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English 101

Essay 1

1/26/05 Personal Narrative: Finding Myself

Transition can be one of the toughest things that a person can ever do. If change is not handled properly, it can be gruesome. That is why it should be attempted only when one really feels ready. However, one a lot of times feels ready, but then gets a rude awakening.

I am living proof of this above thought. I thought I was ready, and obviously I wasn't. This is the "changes are not for wimps" chapter of my story.

I graduated from Estill County High School at Irvine Kentucky in 1995. I tried to go to Berea College because all of my peers said it was good to go to college, especially this one. These peers even included the school counselor at that time.

Berea College didn't charge tuition as other schools did. One works for the tuition money and the student never gets charged a cent. I was told that it would be a good idea to go to college to "make something of myself." I didn't know what being ready for college meant.

I had other issues too. I had a disability (still do). I was a foolish man back then. I didn't truly want the help that was there because of my pride in acting "normal".

I took the wrong classes for a freshman. I took Anatomy and Physiology I, Political Science, and Spanish II (I tested out of Spanish I and I am not sure if the order of these classes is correct) and English 101. These awful classes were taken because I declared Pre-Med. I did this because I idolized my Uncle Carl, who is a very good doctor.

The first three of these classes were more rigorous than I could ever imagine. English class seemed to have one of the toughest graders I have ever seen. He didn't seem to give out many compliments to anyone.

In the second semester, I was also very foolish. I picked Anatomy and Physiology II (even though I got a D- in the last one). I picked a computer science class, Women's Studies, and Earth Science. The above idea of Pre-Med was still on my mind.

I dropped the computer science class when I received two bad project grades. This was a foolish idea, for I had a B average. I failed all of the other classes. In short, I failed miserably at Berea College because of pridefully not asking for help from the correct channels (like their disabilities department), and no clear way of adapting to my college environment, which obviously was a tougher one than high school.

After this failure, I returned to my mom's place for about two or so years to regroup. I started assisting Mom in Bible School, singing

specials in Irvine First Church of the Nazarene and making a general friendship network.

However eventually, this wasn't enough, as the reader(s) will eventually see.

Around a year or so after my dismal failure, I started wanting a job. When I started looking around, I found a daycare center to work in for a while. I still wasn't quite ready for the workforce because I didn't know how to handle stressful situations yet. I was fired from that job because of this.

Soon after this, I got another job at a local fast food restaurant. I wasn't fast enough and I got laid off. I never was called back.

I went to live with Dad for a little while in very late 1997. This was a one-year trip. I wanted to try to learn some things from him. These would include communication, how to keep a schedule, and the meaning of hard work. This was all fine and dandy I thought, so I went to Dad's. I learned these things from him but his teaching style was not (in my opinion) conducive to learning anymore, so I returned to

mom's house because I thought Dad had a bad attitude.

I had strong reasons for thinking that it was time to go to Mom's. First, it seemed like Dad would get mad over seemingly nothing. He would use language that I felt like was derogatory when he got upset. He didn't like my music, because it was cartoon, comedy and kid oriented. He didn't like my choice of programming on the television either, for it was the same genre and was very verbal about why.

He thought it was all childish and not befitting a man as myself.

It was now very late 1998. I was now in Mom's house still in the regrouping stage. I had tried a lot of things to get myself back on track. This time my situation was a variation on my on-going theme of trying to regroup. I started teaching Bible School with Mom as my assistant and serving in Irvine First Church of the Nazarene as a choir member and a soloist.

In the year 2000, which was two or so years later. I felt myself stagnating or stalling out. I

wanted a job again. So, I got a job at Cracker Barrel. This was the beginning of the end of my stay at Mom's. I had to take taxis back and forth, which was very expensive. However, at that point I didn't care because I was still working. Very shortly thereafter, I told one of my friends about my situation. This friend immediately started working on helping me to find a place to live closer to work. I was however thinking more on the lines of independence rather than money from work. I moved to Richmond Kentucky within one

month after starting work. Richmond Kentucky is where I currently live.

In Richmond, I had another transition problem. I didn't have any friends around me anymore and I missed them. All of those friends were still in Irvine. I became extremely lonely and needed some friends badly. Four months after I got hired, I lost my job at Cracker Barrel due to my disability causing unsafe conditions to the company pocketbook and myself. I worked there from September of the year 2000 to December 27 of that year.

I was pretty down and needed people even more. I soon found the Eastern Kentucky University Wesley Foundation and found strong friendship ties and another home church.

Let me elaborate, after I was fired from Cracker Barrel, I really was blue. I didn't have my job, my credit was about to get wrecked because of no money coming in, and I had no friends near me. This however, proved useful in breaking my bad attitude down so that the change needed in my life would be possible. However, I still was very prideful. Because of

these events, including my pride, I was soon got even sadder.

I went out one night in early 2001 within this blue or depressed state wanting to find a snack or at least a person to talk to. It happened to be a Thursday night. This meant that the Wesley Foundation Jericho Road teams would be out. However, I didn't know this at that time. These ministry teams talk to people on the streets on Thursday nights, hands these people a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with some hot chocolate or Koolaid, and spreads God's love.

Well, since I was out, I ran into them. They did the above and I ended up helping this ministry ever since. This was the beginning of a good friendship network in Richmond Kentucky. It was and is exactly what I really wanted and needed. Because of this bond, I found deep spiritual roots and my attitude started to change.

This led to finding another transition. This time it was spiritual. It was now the fall of 2002. This was a big step for me. I was baptized and became a member of the Richmond First United Methodist Church. I

was shocked to find lots of transition problems with this situation too. I was passionate (still am), for I had made a commitment to God and the church that I had started to serve, but now my mind and spirit were at war with some of my former issues and then some new ones. This still holds true. The former issues would include the old “be like everyone else” mentality. I still had the old “don’t ask for help even though it might come in handy” attitude. The new issues became a lot deeper than the first ones. When I made that fresh commitment

to God, I felt my spiritual ears and eyes get stronger immediately. I was lukewarm in my faith, but now I was much stronger, thus becoming hot. I feel that my then new friends at the Wesley Foundation helped me considerably by showing kindness to me when I needed it most.

This strengthening of faith right after the baptism and fresh commitment brought on even more spiritual transition. However, this time it was not all a bed of roses. My spiritual ears were more sensitive all right, but with this, came

an interesting and disturbing twist. I started to hear voices mostly bad ones. They were literally insanelly mad at me, vowing to hurt me. They were laughing at, and tormenting me. This torment started about three days after my baptism and included intense profanity against God, I and Mom. Also, I heard them singing to me in filthy language and spades, and also, holding pep-rallies in my ears (vowing my destruction). I knew and felt at the same time that this would be a fight for my spiritual life. These voices nearly paralyzed my brain for

about a week. I actually missed a credit card payment because I couldn't think.

Through all of this, I felt like for the first time that I needed help badly. Mostly, I knew I needed God's help. I started praying harder than I ever had before. At first, while I was praying, I felt nothing but an angry and spiritually cold environment around me. From this personal experience and the other experiences mentioned earlier about these voices, I can only conclude that the voices were purely demonic. Through much prayer

however, this has become much easier to handle. I still have to contend with a lot of this, but not much (some) of the cold environment of the past. At least now I hear the good voice of God now instead of all the bad stuff all the time. I do however still hear the other.

Because of the above new situations, I began to realize that I needed someone besides myself for the first time in the physical sense as well. I received help from a few pastor friends because I asked for it. This is probably the first time I had asked for help with a really tough

situation. Thus, my hard exterior was torn in twain, revealing a softer me that I was afraid to show. I had been made fun of so much in my past (grade school, high school) that I didn't want to show anything much as far as weakness for fear of it. I realized that if I wanted to not go insane because of what I was experiencing, that I had to ask for help. I got the help without rebuke or one comment about being weird. I realized also with much help from pastors and other friends that these voices were speaking of nothing but empty threats. These voices were

powerless, just annoying. “God is on your side,” they told me. “Demons are not allowed to do anything without God’s permission.” In short, they were telling me only annoyances like this one would happen, not anything else. They also told me that even if something did happen that I could easily use it for encouraging others or helping others who are afflicted. Not in so many words, but that is what was meant. I took all of this advice to heart. In short, this meant to not be afraid of these demons that were speaking like that.

I was still ever so fearful about going back to school again because of my prior dismal failures. Three of my friends named Gifford, Daniel and Merita, persuaded me to go back to college. These friends said they were led of God to say, “Come back to college. Don’t be afraid. So what, you failed last time. That doesn’t mean that you are going to fail again. Look at what you have been through (the voices). If you can get through that with God’s help, you can get through college with God’s help. We will be there for you as well.” I took

this to heart and fearfully still; I went back to school. This time it was at Eastern Kentucky University.

All of these experiences, yes including the voices of demons that want to destroy me (that's even though they are not meant for good at all), have been used of God to perform both a drastic and miraculous change in me. Because of all of this: the way I think, pray, and of course asking for help from the people that can't help unless they know my situation changed dramatically.

I wouldn't be where I am now if it weren't for even the bad stuff I have been and still am experiencing, the good stuff like my good friends and having the current bravery to talk to people about my problems. I now serve as a Sunday School teacher, daycare volunteer, and choir member at the Richmond First United Methodist Church. Of course I am currently a student at Eastern Kentucky University.

I know I will grow even stronger in my faith in God over time. After all, God is helping me out with the situation of the voices; I know that

He will help me out with even more tough situations in the future. Even the current situation (going back to school), will be much less stressful with God's help and a major attitude adjustment like I have done with God's major help.

Change was an extremely grueling task for me because my attitude through most of it was bad. I didn't want to accept my limits and ask for help when needed. I do now though. I know that I cannot be "normal" or act like everyone else. I can only be myself. I have to

look differently, act differently, and talk differently because I am “me”. So, for a smooth change to take place, one’s heart, mind, spirit, and attitude need to be conducive to learning and asking for help. This means if I have a question about a situation that I am in, or if I am in need of something like help because of my disability, I ask now how to find proper channels. I then ask the proper people. I accept escorts when offered to me and ask for them if I feel it necessary. As a result of all the above experiences, I am doing well at Eastern

Kentucky University. This is the fruit of a very grueling time of change. I don't recommend the former bad attitude for anyone who is going through spiritual and other life changes. A bad attitude leads to what I experienced. This may not include any voices, but change would be grueling nonetheless. A bad attitude leads to constant failure.

In conclusion I am clearly mentally and spiritually a lot stronger now and therefore wiser because of changes in life that I have experienced, like a caterpillar becoming a

butterfly. In other words, this entire transition has been like a giant cocoon. As I see it, the things that I went through can only cause change. However, it depends on the choices of an individual that experiences changes. I used my changes or transitions for a good purpose. Others unfortunately might give up on life because of them. I don't know. I recommend that people use things like this for the good. Otherwise, one will allow himself/herself to be utterly crushed under the weight of the

experiences that I have endured or any kind of
tougher experience for that matter.