

September 2010

Transition Day

A few years ago I took a course entitled “Personal Spiritual Transformation” in which one of my classmates, Tim, articulated something that he felt was spiritually blocking him. He told the story of his mom abruptly leaving him standing on the steps of the university he had just come to. He was still struggling with that day, trying to understand what he perceived as a break in his relationship with his mom. Part of his spiritual journey was trying to empathize with his mom’s actions and to find some peace with that situation. Years later that day was still etched on his heart. Eventually Tim and his

mom found a way to talk openly about that day and that brought him much peace.

You have just navigated through this “crucible day,” a day full of practical, social, emotional, and spiritual elements. At Parents’ Orientation we asked parents to share a prayer request that would be part of this e-newsletter. My prayer for you is that you would give and receive much grace and peace as you find your way through this next step in the life of your family.

You are in our hearts,
Karen Cornies, Dean of Students

A Mum’s Reflections

by Audrey Benjamins

My husband and I have been parents for many years, yet we continue to be surprised at the things that happen. We started out parenting our babies, and as they grew into children the hours ran into days, days ran into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years: diapers, sippy cups, Psalty the singing songbook, Christmas plays, baseball games, MP3 players, piano lessons, concert band tours, G1 and G2, iPod touches.

But suddenly in 2010, after years of living with children, we find ourselves the parents of adults and teenagers who are soon to be adults. A little over a year ago our oldest son married. Now, we are

surprised to realize that two of the remaining three are leaving us. One daughter, who has been commuting to another city to attend university for two years, is moving out to be closer.

At the same time, our 18 year old will be settling in to dorm life at Redeemer University College, something which she is very excited about! She navigated the application process, applied for the necessary funding and signed up for courses. My contribution was to take her places to prepare her for independent living: Value Village and Ikea. We now have only one resident child left, and the reality is dawning on us

A Mum's Reflections...cont'd

that as he is already halfway through high school, he will be leaving soon as well. After 23 years, life without kids is in sight!

My initial response to this is Yippee! Hooray! Life soon will be less – less cooking, less baking, less laundry, less busyness all around. My delight is evident to our younger daughter, and she admonishes me, “Seriously mom, take some lessons in nostalgia will you!” But in my heart, I realize that soon life will also be more – more quiet, more worry, more distance between me and my girls. The smile fades and the clouds roll in as I wonder what life will look like next month.

Change is coming. This is when I turn to the one who has never let me down, the one who has always carried me through the stuff of life and family, and the familiar words echo in my head: “Be still and know that I am God, I will give you a peace that passes understanding, I will supply for all your needs, lean not on your own understanding, I will not forget you, see I have you carved in the palm of my hand.” Even though conflicting emotions do rise and swell within me, I know that all is well with my soul.

Never ending but always changing

Last week a 70-year-old friend of mine said, “It’s funny how the job of parenting never ends. But it always changes.”

I remember the day Evelyn and I dropped off our youngest for his first year of university. We felt strange as we drove home. “What is our calling as parents now?” we wondered. “How will our calling change? Are we up to navigating this change?”

That was two years ago, and we’re still asking the same questions.

When our children transition from the teenage years to adulthood, our relationships with them change significantly as well. Sometimes these changes are so gradual and smooth that we hardly notice that anything has changed; other times the changes are stressful and come with significant conflict. So many different factors determine whether it’s easy or hard that we can’t predict it

and we can’t control it; there’s no recipe to guarantee an easy transition. We simply walk with our children through these transitions prayerfully, on our knees.

Here are some guidelines for this transition that I have found helpful:

1. Try to discern that fine line between over-communicating and under-communicating. Most young adults need to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers and that we are profoundly interested in their lives, but they also need space. Too much communication and they feel like they’re being treated as children. Not enough and they wonder if anyone cares. This balance varies tremendously from person to person; what’s too much for one person is not enough for another. Seek to discern the right balance for your young adult. We don’t need to get the balance perfect, but we do need to be aware of it.

2. Begin relating to them as fellow adults by asking them for advice for situations you are dealing with. We parents are often over-eager to give advice to our young adult children; they will find our advice easier to accept if we also ask them for advice. It's a beautiful thing when our relationships with our children take on an adult-to-adult tone. It's a blessing for our children to have opportunities to give of themselves to us as parents, but they need a gentle invitation (not a guilt trip!) to bless us. Asking them for advice is an easy way to offer such a gentle invitation.

3. Pray for them every day, and every now and then remind them that you are. Ask them if they have any prayer requests.

4. If you are like me, you will have regular times of feeling anxious about your young adult children. Try to offer this anxiety to the Lord instead of allowing it to shape your relationship with your son or daughter, so that it won't affect the way you relate to your young adult. That's Paul's advice: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4: 6-7).

5. As you know, parenting is filled with learning to handle new situations. We've just gotten accustomed to one particular stage of our child's life, and they're off into the next phase. We need to compare notes with other parents, asking questions like, "what was it like for you when your oldest left for university? What did you learn from that experience?" Mutual encouragement (and commiserating at times) is a great blessing of Christian community.

6. Take these guidelines with several large grains of salt: it's easy for Syd the chaplain to write them, but it's much harder for Syd the dad to live them out. 😊

Our 2010-2011 theme: pray without ceasing

What if prayer wasn't only an activity that we did, but was also a way of life? Might that be what Paul is referring to in I Thessalonians 5 when he calls us to pray without ceasing? And might David also have this in mind when he tells us that no matter where we might go, we are always in God's presence (Ps. 139)? As a Redeemer community, we'll be pondering questions such as these as we explore Paul's call to pray without ceasing as our theme for the year. If you'd like to receive a weekly devotional that explores this theme, contact the chaplain at shielema@redeemer.ca.