

Profile Communications – Megan Harber

Politics, Money and Religion, for as long as I can remember, these were the 3 things you were to never discuss at the dinner table. That is, if you didn't grow up as a Pastor's daughter. Religion has always been a main discussion point at my family's dinner table. Whether it be relating to the sermon that week, something that happened at school, or how my brother, sister and I treated each other. I can't think of a time when it wasn't somehow brought up at my house. So I am sure you can imagine my surprise when I would go eat dinner at a friend's house, and then remember that religion isn't a normalized topic at the table.

To give you a little background of when religion was brought into my life, I was born right before my mom's final year at Seminary. I attended my first Seminary event when I was two weeks old, and then my first class at three weeks. As my mom was called to different churches I was pretty much stuck with her from every church event, local mission trip, and summer camp. Let's just say, I met more high schoolers during the first six years of my life than I did when I was actually in high school. Attending every one of these church events set the stage for my own faith journey.

The first time I ever remember feeling Jesus was when I was nine. I was at Camp WAPO (a large church summer camp) with a couple of my friends, and we were sitting at the evening outdoor service. It was completely dark outside, the grass was a little dewy, and a huge projector screened lyrics to a popular contemporary song up on the side of the dining hall. Hearing everyone around me sing, knowing I was surrounded by good friends and God, I felt still. My body had a wave of goosebumps shiver over me and then I was calm. I had been to so many church camps with my mom when I was a kid, but in this moment, this was my moment with God. I had never felt anything like it.

About three years later my mom was called to a church an hour and half away. I was 12, and like most 12 year old's would be, I was not happy with this idea of leaving all of my childhood friends, the normalcy of my life, just so that she could work

somewhere else. I began resenting my mom, and therefore resenting everything she was connected with, including the church. At this new church, I realized that even though I was physically there, I was never mentally there. I thought God had failed me. I was depressed, hating myself, hating school, hating my mom, and hating God. I felt that no one was there for me. I truly have never felt lonelier in my life.

Within the year I had moved to a much smaller school, made a few friends, switched to a different confirmation group, and finally started opening myself up to the idea of Jesus. As I continued on my faith journey, I started recognizing what brought me closer to him. The act of service. From service trips to volunteering around the building. I loved helping others and hearing their stories about life, and about their own relationship with the lord. It helped me reflect upon my own experience and all that I have to be thankful for.

Now, to be completely honest with you all, I think I would be lying if I said my relationship with God has been 100% since that 'rock bottom' point. However what I realized is that in order to be able to open myself up to Jesus, I have to be comfortable and confident with myself. Like any relationship, if we don't take care of ourselves, how can we be expected to care and give what we need to others. However, we are lucky, because even in the darkest of times God is there for us, even if we don't accept him, and that is a feeling of comfort and light amongst the darkness.

I am thankful for the relationship I have with God, with the church and with my family today. I got so lucky living in a home where even when it could have been pressured, religion never was. I think it helped me be more open to welcoming it back in. My mom always encouraged me to ask questions and create discussion about religion and faith even if she didn't know the answer. I truly believe that because of her I will always have room for faith in my heart. And now, even though she may never see this, I want to thank her and any other parents who have been tasked with discussing religion and faith with their kids,

grandkids, nieces and nephews, friends, and even yourselves. These are not easy conversations to have, and even when you are struggling, those moments and discussions are more important than you will ever know.