I love pictures. They capture moments and make them live on forever. I decided to do this reflection through pictures and describe why they mean so much to me because pictures really do speak a thousand words. The expressions on people's faces, the scenes, the moods, and the memories are irreplaceable and express so many things. I will explain the pictures somewhat, but I really believe that the pictures are significant standing alone. I believe that they are pieces of art that need to be appreciated and interpreted. Just like the paintings of Monet, Manet, and Van Gogh, pictures envoke emotion. I would ask that you look at the pictures before reading my summaries and see if you can tell how each picture influenced my life. Some are easier than others, but all tell a story that yearns to be heard.
My sister and I used to run around the house singing Christmas hymns while gathering supplies to make a manger scene. I’m sure our parents just loved us tearing sheets off of our beds, sorting through all our stuffed animals to find the perfect ones to play each role, and dragging furniture from every corner to make a stable. Despite our mess making, our parents would gladly join in the fun and help us create the perfect scene. We would all wrap ourselves in sheets to look like Biblical characters and take turn playing each role.

This is just one example out of many as to why I love my family. Growing up, my parents were the best role models anyone could ask for. My dad was a strong, loving leader that taught me how to be humble and Godly in everything I do. My mom taught me how to fight the battles worth fighting and that I can do anything I set my mind to. My family has certainly impacted the kind of leader I have become. They always gave me freedom and trusted me to make good decisions, which allowed me to mature very quickly. They led me by example, which was highly affective. I love my family so much and would never have turned out the way I did without them.
One day at church, I made a new friend. She was much older than me, but that didn't matter. I invited her to sit with my family and I at the service that day, and after that I knew that I wanted to spend more time with her. Lucky for me my brother was fond of her, too, so he invited her to have Christmas at our house because she was new to the area and had no family or friends to celebrate with. The next year we took this picture on their wedding day. Even though I don't look it in the photo (yay for the “smiling with no teeth” phase of life), I could not have been happier. That day I invited her to sit with us in church, I was looking for a friend. Little did I know that I found a sister!

As mentioned in the last photo, I love my family. My siblings mean the world to me, all three of them. My sister Annelise is one of my closest friends. She and I share clothes, give each other advice, and make wonderful memories together. She taught me how to be both strong and gentil, and how to fight the battles worth fighting. My brother Blake taught me that even really intelligent people can be hilarious and fun. I absolutely love spending time with him because I know that I can ask him really serious questions, or really funnny ones, and he will always have the perfect response. My sister-in-law Lydia is a blast. She is always very creative in everything she does and just makes life fun. I love all my siblings dearly, and wouldn't trade the world for them.
There were two minutes left in the fourth quarter and we were down by six. Desperately trying to score, my teammates and I scrambled around, trying to steal the ball. After scratching and clawing our way to the state championship, we had finally fallen short of our goal. When the buzzer went off, we walked off the court and sat on our bench, gasping for air and resting our bodies after working harder than we ever had before. But I didn't cry. I stood up when they called my name and walked over to my coach, who placed a red ribboned medal around my neck. I thought that it was something to be proud of to make it to the state championships when your starting line-up consists of three freshmen and two sophomores. Of course I couldn't help but think, “If I had just made those two free pointers, we could have gone into overtime,” but I wasn't destroyed over it. I knew we worked as hard as we possibly could have, and that was something to be proud of.

Basketball has been one of the biggest parts of my life so far. I have learned so many lessons from it, both on and off the court. It helped me learn how to lead in all different scenarios. I was a captain all four years on the varsity team, which allowed me to experience a lot of situations in which I had to act. It allowed me the opportunity to lead people after experiencing a loss, after working hard in practice, after coach yelled at us, or after winning a big game. I would not be the same person I am today without basketball in my life.
These are my friends. They are wonderful. We are just about as close as any pair of friends can get. We laugh together, cry together, learn together, and lead together. They are vital to my life. They push me to be better and don't ever let me give up. When things get tough, they are always there to help in any way possible. I can't count the number of times I have been brought to tears by the kindness they have showed me. I think this picture describes it all. We bring each other joy and strength.
This is one of my favorite pictures I have. I think the expression on my headmaster Mr. Shelton’s face is priceless. He is looking at me with such admiration, which is special because I admire him so very much. He never ceased to amaze me. I always strived to be like him, helping those in need and guiding the lost. This picture reminds me that I have been doing something right in the way I have been leading my friends and classmates. He once sent me an email while I was working countless hours running a school-wide fundraiser that said, “Your leadership and example have been invaluable lately... well done. Know that it is not taken for granted. From an impressed headmaster, Rob Shelton.” This email has stuck with me for a long time. Even though it is but two sentences, it means the world to me.

Mr. Shelton is a wonderful leader, and better friend. He is someone you fear to make angry, but know he still loves you when you mess up. Mr. Shelton has a certain way of making everyone try their hardest and learn from their mistakes. I give him my utmost respect. He shows his faith in everything he does, which made me want to be a Godly leader even more. I will never forget all that he has taught me, and hopefully I will continue his legacy of being an effective leader. My high school’s mascot was the eagle, and he certainly taught me how to fly like one.
No, this is not my boyfriend. His name is Teigen and he is one of my friends that went on our class trip to Europe with me. In this picture, we are dancing in the streets of Rome, which had been a long time dream of mine. We are dancing to “La Vie en Rose,” my all-time favorite song. I will never forget that night as long as I live. After dancing in the streets, I went up to the roof of our hotel and looked out at the hills of Rome. When I closed my eyes, I can still feel the cool breeze on my face and picture the Colosseum in the distance. A few days prior, I bought a ring in Greece. That night in Rome, I promised myself that I would no longer be afraid to do things. I was more on the timid side back then, scared to actually act on my thoughts. But that night, it all changed. I promised to do the things that scared me and put myself out there more. Of course, at first, this meant actually talking to the guy I had a crush on or jumping off the high platform into the lake, even though I’m terrified of heights. But as time went on, it meant being bold and unafraid to stand up for what I believed in. Every time I look at the ring I got in Greece, I am reminded of that promise. As I remember that night in Rome, I can’t help but think of the song “I Hope You Dance” by Celine Dion. It embodies what I wanted to achieve and inspires me to do it.