiming for speed. Was I going to run for glory or was I going to stay alongside a friend and run for fun? Remembering that “two is better than one,” I quickly abandoned my hope for a record time and joined up with Alyssa.

There was a short stretch of pure running before we reached the first mud pit, which was neither what I expected nor anything I desired. It was very shallow, with muddy water barely reaching my ankles. I came out the other side without a hitch.

Overflowing with over a thousand outrageous runners, some decked out in even more outrageous outfits (tutus and Batman suits to name a couple), the Mud Run stretches a total of 3.8 miles of slime, muck, and filth. So what is it really like trudging through an endless pit of mud, only to find ten more trenches and a wall that feels the size of Mt. Everest straight ahead? We sent some of our finest to find out.
time we stopped at the second water station. Moments later, we were greeted by a rousing chant of “Biola!” and glanced over to see the Stewart Hall RD Garrett Shur and several friends waiting for a team of Biola alumni. They begged us for a quick picture and, unable to resist, we gave them our best Biola pose before refocusing on the path ahead.

We ran by Irvine Lake and entered a very narrow trail. Here, the mud became exceptionally deceiving. After losing my footing yet again, I was drenched in an especially unfriendly slime that smelled of cow manure. Every step I took proved exponentially harder than the last, and the mud sunk and slid beneath me, nearly dragging me into the lake itself. I finally passed this expanse and neared the back portion of the course. I “cleared” the final wall, only to realize I had used my foot to cheat at the top. So, I did what any respectable, well-cultured man would do: I ran back and vaulted it again.

The back end was probably my favorite section of the race. I came upon a series of small hills and pits, the first of which I dominated with ease. Unfortunately, the second pit proved much more resilient, and seemed rather reluctant to let me go. My foot became severely stuck in a deep quagmire, and I struggled for half a minute against both the mud and Alyssa, who seemed intent on pushing me all the way in. I ultimately broke free, only to spend twice as long attempting to mount the third hill, a war that took five painful battles to win.

The next onslaught of hills was even steeper, and may as well have been the Himalayas to my aching, mud-covered self. After ascending the first hill, I threw all convention to the wind and made a wild leap. As I splashed into the gaping crater of mud, I felt the immediate pain of regret—I had landed on a rock, and procured what looked like the mother of all paper cuts.

Nevertheless, I pushed on to the final obstacle, a pair of military-esque bear crawls. Having fully surrendered to the mud at this point, I dove headlong into the rivers of muck and swam through with bravado. A young bystander later deemed me the muddiest person in the race, an inspiring prize that made all the misery worthwhile.

At long last, in the race’s 58th minute, I made the final sprint for the finish, leaving Alyssa a few yards behind and crossing the line with conviction and relief. I later discovered that I had accidentally run with the elite group—people who’d probably trained a lot and had actually been running competitively, boosting my muddy ego and putting the icing on the somewhat messy cake. I took the pain and the layer of muck as my well-earned medals of pride.
The Idiot's Guide to Mud Running
by Chris Challender

This guide is written to the average person who is attempting to conquer a mud run—not just playing in the backyard after a rainstorm, but an official mud run race. Like, for example, the Irvine Mud Run.

Let's start at the beginning. The first thing anyone needs to know before entering an official mud run: a mud run is muddy. This may seem obvious, but your typical mud-runner doesn’t think about the physical effects the muddiness will have during the race. The mud really plays a big role in the amount of energy that a person has to exert, so it’s important to train with this in mind. The amount of mud varies from course to course, but a good mud runner prepares for the worst. The hardest part of training for mud runs on the West Coast is that it’s just difficult to come by large quantities of mud in Southern California. A good way to ensure you’ll be prepared—even during the dry season—is to fill a kiddie pool with potting soil and water and use that as a sort of treadmill.

The second thing you should prepare yourself for is the running. The second most difficult thing for me was that the run seemed endless, though the mud run course in Irvine, CA, is just 3.8 miles long. It wraps around an extremely windy and also steep, hilly section of a local lake. Your mud run course may look different—totally flat or all downhill, maybe—but either way, you’re going to have to run. The idea of running through mud at first sounds so fun that runners forget how hard running can normally be. If you can’t run a 5-K without needing an ambulance, you might want to start your training for your mud run far in advance. Download running plans from websites like Coolrunning.com, Active.com, or Dailyruns.com.

Now that we’ve covered the basics of a mud run—mud and running—let’s now look at other ways to survive while you’re actually running. To explain this properly I am going to take you through some of the highlights of my run in Irvine. Since this is the “Idiots” guide, let’s begin at the starting gate—or, really, let’s start when I was at the starting gate. You will be herded into a large group of people that range in athleticism from “round is a shape” newcomers all the way up to “exercise is my oxygen” sorts. After you stand in the starting gate for what feels like an eternity (nerves muddle your sense of time) you will make your way up some hills. In those hills, you’ll find yourself staring down at some very murky, stagnant water. Here you have a decision to make. Somewhere, in your conscious or subconscious mind, you’ll have a thought somewhat like this: “If I walk in that water, I’m going to get all wet and have to run in wet gear.” Do you chicken out and tiptoe around the edge of the puddle? No! You’re a mud-runner! You plunge right in!

You then proceed through the muddiness along with all the other people of all other shapes. The communal slodging ensures that the mud gets not only all over your feet, but splashed all up and down your body as well. After some very difficult, soggy running, you will at some point come to another pit of mud. No need to fret this time: you already look and smell terrible. You plunge in again, then continue running (or, sloshing) along the marked trail, considering whether you are extremely tired and whether your body is actually supposed to feel like it is dying cell by cell. This will happen again and again until you’re past all the pits, the number depending again on the course you’ve chosen. Don’t let the feeling
of death stop you. Once you move past it, you will see the most beautiful, breathtaking thing you’ve ever seen in your life: the finish line.

The finish line looks great and all, but let me warn you: you got so caught up looking at it that you didn’t see the 400 yards of mud you have to crawl through to get there. Do not be fooled by the track designers—they had no mercy while planning the race, and made the last stretch the hardest on purpose. In my run at Irvine, the last 400 yards were a series of hills and mountains that you had to climb up and run down the other side to the warm and slimy embrace of—you guessed it—more mud.

Here is a good point for a second warning: you can’t be concerned about the grossness of the mud half as much as you should be concerned about the danger of it. The pits at the Irvine mud track, especially those deep ones in the last 400 yards, had large rocks hiding at the bottom of the pits. Unless you’re a masochist—which, given that you’ve signed up for this run, you very well may be—you may not appreciate scraping your hands and knees on these rocks. If you do though, enjoy it—the scars you’ll have will be marks of glory, if you make it to the end.

Though this last quarter-mile will only take 5-10 minutes, it will feel like the longest hour of your life—longer than the rest of the run combined. All your training and all your sacrifice—all the hours on the track and all the detergent you’ll use to try and get the stains out of your clothes after the race—will seem worth it if you can just get through this last section. Right as you exit the final pit, you’ll find yourself just yards from the finish line.

At this point there is only one more thing to do, and I’m sure I don’t even have to tell you to do it: Cross the finish line! Let your legs collapse and fall into the arms of a muddy fellow runner—everyone’s too dirty, happy, and glad to be alive to mind a round of big mud hugs.

Now you have successfully been trained on how to complete a mud run. Get out there and get muddy!
Giorgio Armani once said, “There is no virtue whatsoever in creating clothing or accessories that are not practical.” This speaks true for a college student, whose extra cash tends to go towards books. In this day and age, anything can be fashionable if you have the confidence to wear it. With the advice of Armani and a few everyday staples, college students can have a sense of fashion that is practical for every occasion and easy on funds. Black skinny jeans and a white V-neck tee-shirt are the perfect essentials, and the starting point for great style.

Basic Brights
Match a colorful scarf with bright flats for quick and easy accents.

Just Dandy
Even guys can accessorize—use a fedora to play up a fun cardigan color.

Lazy Lady Lumberjack
Get cozy at a late-night study sesh with overlaid flannels, Ugg boots, and your favorite mug.

Paul Bunyan Meets Tony Hawk
Vans. Hat with earflaps. Enough said.
Fun and Flexible
Blazer-style sweaters and sleek boots let you move straight from study hour into social hour.

Smooth in a Snap
Layer on a vest when you’re rushing from your last class to work or a night out.

Presto Polish
Bangles, long necklaces, and dangly earrings give street-worthy glam to a comfy outfit.

Simple Swag
Top a blazer with a beanie to create casual class.
Since They’ve Been

Eagle Alumni Share What They’ve Done
Since They Left the Nest
Earle Patriarco

The audience, settled eagerly in tiers of velvety red chairs, cranes their necks forward as the spotlights illuminate the stage. Earle Patriarco, playing the lead role of Figaro in “The Barber of Seville,” fills his chest and curves his lips, releasing a long, rich note of baritone vibrato. It is Saturday night at the Metropolitan Opera, where the best seats sell for $400 and faithful patrons flock to watch the world’s most eloquent vocal performers on one ornate stage.

Patriarco, a critically acclaimed vocalist in opera houses across America and Europe, has pursued his talent intently ever since he began studying vocal performance at Biola University. Here he established a simple philosophy, which he has continued to apply since his years as an undergrad: “Your experience is what you make it,” Patriarco declares. “It’s not dependent on anyone else but you,” he advises. “Don’t wait for an opportunity to come to you, go find that opportunity where it is.”

As a junior at Biola, Patriarco kept busy serving as a singing waiter at Miceli’s Italian Restaurant, cramming his spare time with homework, working other odd jobs to help pay the rent, and spending time with his new wife Kristin. He was living out his philosophy of initiative with conviction.

This strategy for success, coupled with a resolute work ethic, has propelled Patriarco through the difficult and elite world of show business. After Biola, Patriarco pursued a master’s degree at USC on full scholarship, and eventually made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 1996, as Ping in “Turandot.”

Before long, Patriarco moved to New York and performed in several major roles, including Figaro in “The Barber of Seville,” Belcore in “Elisir d’Amore,” Falke in “Die Fledermaus,” and Marcello in “Bohème.” In addition, he landed roles in national venues.
such as the Seattle Opera, the Welsh National Opera, and the Los Angeles Opera, as well as multiple European houses such as the Bastille Opera in Paris, the Berlin State Opera, and the Teatro Real in Madrid.

Patriarco has performed in concert alongside symphonies such as the Montreal Symphony, recorded “Carmina Burana” with the Atlanta Symphony, and collaborated with the conductor Antonio Pappo and other illustrious opera singers for a production of “Manon,” for Electrical and Musical Industries, Ltd. Both of these recordings were nominated for Grammies, and “Manon” won the 2001 Gramophone Award for Best Opera (equivalent to an Oscar for classical music). In January, Bizet’s “Carmen” was filmed at the Metropolitan, with Patriarco in the role of Dancaire, and was screened in movie theaters across the country.

In a small bio on Biola’s website, Patriarco recalls the impact of his undergrad years: “Biola has an incredibly fantastic music program. Its solid musical preparation helped me to be the best musician that I could be and gave me opportunities to perform.” Out in the public sphere, he shines as a beacon to others in a culture of class and high art.

Mike Strauss

University of Oklahoma physicist Mike Strauss, who does research at particle accelerator labs in Chicago and Geneva, Switzerland, tries to talk about his job in ways fit for non-PhD ears: “We smash protons on other protons,” he says, “and see the debris, and understand the building blocks of matter. It relates to understanding the origin of the universe—it’s fantastic.”

Since stepping off Biola’s campus with his B.S. in physics, Strauss’s evident passion for science has propelled him through his field. In graduate school at UCLA, his interest in quantum mechanics and subatomic physics drove him towards research at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC). He earned his Ph.D. in High Energy Physics in 1988.

Following graduation, Strauss continued working for SLAC while conducting post-doctoral research for at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In 1995, Strauss, his wife, and their two children moved to Norman, Oklahoma, where he has since served as a physics professor at the University of Oklahoma. He also works for Fermilab (near Chicago) and The European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN (in Switzerland).

Half of Strauss’s work involves investigating the smallest structures of matter; the other half he spends teaching bright new minds at the university. Strauss now teaches classes with as many as 300 students, but still remembers his own experience at Biola with clarity—student government, forensics competitions, hunts for the Biola Egg, intramural football, working at Eagle’s Nest, serving as an RA in Stewart. He even recalls waking up to an indignant goose in his dorm room, caught at the La Mirada park and brought there by his floormates.

Most of all, Strauss remembers his tremendous spiritual growth as an undergrad and the encouragement of students and faculty in the Biola community. One professor at Biola even organized a group of three students—Strauss included—to form a mini-course in upper division statistical thermodynamics, using his office as a classroom.

“My professors had such an influence on where I am today,” he remarks. “It’s given me a great understanding of the influence I have on my students.”

In his career, Strauss confronts the notion that science and religion conflict on every level and ought to remain distinctly separate. Studying the origin and design of nature has only deepened his convictions about the Creator God of the Bible, as both science and Scripture reveal an interweaving pattern of intelligent architecture.

Strauss often speaks at universities, churches, and organizations such as Reasons to Believe, where he brings his expertise to the argument for Intelligent Design. He argues that the connections between science and Scripture empower Christians to love God completely with their heart and mind without sacrificing either. Examining the compatibility between the Bible’s explanation of the universe and the witness of science enables him to trust God even more in other areas of life.

“There are days when I have questions,” he says. “Can I trust God? Is he really there? On the days my subjective relationship with
Christ is struggling, I can stand on this rock of objective evidence.”

Rooted in the firm foundation that Biola provided—one that combines excellent academics with unwavering faith—Strauss is equipped to shape and cultivate the great minds of the next generation with a seed of an even greater truth: that God is the true author of all science.

Michelle Burford

O Magazine, the publication founded by American icon Oprah Winfrey, celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. After ten years, Michelle Burford, a New York City journalist who served as one of the magazine’s senior founding editors, continues to shape the influential collection of stories and advice every month. But Burford hasn’t always worked for what some would call the most influential woman in the world.

Back in 1994, Burford had just graduated from the English program at Biola University. She quickly became an assistant editor at Single Parent Magazine, a small, start-up publication, before moving on to contribute to several other magazines in Colorado. In Colorado, Burford’s hunger for larger-scale publications grew until she eventually enrolled in the Radcliffe Publishing Course (now the Columbia Publishing Course), a summer boot camp designed to train journalists for New York publishing.

Burford recalls long days of work as a journalist followed by nights selling shoes at Sears to earn money for the program. Through this course, Burford met an editor at Essence—a New York based magazine, who, impressed, proceeded to hire her shortly thereafter.

Once in New York, Burford immediately began making contacts. She had been a fan of “The Oprah Winfrey Show” since her early teens, so when the concept for an Oprah magazine began to take form, Burford excitedly came alongside the project, eager to help launch the idea into reality.

Burford now works primarily as a contributing features editor for O Magazine, as well as a freelance journalist for outside publishers. One of her most recent projects has been collaborating on the book “Words That Matter,” a compilation of meaningful quotes from past issues of O Magazine.

During her time as a journalist in New York, Burford has met countless celebrities and political figures (including five U.S. presidents) and traveled the globe as well. She has lived with a family in Morocco, ridden a camel across the Sahara Desert and even island-hopped around Greece as part of her contribution to the book “Let’s Go: Greece.” Of all her experiences, her favorite was a trip to South Africa for an O Magazine interview of Nelson Mandela in his home.

In 2007, Burford graduated with a master’s degree in Community Service and Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and although she has no current plans to that direction, Burford constantly finds ways to incorporate her new degree into her work as a journalist. When she thinks about the future, she leaves room for surprises.

“I have goals, but I hold them loosely,” she explains. “If we hold on to our goals and plans too tightly, we don’t leave room for them to evolve, and I believe dreams evolve.”

Certainly, Burford’s dreams have evolved dramatically since her days as a writer for Biola’s student newspaper, The Chimes. She certainly serves as an example to ambitious Biola students that, with the right drive and the right foundation, anything is possible.
Food trucks have a mixed history. For some, they bring back summery childhood memories of running to the curb at the first few notes of the ice cream truck jingle. For others, food trucks offered tasty, cheap eats from sources of questionable sanitation. But today’s food trucks take gourmet fusion food to the masses, especially the streets of Los Angeles.

Using social networking tools like Twitter and Facebook, food trucks have created a loyal customer base, tweeting their next location for hungry followers. Food trucks offer more than just food—they offer adventure. With a few bucks and an empty stomach, we took to the streets of Los Angeles, embarking on the food truck hunt of our lives. These are our top ten.

Shrimp Pimp Truck
From “Drunken Shrimp Tacos” to the “Greek Shrimp Sandwich,” the Shrimp Pimp Truck’s entire menu revolves around these mini swimmers-of-the-sea. With great taste and excellent balance, the Shrimp Pimp Truck does come at a price, costing $8 for fish and chips. Shrimp Pimp offers pretty good taste, but smaller portions at an expensive cost.
**The Burnt Truck**

The Burnt Truck flourishes in the world of sliders and offers something unique to its customers: a deliciously messy eating experience. Selling a variety of mini-burgers, from the standard cheeseburger to panko-breaded chicken katsu, Japanese curry, and pickled radish, the chefs create new takes on standard comfort food.

Kris Lau, a happy Burnt Truck eater, chowed down on the Vietnamese pork cheeseburger and sloppy joe slider—his favorite. He also mentioned that the Burnt Truck’s food, despite its name, is fresh. Watch out, though, their sloppy joe sliders might slide right out of your fingers and into the gutter.

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**Dogtown Dogs**

“I guess guacamole makes everything taste better,” says Mike Kang, a customer at Dogtown. The “California Dog,” made with avocado, arugula, basil aioli, tomatoes, fried onions, and a light vinaigrette makes most customers salivate. Dogtown Dogs lets you put anything and everything on your dog.

The Dogtown truck offers hot dogs with all sorts of condiments, like fried jalapenos and fennel slaw. Their “Spicy Angeleno” wraps the hot dog in bacon, served with tomato sauce and salsa fresco, and topped off with jalapenos. They even cook up a “Morning Commute Dog” with a bacon-wrapped hotdog topped with a fried egg. This truck was good, though it doesn’t especially stand out.

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**Ludo Truck**

Fried chicken with a dash of French influence—though trés gourmet—is standard fare for the Ludo Truck. Head Chef Ludo Lefebvre, who has appeared on the Today Show and Iron Chef, created this food truck as an offshoot of his restaurant, Ludo Bites. The restaurant transforms dumpy diners into temporary gourmet restaurants, and the Ludo Truck does the same—but on wheels.

A trained chef in France, Chef Ludo sets the bar high for other gourmet food truck chefs. Once you take a bite, you’ll know: this is not fried chicken from the Colonel. You may even shout “Savoreux or délicieux!”—but don’t get too hyped up yet. At $7 for two fried chicken strips, the price might burst your student budget. After your taste buds settle down and your wallet loses a few pounds, the Ludo truck might seem a little overrated.

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**Great Balls on Tires**

Meatballs may be an Italian food staple, but Great Balls on Tires (GBOT) offers a culturally diverse menu, from their Indian inspired “Ballywood” meatball to their Korean “Ball Gogi.” And GBOT doesn’t water down their flavor.

Tim McArdle, a GBOT staff member, says that their food has “a wide variety of complex and whole flavors.” However, priced at five bucks for two meatballs, passersby Jackie Chui and Emily Wong admitted that GBOT may not be the best ‘bang for your buck.’ Regardless, they got right in line again for a second helping. Despite the small portions, Great Balls on Tires offers great taste.
The Tastymeat Truck
Typically known for the unique mix of beef and lamb in their signature “Bamwich,”
the Tastymeat Truck attracts customers with more than their catchy sandwich names and
cute flying pig logo. Tastymeat Truck’s conveniently wrapped sandwiches and reasonable
prices are perfect for on-the-go eaters. We recommend their $4 Feta cheese fries—to die for.

Tropical Shave Ice Truck
On a hot SoCal day, the Tropical Shave Ice Truck will quench your parched throat.
Jenny Lieu described it as “Amazing! The texture reminds me of real Hawaiian shaved
ice—almost like halo halo [a Filipino dessert].” They create their own cane sugar syrups,
and carry 20 unusual flavors (from Guava to “Tiger’s Blood”). They even combine syrups
to produce signature flavors, mixing strawberry, mango, and peach to create “LA Sunset,”
and coconut, lilikoi, and strawberry to make “OC Lava.” At $3 for a small shaved ice cone,
the Tropical Shave Ice Truck will not freeze your funds.

Vizzi Food Truck
What do you get when you fuse gourmet techniques with California coastal
flavors? Surprisingly delicious Vizzi Food Truck’s White Truffles popcorn, which sells for $5 a box.
The name sounds peculiar, but just one bite
and you’ll be saying, “Who knew throwing some oil and green stuff on popcorn would
taste this good?” Even Chad Fuñe, one of
the truck’s owners, swears by them, saying,
“Those are addicting—seriously addicting.”
In addition to their sides, Vizzi offers
other gourmet entrees, such as black skillet
chicken sliders, tomato and basil salad, and
Wagyu beef and broccoli—all of which look
and smell delicious. With their unique take
on food, Vizzi Food truck produces perfect-
ly balanced Southern California cuisine.
**Komodo Truck**

Known for his fusion of world flavors, Head Chef Erwin Tjahyadi has worked on high profile projects such as the Sony Playstation Launch Party and the Annual Pacific Design Center Party. Piled high with meat and other goodies, each of his tacos costs only $3.

The “Komodo Taco,” with seared skirt steak and Jalapeño Aioli, is enormous, so make sure the Southwest Corn Salad doesn’t slip out and stain your shirt. The tender meat is precisely seasoned, shocking your mouth with such a rich mixture of textures and flavors that you’ll wish you could eat it over and over again. Their “Garlic Fries,” however, far surpasses their well-known tacos in flavor. For tasty food at a good price, capture the Komodo before it slithers away.

**Kogi Beef Truck**

A trailblazer in the gourmet food truck world, Kogi Beef Truck holds the number one slot in the LA food truck scene. With its unique Asian-flavored tacos and innovative use of Twitter, Kogi sparked a trend in LA food culture.

With five food trucks roaming the streets, the Kogi Beef truck offers convenience at an affordable price. Their inexpensive $2 tacos and $5 burritos lure lines of famished customers. And we were no exception.
by Carizza Sioco

In casual chats and formal interviews, this familiar exchange often frustrates Biola students, who patiently correct, phonetically sound out or eventually spell B-I-O-L-A for people who don’t attend this SoCal university.

One prospective student attempted to direct a taxi cab driver to Biola, only to end up at Loyola University, 30 miles away.

“Biola University.”
“Where’s that?” they ask.
“La Mirada.”
“Where’s La Mirada?” they ask.
“Oh … it’s near Disneyland.”

“People think that we’re a Catholic school, a strict Bible college, unaccredited—the whole nine yards,” says Joshua Pardy, Senior Admissions Counselor at Biola, who deals with some common misconceptions of the school. “I’ve also heard that we’re a school for biology, because ‘bio’ is in the title.”

Although amusing, these misperceptions muddle the school’s identity. Biola boasts over one hundred years of equipping its students to “impact the world,” but still gets mistaken for an amphibian-dissecting, hyper-disciplinarian institution lacking educational accreditation.

James Gomez, a 27-year-old former resident of La Mirada, grew up close to Biola, but never really knew what was going on behind its red brick buildings and immaculate lawns. Most people in his neighborhood didn’t bother trying to understand Biola because there was and still is little communication between city and school.

Gomez describes La Mirada as a close-knit community, where most people know each other and have lived there for generations. However, Biola, taking up 95 of the city’s 5000 acres, hovers outside this intimate circle.

“Everyone knew where Biola was,” Gomez says, “but as far as any real knowledge … no one had it.”

Besides monopolizing parking spaces around the city and sometimes paying a parking ticket or two, Biola students have little interaction with the community. For most students, La Mirada is Biola—the city exists because of the school.

One reason for the disunity between Biola and La Mirada has been the misperceptions non-Christian community members have of Christian Biola students. Some Biola students hesitate to share that they go to a Christian university because they don’t want the stereotype that comes with it—a Bible-thumping, Ned Flanders-type with little purpose in the world.

Katie Twigg, a junior Bible major, is enrolled in Cal State Fullerton’s Army ROTC program, surrounded by peers who do not attend Biola. Their reactions lead her to feel that Biola students are known more for what they aren’t allowed to do.

“As a Christian, they expect things out of you,” she says.

But, Twigg notes, when Christians don’t meet those expectations, “They label you as
“Biola students should be the most amiable and welcoming citizens of the La Mirada community. They should start relationships with others rather than waiting for city residents to invite them to dinner.”

hypocritical and look down on Christianity.”

Many Biola students experience the same barrier when they interact with non-Christians in the community. By trying to fit a “Biola mold,” students end up presenting an impersonal, robotic facade. Perceived as tailor-made products of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Biolans seem like outstanding theology students, but mediocre neighbors.

Such a perception, says Ricky Norris, a recent Biola grad who still lives in La Mirada, is the exact opposite of the one Biola should produce.

“If we have been raised in a setting where people care about us at Biola, and people invest in us, how could we not want to bless the community around us?” asks Norris. “It should come naturally from what we’ve been blessed with.”

Norris has befriended local gas station attendants and the owners of a neighborhood grocery store. He approaches the community through small acts, not self-conscious attempts to portray a “perfect” Jesus imitation.

For Norris, Biola students should be the most amiable and welcoming citizens of the La Mirada community. They should start relationships with others rather than waiting for city residents to invite them to dinner.

Some argue, however, that self-focus during the college years prepares you to become a better citizen later on. The university seeks to “equip men and women for Christ-centered public service.” The school shapes students for the future, and some take this to mean that students can wait four years before actively involving themselves in the community.

Kevin Cram, Resident Coordinator for Tradewinds Apartments, believes that Biola students’ inward focus is natural for a college setting and does not warrant strong disapproval.

“A university is an inclusive thing. You live on campus, you have class on campus, your social life is on campus, you eat on campus,” says Cram. “A university system isn’t always set-up to push people outside of that.”

Even so, an anti-social attitude doesn’t line-up with Biola’s strong commitment to community. Biola should not be known for its exclusivity, but also shouldn’t be known as an overbearing “holier-than-thou” community presence. The happy medium lies in simple kindness towards local community members, and not in half-hearted performances that only contribute to the unhealthy Christian stereotype.

“Realize the impact Biola already does have on the city,” says Cram. “If you’re at the grocery store and there’s an elderly lady, just offer to help her. I think that Biola could definitely do more to benefit, to bless, to contact the local city of La Mirada.”

Biola University and the City of La Mirada coexist mutually, but separately. Tom Robinson, City Manager of La Mirada, would like to see Biola embrace the community that surrounds it more fully.
so distant? The hearts of the City and the University both lie in the right place, but act independently of each other. It cannot be by chance that such parallel worlds, hearts, and desires exist side by side in this community.

“The spirit that you find in Biola reflects much of what’s best about La Mirada,” says Robinson.

The partnerships that Robinson encourages already have foundations set for them. Coincidentally, the University and the City’s mission statements echo each other.

La Mirada’s mission statement declares that the city strives to cultivate open communication. Biola’s mission statement urges its students to make a dialogue of faith to make a difference in society.

La Mirada is proud to embrace its rich diversity, while Biola students are to enthusiastically respect and reflect the diversity of God’s kingdom.

The main focus of La Mirada is to improve the quality of life by attending to community needs. Biola’s mission is that each person who is a part of Biola’s community can make a difference in families, churches, vocations, and other communities for Christ’s kingdom.

The similarity of these visions begs the question: how can Biola and La Mirada be so physically and ideistically close, but remain

“There are partnerships that can be explored between the community and the university, that bring people together,” said Robinson.

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Biola University President Dr. Barry Corey (aka DBC) shares something very intimate with this university: comical anonymity. And he likes it.

“I usually tell people outside Biola that I’m faculty, or I do administration work,” DBC says.

Rather than flaunt his title as president, DBC – like the rest of us – just wants to be himself. When people probe further and discover DBC’s real identity, they suddenly become nervous, defining him as a president rather than a person.


Driving to work one early morning, Corey passed Alicante Road, busy thinking about all the things he had to do. Unfortunately, he also passed a policeman, and Corey was doing 50 in a 40 mph zone.

Lights flashing and siren wailing behind him, Corey shamefully pulled to the side of the road—directly in front of Biola’s soccer field on La Mirada Boulevard. After handing over his license and registration, Corey realized students were most likely driving past. What a president.

He chuckled at himself, and when the policeman asked for an explanation, Corey answered that he was the president of the very university across the street from them, and that he was very embarrassed. The policeman laughed and told Corey he couldn’t possibly write him up. DBC admitted it was his fault and deserved the ticket, but the cop simply laughed again, handed over his license and registration, and let him go.

Despite wishing for anonymity in moments like this, Corey believes that in university business, “the chief spokesman of a university has to be the President.” He represents Biola near and far—from La Mirada City Council meetings to international exchanges with donors and leaders.

“I want to tell Biola’s story,” DBC says. “Not for our own sake, but for the sake of our mission.”

Though many people wonder what the heck Biola, or Viola, or Loyola, or “that Christian college” even is, Biola’s public image is better than twenty years ago, DBC says. Biola is a weird anomaly in private Christian universities—not represented by a specific personality, not pushing a certain political agenda, not defined by a distinct denomination. Students may wonder how anyone, anywhere, is ever going to know about the school where they spent four plus years. It’s one of US News and World Report’s “up-and-coming universities” that hasn’t yet arrived.

“We are a regional Bible Institute becoming an internationally-known university,” Corey says.

Corey believes Biola will have its time in the limelight, but as it waits for stardom, he tells students, “Make yourself receivable. We need to be more interested in building community than building walls. We don’t want to have steel-toed boots that kick Jesus at our culture, but we want to be feet-washing examples of Christ.”
College. What is it for? Getting a top-notch education so that you can start a successful career? Yes. Being stretched by books, professors and ideas? Most definitely. But at Biola, it's even more. This is a place where, in an all-Christian community, you will be prepared for an influential future. At Biola, you’ll find a community that teaches, learns, and thinks deeply … and then does something about it.
It’s not uncommon to hear of families who have adopted one or two children, but senior Joel Hasemeyer’s family has gone far above and beyond that—they’ve welcomed 10 children into their family, in addition to their three biological children.

When Joel was in third grade, his mother (an elementary school P.E. teacher) gave out free tickets to a roller skating rink to students who earned “athlete of the week.” When a foster child in her class won a ticket, he gave it back, saying, “I live in a foster home and nobody’s going to take me.”

The stark reality of children with no families hit Hasemeyer’s mother hard. They began the process of adopting two young sisters. A month later, the family received a call that the girls had a brother from a different father, and agreed to take him in as well.

“In only a month,” Hasemeyer says with a laugh, “our family went from five people to eight.” This was only the beginning of what would be a long, rewarding journey for the Hasemeyer family, whose 13 children now range in age from five to 23 years old.

While the Hasemeyers and many other families like them have undertaken the responsibility of providing for children who lack stable homes, there are still many more children left adrift. In September 2009, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services classified 114,556 children in the United States as “waiting to be adopted.” The term refers to both children whose parents are deceased and children whose parents either will not or cannot care for them, but does not differentiate between those situations. Dr. Donna Thoennes, a Torrey Honors Institute faculty member who adopted two daughters with husband Dr. Erik Thoennes, speculates that because U.S. officials use multiple terms—foster child, orphan, homeless—to classify minors without parents, tracking down exact numbers and creating statistics can prove difficult.

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“...”

Effects of a System

Of those children awaiting adoption, many are caught in the foster care system. Some of those children may age out of the...
system when they turn 18 without ever having found a family. Horror stories of children helplessly tossed between a series of unstable, neglectful, or abusive foster homes are abundant, and Hasemeyer can attest that there’s a sad amount of truth to such stories. Two of Hasemeyer’s adopted siblings, biological sisters Gabby and Rosie, were removed from their parents (who were drug users and physically abusive) and placed with the Hasemeyers. The girls soon went back to their biological family, however, after their parents somehow managed to win back custody, only to be removed again and placed in another foster home.

“They’d been in three homes, and that’s just really hard for a kid,” Hasemeyer says. “So my parents really fought to get them back in our home.”

While Gabby, who was less than a year old at the time, has no memory of the tumultuous process, Hasemeyer says that the ordeal took its toll on Rosie. “She has some hard times with trust and just feeling secure where she is in a home,” he says, but adds that with love and support, she is slowly overcoming those issues.

Jesse and Elle, also biological siblings, came to the Hasemeyer family with their own foster care stories. Jesse had aged out of the system and was living on his own, but Elle, 14 at the time, was trapped in an abusive foster home.

“There were a lot of things going on in that house,” Hasemeyer says, “and [Jesse and Elle] were afraid that if they said anything, [Elle]’d be taken out of that foster home and placed in a worse one.”

After pulling some strings, Hasemeyer’s parents were able to have Elle placed in their home, and adopted both her and Jesse. Both siblings, Hasemeyer says, have flourished since then.

The Unwanted

But what about the wards of the foster system who, unlike the adopted Hasemeyer children, are never placed in loving homes? Hasemeyer offers some insights as to why so many children continue to fall through the cracks, explaining there are a handful of factors that deter potential adoptive families.

“It’s hard enough to find foster parents for any kids,” he says, “but things like age, race, medical issues, mental issues, those things make the possibility of them finding a home even less likely.”

The Hasemeyers have adopted several children who fall into those “difficult” categories. Levi, age 5, and Josh, age 8, both have medical problems directly resulting from their biological mothers’ drug use (Levi’s issues include severe facial deformities); Jonah, age 12 and Hispanic, and suffers from autism; Luke, age 15 and African-American, has multiple medical defects.

Jamie Sinnott, a social worker with Bethany Christian Services (the nation’s largest adoption agency), explains that the biggest problem with foster care and adoption is that in both cases, some families aren’t prepared for the extent of the challenges that bringing in a new child entails. Sinnott believes that foster families who neglect their charges generally do not do so because they are malicious at heart, but because they failed to adequately prepare themselves for the responsibility.

“There are some people who go into it for the wrong reasons,” she says, “but for the most part it’s people who just aren’t equipped. These are normal people who just are pushed to the brink of their stress. At the root of it, it’s not that they’re bad people.”
Facing the Challenges Firsthand

Senior Adrian Gonzalez’ story is not quite what most people would consider the “conventional” adoption account. When he was born, his mother was in prison, and his father had long since disappeared. He lived with one of his aunts in South Central Los Angeles for the first three years of his life, until his mother was released and regained custody.

The next few years of his childhood remained far from ideal, however. His mother struggled with alcoholism, and her boyfriend physically abused Gonzalez and his siblings, eventually driving Adrian's older brothers and older sister to leave home. His sister was taken in by one of their aunts, but his brothers, one of whom was a gang member, simply disappeared. Gonzalez has not heard from either of them since.

At age 12, Gonzalez' life became even more tumultuous. His mother was diagnosed with cancer, and while she was hospitalized, Gonzalez was left alone at home with his abusive stepfather.

“I went to my mom in the hospital and I told her how difficult it was to be at home, that I didn’t feel safe.”

He once again went to live with his aunt for a year. During that period, Gonzalez began to attend church for the first time, but even as regular church attendance became part of his life, he struggled not to rebel against the rules—which he never really had while living with his mother—suddenly imposed on him.

Eventually, Gonzalez returned to his mother, who was trying to recover at home rather than in the hospital.

“I didn’t want to be there again,” Gonzalez remembers. “At that point, I thought anything was better than home.” His mother made arrangements for Gonzalez to live with a family she knew in Texas, and during the year he spent with them, his performance in school, which he says had been sub par up until then, began to improve. Upon his return, he found his mother had become deathly ill. It wasn’t long before she passed away.

“I felt like I could show my mom that I could be a good kid, that I could get good grades,” Gonzalez says. “I could have been a good kid all along and I never got to show her that.”

Finding Family

Although Gonzalez admits that growing up without a father was difficult, he says it was the death of his mother that was the hardest piece of his childhood to cope with. To make matters worse, he was once again without a home, tossed around between family members. Eventually, Gonzalez’s eldest aunt—who is unmarried and has a low income—took him in for good. Despite his scattered past, his stable place as an adopted son has allowed him to grow and flourish.

Ten years after learning they would be unable to have any children of their own, the Thoenneses turned to adoption. A missions trip to India solidified their decision to commit to an orphaned child.

“I feel we often forget that there are orphans in the world,” Dr. Donna Thoennes says. “We forget that they exist, we forget that we can do anything about it, so seeing them face to face just broke my heart and changed my life.”

After their second trip to India, the Thoenneses began pursuing adoption, finally welcoming an eight-year-old Taiwanese girl (who they named Caroline) in 2008.

“She’s delightful,” Thoennes says, smiling proudly. “We just love her so much.”

A year later, the Thoenneses hosted a six-year-old girl whose American name is Paige. Paige came to the U.S. with group
of children from an orphanage in Taiwan, with the hopes of finding homes. She stayed with them during the two week tour and, six months later, they adopted her.

Because of both girls’ difficult backgrounds, each of their transitions into the family was challenging, Thoennes says.

“We were definitely ready for a challenge,” she says. “I had read probably two dozen books on what to expect when adopting.”

The biggest struggle for the girls, she says, was believing that their new parents loved them unconditionally after having experienced rejection from their biological families. They still struggle to realize that they don’t have to compete with each other for their parents’ love.

“Even when I say ‘I promise that I love you and I’ll be your mommy until I die, I promise,’ they still doubt because others have broken their promises to them,” Thoennes explains. “But I see progress, and I believe that God can bring them both to the point where they really have confidence that that’s true.”

Seeing Clearly
Those on either side of an adoption story attest to both the trials and the joys involved in the process of adding to a family. While some have experienced more of the bitter and others more of the sweet, all the individuals in this story are confident of God’s hand over their situations.

“I can’t compare God to my dad, because knowing His nature, I know God is totally different from my dad,” says Gonzalez. “I’m really thankful to know God, because although I’ve suffered through this, God has amazed me with how He’s guided me and kept me together. My dad was absent, but God was never absent.”

Hasemeyer has seen God’s love through his parents’ love towards all the children they’ve fostered and adopted over the years. While ministry is a deed for most people, Hasemeyer says, it’s a way of life for his parents.

“My parents really believe that Christ calls us to defend the needy, the ones who have no hope. God gives hope to the hopeless, so they’re acting on behalf of ‘the least of these,’ he says, referencing Matthew 25:40. “It’s this love that God has instilled in their hearts to give a home to kids who wouldn’t have a home.”

Despite a renewed focus on orphans in the Christian community, the need (both nationally and internationally) is still great. For Biola students, though, the ideas of family and adoption are not immediate concerns, and not every family feels called to adopt. Thoennes suggests other ways to respond to God’s command for families for adoption.

“Not everyone is called to adopt,” Thoennes says, “but everyone is called to show compassion to the needy, to orphans and widows, and that can look very different for different people. I think we’re being unfaithful when we sit comfortably and choose not to think about all the needs in the world and how we might use some of our resources to meet some of those needs.”
Everybody’s Adopted

Hasemeyer believes that caring about orphans not only appropriately responds to God’s commands, but also mirrors the way that God accepts anyone and everyone who comes to Him.

“The concept of adoption is such a beautiful metaphor for what God has done for us—how He welcomes us into His family, into His kingdom,” Hasemeyer says. “We haven’t done anything to deserve grace, but God gives it to us. My parents adopt these kids who have these issues, these problems, these things they need to work through, and my parents are just continually reaching out to them. That’s how God works with us—He gave us the ultimate sacrifice, sacrificing Jesus’ life to welcome us into His family.”

In addition to the 10 children that the Hasemeyers adopted permanently, they continued to foster other children — Hasemeyer estimates six or seven throughout the years. It was seeing those children come and leave, Hasemeyers says, that was the hardest part of growing up with a family who took in children. He says that for the most part, the new members of their family blended in well, struggling mainly with ordinary childhood problems like sharing, but “it was really hard,” Hasemeyer says, “as a kid, to call another younger kid a brother or sister when they have to leave.” Most of those cases, he says, were instances of the child’s biological parents coming back for them.

As for the children who became permanent members of the family, however, Hasemeyer says, “Some of them still think that everybody’s adopted, and so to adopt another kid is just a new, exciting thing. They love each other so very much like a family loves each other, like, ‘I love you because of who you are, and I don’t expect any more or any less.’”

How You Can Help

—Financially supporting missions work involving orphans at home or abroad
—Sponsoring an underprivileged child through an organization like Compassion International
—Participating in missions trips to orphanages (like Biola’s Tijuana Ministry)
—Providing practical support for adoptive and foster care families like babysitting
—Devoting specific prayer towards orphans and families who can and do adopt them
by Autumn Brim

That night in his living room, Grant Gunther did not expect to face such a difficult decision. As he sat down on the couch, his mother told him that his church had brainwashed him. She needed to do something to protect him. She saw an ultimatum as necessary—the thing any good mother would do, a single blow that would force him to sever his ties with those radical Christians.

"My mother told me I had to quit working at my church," recalls Gunther, a 22-year-old Biblical studies major at Biola. "Or, I had to move out."

At 19, Gunther faced two options: his family or his faith.

Gunther’s parents had been Christmas-and-Easter churchgoers, yet they never made the faith their own. Gunther, however, committed his life to Jesus Christ as a senior in high school. He expected his parents to be apathetic, and was not ready for his mom’s threat. Despite the shock, he told her, "I’ll pack my bags right now."

The conversation took five minutes, and Gunther went to pack his belongings. His mother sat silent and stoic, watching him go. Everything was quiet—no drama, no yelling or accusing from either of them.

"I was at peace because I knew I was doing the right thing," Gunther says.

At Biola, a number of students and faculty are the only Christians in their families and their families’ reactions to their faith vary. Some students find that their families support their decisions. Others, like Gunther, are forced to choose between following their parents and following Christ. Whether their parents disapprove or outright disown them, they are all “spiritual orphans” seeking
Christ without the support and guidance of their immediate families.

The severe sacrifice spiritual orphans make when leaving their families is frightening and almost incomprehensible to Biolans who have grown up in Christian homes. But Gunther believes that his decision to leave his family was necessary.

“It was a sacrifice I knew I had to make,” Gunther says. “The Bible speaks about suffering for Christ’s sake. Hardship and persecution are just part of the ballgame. You’d have to be a fool to think hardship isn’t part of Christianity. Christ suffered for me and it’s my privilege to suffer for him.”

Barbara Miller, Director of Spiritual Life at Biola, knows many students who are the first in their families to follow Jesus, and she witnesses the difficulties they face. To comfort these students, Miller points to Luke 18:29-30: “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

“Jesus promises that He is worth the sacrifice that comes with following Him,” Miller says. “Not only is there a reward in the age to come, but also in this time. That can give a student great comfort, knowing that the sacrifice will bring great blessing that far exceeds the initial loss of family understanding and support.”

“This blessing still seems far off for spiritual orphans trying to begin their spiritual journey without their parent’s guidance. They weren’t raised on the usual fare of Sunday school and nighttime prayer. While many Biola students and faculty have church-going families and an understanding of church culture encoded like their DNA, interacting in a church community is unfamiliar to spiritual orphans.

Such was the case with Natasha Duquette, a professor of English literature at Biola. Raised by an atheist father who held tightly to Darwinism, she learned that everything, even emotions, were the result of biological determination. She heard about God at a youth camp, and her beliefs began...
to evolve. When she first read Scripture, she felt that she had finally found the life answers for which she had been searching. By the time she was a young adult, she had fully committed her life to Christ.

“I felt His presence saying, ‘I am real,’” she says.

But when she went to church and began observing the people and relationships there, she felt out of place.

“Church culture was alien,” she says. “All of it was so new.”

Like Gunther and Duquette, spiritual orphans go to church and find Christian communities without their parents’ direction. The difference between their families’ culture and the way that church community members relate to one another can be very different. Spiritual orphans, unlike most people who grew up regularly attending church, do not have a real parent encouraging them to persevere when trying to understand the new words, phrases, beliefs and people they encounter in church.

“It is hard not to have that guidance from your parents,” Gunther says. “After all, they are the people who guide you in other areas of your life.”

In the Christian community, pastors preach sermon after sermon on the unity of the family, the role of parents in spiritually directing their children, and children submitting to their parents. Young spiritual orphans may take this to heart for their future families, but they still need an immediate, welcoming community that will take on the role of their absent parents. Gunther takes solace in knowing that while he was “orphaned” from his biological family, he was adopted, at the same time, into the local and universal family of God.
“I was always aware that I was never alone,” Gunther says. “I knew that the body of Christ was my true family.”

At the church he began to attend, Gunther met a man named Eric Williams. They became such close friends that Gunther refers to him as his father.

“He has shown me what it means to be a Christian man.”

When spiritual orphans find a church home, however, they still have to deal with the severed relationships in their immediate family. They may share memories, familial culture, and traditions with their family, but their worldview centers on a completely different set of principles.

Tim Richardson, a Biola film major, has experienced the disparity between his family’s beliefs and his own firsthand. After coming to Christ at youth camp, he discovered that his parents, though they supported his decision to join the church, held Christianity at a cautious arm’s length. He clearly remembers the day he overheard his father say, as Grant Gunther’s mother had, that the church had brainwashed him.

Richardson came to Biola knowing that his parents would not understand the spiritual transformations he would experience here. They would not partake in the first communion service at Biola, nor would they send him off with prayers and Biblical wisdom. Even today, he can’t speak with them about spiritual matters.

“You come home from church or Biola and you can’t share all the amazing stuff that you have learned,” Richardson says.

The salvation of his family is the one thing Richardson wants most. He hesitates, though, because, like everyone, he doesn’t have all of the answers. He also doesn’t want to push them away. He tries to show his growth by imitating Christ in his everyday actions and attitudes, but trying to be a perfect example of Christ can quickly become overwhelming.

“‘Spiritual orphans don’t need to be perfect in order for Christ to be revealed to their family,’” reminds Miller. “‘The same grace that brought them to Christ is the grace that will keep them there. And it is that grace of Christ in them that reflects His glory to others.’”

Though spiritual orphans may not feel as equipped in Scripture knowledge or theology, they demonstrate to their new church family what it means to be set apart for God. Forced to stand alone, outside the circle of their non-believing family, they have trusted God for stability, sustenance, and salvation. They have chosen Christ over comfort, despite losing relationships with their parents, siblings and relatives. In making this choice, however, they have found comfort in different places—the new “families” of believers and the enveloping love of God they find in the Christian life.

“God has really worked in my life,” Gunther says. “The Christian life is not easy. But it is a good life.”
Brainstorming story ideas? Check. Interviewing sources? Check. Cramming eight members of the Point staff into one vehicle for nine hours on a road trip to a tiny, rural town named after our university? Check.

Photographer Kelsey Heng originally suggested writing a story about the town, located near Fresno. The staff jumped on the chance to take a mid-semester road trip to experience our municipal namesake firsthand. On Saturday, October 16th, we embarked on a crazy escapade to the town called Biola.

We chose October 16th—the date of the town’s annual Raisin Day Celebration (yes—raisins). We gathered at 6 a.m., groggy, but excited. All eight of us climbed into a hulking red SUV named Clifford. After we powered up on donuts and coffee, we hit the road for real. We also hit L.A. traffic. It was going to be a long drive. We spent most of it picking favorite songs on our iPods and watching Friends on Callie’s computer, but as we neared the town, our anticipation grew. What would Biola be like? How big would it seem? And what happens in a Raisin Day celebration? Soon enough, we found out. Our staff takes you through the town of Biola firsthand:
What was your first impression when you arrived at Biola?

**Callie:** I realized you can’t have any pre-conceived ideas about Biola. You won’t believe it until you’re there. It was like stepping into a whole new world. It’s not what you expect—it’s got such a unique feel to it.

**Stephen:** Wow! This is absolutely beautiful countryside. Very liberating, definitely not what I had in my head. Where’s the Caf? (laughs).

**Matthew:** It was dusty. Most of the roads were either made of or covered in dirt. The houses were definitely old—cracked paint, worn steps, sagging roofs—and some of the buildings looked legitimately ancient.

**Josh:** I looked for all the things to do. And then I realized I was already looking at them.

**Sarah:** All thoughts that Biola the town might have some resemblance to Biola University went out the window. Goodbye university, hello small town.

What are the residents of Biola like?

**Karissa:** Most of the individuals we spoke to were very open and genuine. They are hard-working and very loyal to each other.

**Angela:** Most of them were really friendly, and they loved hearing that we were from a university near L.A. that their town was named after. One woman even told us her life story and how her family came to be permanent residents of Biola.

**Matthew:** They were relaxed, mostly quiet and somewhat reserved with strangers, but jovial with each other.

**Josh:** People in Biola seemed to be very communal, by necessity. They were very personable.

How did Biola get its name?

**Karissa:** A Biola University alumni loved his school so much that he created a town named after it, just four years after the University’s establishment. The pastor of their church is a Biola alum as well.

**Angela:** We also heard something about migrant workers and an offshoot of Biola University and some other confusing stories.

**Kelsey:** Our school was going to place a satellite campus there, since at one point [the town of Biola] was a thriving agricultural town. But then, for many reasons, the town kind of died out.

What is Biola known for?

**Callie:** Raisins! The vineyards stretch out around Biola, and all the grapes lay in the hot sun, turning to plump, juicy raisins.
**What is the Raisin Day Celebration?**

**Karissa:** Every year the town gets together to celebrate their famous raisins. The entire town lines the streets to watch a parade. It’s one big backyard “partay,” and the people loved every minute of it.

**Stephen:** From the locals’ perspective, as I found out, it is the one day that everyone who is affiliated with Biola comes ‘home’ to celebrate.

**Matthew:** The Raisin Day Celebration is Biola’s annual festival for their staple export. The parade is surprisingly impressive, chock full of a few dozen ornate cars and floats, several notable figures from the area, and of course a full-size Raisin-Man mascot.

**Kelsey:** The festival is a Biola tradition, occurring nearly every year since it began in 1939. This year was the 54th annual celebration.

**What was the funniest or quirkiest thing about Biola?**

**Callie:** Biola is just a quirky place as a whole. That’s the perfect word for it. The whole experience was quirky and remarkably memorable—from the fields to the town center to the horses parading down Main Street in the parade.

**Angela:** I’m not sure I could pick one especially funny or quirky thing about Biola—the whole idea of there being a town named Biola was pretty funny to begin with. I loved the fact that there was a Raisin Day Queen, and that the street through the town was called “Biola Avenue” just like it is in La Mirada.

**Sarah:** The closest restaurant was in Fresno.

**Josh:** They take their raisins very seriously. On the brochure it said, “May your raisins stay dirt free and dry.”

**What are some of the town’s landmarks?**

**Stephen:** Their “Jesus Mural,” which also featured MLK, Mother Theresa and Gandhi. Very diverse.

**Sarah:** Raisin fields, raisin fields and more raisin fields.
Karissa: Biola is well-known for the water tower and church, according to the all-knowing Google Maps. Nevertheless, I think Biola should be recognized for something that cannot be seen: their heart. There is something to be said about a town when the community all knows each other, or when people can say that generations of their family have grown up there. Although Biola is technically in an economic crisis, they know that material possessions are not everything. It was beautiful to see Phillip Cervantes (Chamber of Commerce president) describe the economic state of the town with a smile and a sparkle in his eyes. They have a lot of hope for the future.

What is your favorite memory from the day?

Angela: One of my favorite memories happened near sunset on the way back to Biola after a Starbucks break in Fresno. We were driving along the highway when someone yelled to stop—so we all tumbled out of the van and randomly ran through an orchard. We took pictures with golden light streaming through the trees.

Matthew: My favorite memory by far: when we explored the site of a massive abandoned warehouse, arrayed with shattered windows and a fleet of petition papers tacked to the wall. We couldn’t resist making a bold exploration into the cavernous interior. Inside, we discovered a myriad of graffitied walls, giant pieces of siding and wooden pallets, and the decaying wooden skeleton of an apartment, complete with a small kitchen and dinner table.

Kelsey: For me, Biola was all about the people. Biola is the type of place where relationships matter most of all. The town has charm, but really, it’s who you’re with that makes it what it is. And for us at the Point, it was a bonding adventure in a place that naturally brings people together.