

"It was like being at one of our retreats except without God in it….It was all a lot of fun but being surrounded by crosses and godly stuff everywhere and not hearing a mention of God just felt sooo weird." — My daughter's first encounter with the outside world.

Having spent the last 14 years in Catholic school, fully immersed in every peer ministry group and activity they had to offer, as the ever-willing, participation-craving soul she is, she has, by all accounts, as far as faith goes, been sheltered. No doubt about it.

Although her public university experience began a couple of months ago, it wasn't until just recently when she attended an out of town three-day program geared to help freshmen transition to college that she felt initiated into the secular world. This school program happens to have taken place on a beautiful property used mainly for Christian retreats (although available to most institutions), which houses religious objects throughout and which setting is very much conducive to an atmosphere of worship. So the experience of sharing with her peers in this kind of environment was familiar to her she said, but the omission of "The Word" was a shocking eye-opener that caused her some concern, judging from her comments at the dinner table that night upon her return. "I gotta find something to do Mommy, something that will keep me involved, I don't wanna lose this." "This" meaning her faith groove, her "sport" as she once termed it. "It was like something was missing Mommy," she said. "Yes mama," I told her, "You're not in Kansas anymore."

Minutes later heartburn set in as my inner chatter began: Have we, have *I*, instilled in her the essentials for her to continue on her "walk" and see her "sport" through? Because I know it's been easy for her up to now this faith business. Faith comes so much easier while in its respective environment – where the ingredients to fuel the presence of God are facilitated. Now take away the artifacts, the rallies, the godly atmosphere, take away all those familiar props, and knock, knock, Doubt's at the door.

But survival of her faith is just one of my concerns. Today I realize that one of the hardest challenges we are faced with as parents is to let go when the time calls for it. More specifically where our daughter is concerned, allowing her certain freedoms; loosening the grip and slowly letting go of the rope; not hovering; trying not to be one of those helicopter parents I've read about, and in the process trusting God a whole lot during this transition to a new chapter of her life…of our lives…while time seems to be on warp drive.

"Where has time gone?" a friend asked me just yesterday. "I don't know," I said, "but I've stopped looking for it." I've stopped because it makes me too melancholic. Watching our little

girl blossom right before our eyes and craving her independence like this, while undoubtedly a beautiful thing, is taking nevertheless some serious adjusting. Did I say serious? Yeah if I had a habit I was trying to quit – smoking, drinking, nail-biting – this would definitely be the wrong time. But I don't, so instead I've resorted to chanting "Heart of Jesus I trust in thee" throughout my day. Seriously though, a lot of prayer is involved.

Still, difficult as this adjusting business is, we want to give her a chance to learn how to maneuver on her own outside her comfort zone; to use her values as her compass to navigate the rough waters of today's evils. But does she have what it takes? Will she reap what we sowed? And did we plant the right seeds? Did we plant respect, good manners, work ethic, family values? Did we plant time? Belief? And have we taught her how to plant her own seeds? We sure hope so. God knows we've tried.

I know the job of instilling spiritual fruit in our children is never-ending. We've scattered these seeds and now we pray they take…especially now that she's not in Kansas anymore. And we wait and see because as someone once said, we cannot sow and reap the same day. But can I tell you that this waiting for the harvest is nerve-racking? Yes, I apologize in advance, especially to you my family and friends…for my erratic frame of mind…thank you for your patience.
Oh, and did I mention our son turns 15 today…and will now drive? [GULP].

If you plant honesty, you will reap trust.
If you plant goodness, you will reap friends.
If you plant humility, you will reap greatness.
If you plant perseverance, you will reap victory.
If you plant consideration, you will reap harmony.
If you plant hard work, you will reap success.
If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation.
If you plant openness, you will reap intimacy.
If you plant patience, you will reap improvements.
If you plant faith, you will reap miracles.
~Unknown

The seed of God is in us. Given an intelligent and hard-working farmer, it will thrive and grow up to God, whose seed it is; and accordingly its fruits will be God-nature. Pear seeds grow into pear trees, nut seeds into nut trees, and God-seed into God.
~ Meister Eckart

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