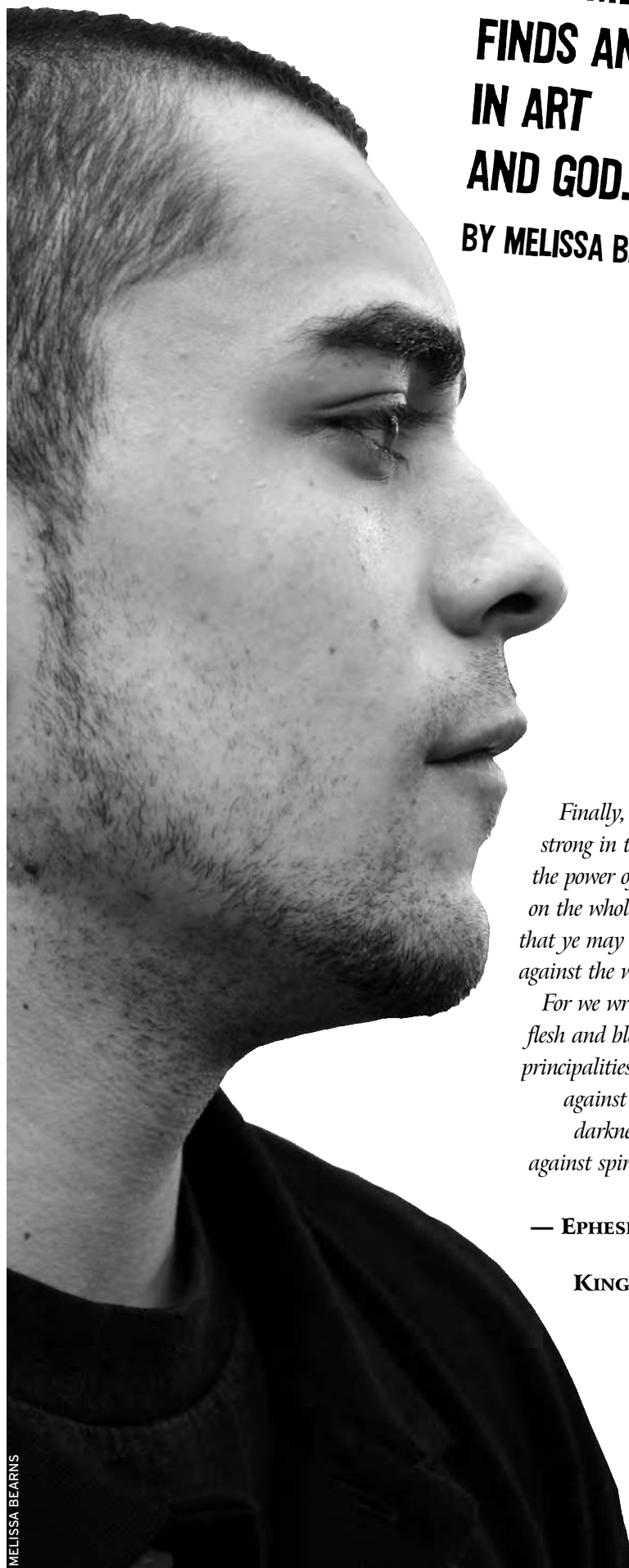


# INSIDE OUT

## TC COMBS FINDS ANSWERS IN ART AND GOD.

BY MELISSA BEARNS



*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against power, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

— EPHESIANS 6:10-12  
FROM THE  
KING JAMES BIBLE

# T

hings would be a lot easier for Trent "TC" Combs if life were black and white, divided in nice clean lines between good and evil, heaven and hell. But he knows, maybe more than most 20 year olds, that it's not that simple. Unlike his art, which is full of vibrant reds, sky blues and cheery yellows, TC's life has been filled with shades of gray.

It was his mom, Kory Combs, who pulled together a few of his drawings and sent them off to the National Christian Art Competition hosted by Art For God ([www.art4god.com](http://www.art4god.com)). He didn't think his artwork, which draws heavily on pop culture, hip hop and graffiti, even had a chance. So it was a shock when he got the news in late March that he'd won.

The winning piece, titled *Weight of the World* (see cover), is based on a passage from the book of Ephesians in the Bible. "I draw a lot of stuff for people who are hurting and struggling," TC said. "Ephesians 6:10-12 talks about a spiritual battle. Not just in the realm that we're in, but the spiritual battle between good and evil. And putting on the armor of God to protect yourself. In the picture, the guy's got the weight of the world on his shoulders from temptations and struggles that he goes through, just in his daily life."

But the "guy" in the picture isn't just any guy. It's TC, channeling his soul and spirit into ink and paper. He draws stories about trying to live a Christian life in a world with no easy answers. "It's really my emotions that I'm portraying, out of my hand and onto a piece of paper," he said. "I'll be driving down the street and see a homeless person struggling. And my heart will go out to him."

### SHIFTING SANDS

TC's middle school art teacher, Rafael Mosqueda, calls his drawings "powerful stuff," and describes a picture TC drew right after 9/11 of the crumbling Twin Towers. Out of the rubble, a pair of hands emerge, "like God's hands trying to hold them up," Mosqueda said.

Mosqueda, or Mr. Mo as the students at Jefferson Middle School call him, was teaching TC during seventh grade, right about the time TC's family life fell apart. His parents divorced, then his mom ended up in an abusive relationship and TC stayed with his father. "I was kind of in a downfall for a few years," he explained softly, shifting from foot to foot in his baggy jeans. "Until our mom came back to us kids."

But he left out a key piece of that story. "It took TC confronting me to get me out of that relationship," Kory said. "When you hear it from your own kids, it kind of wakes you up more." In the meantime, TC's dad had remarried. Eventually TC moved back in with his mom.

Just a few months ago, his dad and stepmom had a baby girl, and again TC finds himself torn — this time between wanting to make time to be a good big brother and wanting to focus on his own life. "It's hard to be in their lives when you're trying to start your own," he said. In a world of shifting sands, TC is having a tough time finding firm footing.

He can't decide what he wants to do with his life now, whether he should go to art school or continue working for his grandpa. And he's not sure how to promote his art. What he knows is that he wants to draw.

### LIFE BY TC COMBS

