



Alumni Spotlight **CORY TREGO, CLASS OF 2010**

by Paul Q. Fisher, M. Ed.

“I’m going for a run in the morning. I’ll probably wear my cross country spikes because of the snow on the trails. The cross country skiers should have been out, and they pack down the snow.” On a day when most of us would pack it in, Cory Trego (’10) makes plans to head out for a challenging run in the bright glory of a snowy winter morning. It’s not surprising for the bookish Eagle Scout raised in a family that adores spending time in God’s creation. CCS teachers recall Cory’s quiet manner and disciplined work ethic, but underneath the serious exterior was an adventurous, outgoing leader with a genuine appreciation for people, God’s best creation. We could see it in class when he’d break out in a beaming grin and let out a silent yet hysterical laugh in response to the antics of his peers.

Upon graduation, Cory went to Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA, where he studied fish and wildlife biology and management. While the environmental science program at Lycoming was the main attraction, Lycoming’s location in the northcentral woods and hills of Pennsylvania was appealing to Cory. For Cory, being outdoors provides inspiration, “As a biologist, I see the complexity in nature and uncovering complex natural processes in the ecosystem reveals how awesome and powerful God is.” While creation speaks to the sheer power and creativity of God, it is what it says about our relationship with God and His creation that speaks most powerfully to Cory. He explains, “He created this beautiful

complex creation and appointed us to have dominion over it—it’s a huge responsibility—and, wow, He must really care about us if He’d create something so beautiful for us to live in. Even though it’s fallen and not as perfect as it could be, what it will be when it is redeemed, it blows my mind. If this world is fallen, I can’t begin to imagine what is in store for us.”

Because of his gratitude for the gift of creation and his love for people, Cory is committing his studies and career to stewardship of natural resources. His focus is on fresh water ecosystem and watershed management. While we sometimes stereotype environmentally conscious people as being overly concerned with the rest of the world and not enamored enough with people, Cory sees stewardship of the environment as an expression of love for people. “Water’s important. There is so much work to be done—city waterscapes, improving water quality and health. Water links entire regions together through shared basins—it’s neat to get people to think about the way they are related to the water and how their actions impact a much larger area of society than they typically think about. Where our impact ends up—it’s profound.”

In essence, he says, the way we treat the environment is the way we are treating people. “I think of the livelihood of all of the crab fisherman and others on the Chesapeake Bay—being a steward of the waterways is a great calling.” He wants to share his joy in

creation with others so that they might experience the glory of God and the blessing of His gifts in the natural world. “Teaching people how to value and cherish their resources is one of my missions. I want to spread my passion for those ecosystems and preserving their ecological integrity.” It’s challenging, however, in a culture of selfishness and entitlement. Cory says most people aren’t interested. It’s tough to have the conversation with people who don’t understand the essential nature of his work. He explains, “The entire economy of some regions in many ways relies on our waterways—from sewage treatment and disposal to runoff to coal mine drainage—most of our challenges are from anthropogenic sources.”

Despite his acknowledgement that people are largely responsible for the trouble our waterways are in, Cory does not look down upon nor condemn his fellow citizens. Rather, he longs for them to appreciate and be blessed by essential understandings that could change their lives. While at CCS, Cory’s class participated in mission trips to Appalachia, where waterways serve as gray water channels for entire communities. He envisions making a difference there. “It’d be cool if in areas like Appalachia, Kentucky we could educate the local people, they could begin to enjoy their waterways, which they have seen as a scar on the landscape for so long. They’ve given up on the water and can’t even let their kids and grandkids play in the water—they know it’s not safe. They should have their waterways back to enjoy with their children and grandchildren. There is so much to be done.”

For now, though, the work Cory needs to do is graduate school. His top choice for his master’s degree program is West Virginia University, but he has already been accepted to his second choice, Syracuse University’s environmental science and forestry program. He has been offered a research assistantship which will cover all of his tuition for his master’s and doctorate degrees and will pay him a sizable stipend for his research as well. He is optimistic that WVU will make a similar offer. Either way, he is thankful. “Basically, I’m going to be paid to earn my degrees. Of course, I’ll need to be doing publishable research, but that’s exactly what I want to do.”

In fact, he’ll be doing some interesting research this summer with Penn State’s Earth and Environmental Science Department.



He will be researching the impact of Marcellus shale natural gas drilling and development on various snake populations and migration patterns. The snakes have had transmitter implants inserted. Cory will track their daily movements. The research started before the development of the Marcellus shale and has been in research for years.

As he wraps up his last semester of undergraduate work, Cory reflects upon his college experience and beams as he tells me about the people he has met, “People are just so incredibly interesting. I’ve always enjoyed the differences between people.” For the last two years Cory has been a leader in Cru, a program with Campus Crusade for Christ. Cru’s mission is one of evangelism and discipleship. When he first committed to leading Bible studies with Cru, it was intimidating. “I had never led a Bible study before, and doing it for all of these bright college students was scary at first. It really challenged me to study my Bible in ways I had not done before.” It wasn’t just leading Bible studies that challenged his new, independent faith. Being in a university setting where many students and professors were not supportive of his faith provided firsthand experience of what he was prepared for at CCS. He recalls, “Worldviews and Bible classes, especially my junior and senior years, really helped me to think critically about what I believed in light of what others believe. I was well-prepared for what I experienced in a secular school.” While the intellectual challenges to his faith were formidable, it was the interpersonal experiences that he feels have sharpened him the most, “I have learned to truly appreciate where people are coming from. It is so important for Christians to have compassion and grace when meeting different people with different worldviews. There is something to love about everyone, especially when we can appreciate their perspective.”

Perspective. It truly is powerful. To hear Cory talk about his experiences and his life is to hear a holy perspective. All of his experiences and his studies are interpreted in light of Christ’s mission to redeem His creation—both the natural world and the people whom He has made in His image. Studying biology and following snakes around the Pennsylvania woods become mission work for the Creator. We’ll look forward to hearing how God uses Cory’s unique gifts and passions to bless others through his research and work.

