

Answering My Own Questions

Kappa Tau First Person Essay

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Life is precious, but it is the art of living that gives existence such value. The last few seasons of my life have caused me to become a much more reflective person, and I often look back at my life for new lessons to learn and things I have experienced that I did not fully understand when they happened. Today I wonder, as I write for competition, what has changed everything in my life? I wonder how it is possible to answer such a question, and I hope to discover the answer to my own question as I write. I hope that my words do not become a few pages of rambling, and I pray that God use this writing to show me things in my life that I can use to affect the lives of others.

I suppose that in order to begin to understand my life, I should start at the beginning of my personal relationship with Christ. I grew up in the “fish bowl” that is the life of a pastor’s kid. However, my parents’ relationships with God do not define my Christian walk. (Most all PK’s use this disclaimer to establish their imaginary independence from their parents job.) I was truly saved in a tent service in the bush of South Africa. When I was nine my family became missionaries and while we were in South Africa a pastor by the name of Johnnie Wilson came and did a revival. During his sermon he gave an altar call that I will never forget. He said “if you die right now, can you be sure that you are going to heaven?” At such a young age this question had me in tears because I had not asked forgiveness for stealing my brother’s allowance to buy a gumball. But I remember that moment as the time I began to understand that Jesus was more than an outlined figure to be colored in during Sunday school. Rather, He was someone I could rely on to be my closest friend in the midst of a confusing and chaotic world. This moment began to change everything.

After we had been in South Africa for three years, my family went through one of the hardest two months we have experienced as a family. In early January of 2002, my grandma had

a heart attack and simultaneous stroke, causing lifetime body and brain damage. My mom flew back to America for two weeks to be with her family. In turn, those two weeks were the most difficult I can remember. During my mom's absence, our family dog ran away and was hit by a car. While this is now, a minor moment of tragedy in my life, it was one that just added to the two months of hardship. On Valentine's Day my family was delivering furniture to some pastor friends in a part of town that was known as a crime area. While there, we were carjacked at gun point and our pastor friend was kidnapped. I was twelve years old, and I will always remember the feeling of despair as I watched the thieves take my mother's wedding ring, purse, and even her fake Rolex. I have always described that moment as the moment my perspective of life changed. This specific moment changed the way I perceived everything.

At the end of my families three year term in Africa, we returned to America ready for something new, Africa had been a wonderful experience, but God was changing our direction. My dad got a job working as the Missionary in Residence at Southeastern University and my mom got a job as a fifth grade teacher at a small Christian school in Orlando. I was thirteen at the time and because mom was working, I for the first time in my life had to go to school, I had been homeschooled my entire life. My nervous feeling was unforgettable. I remember not being able to sleep at all the night before school started, I prayed so hard for God to fire my mom so I could be homeschooled again. Unfortunately six o' clock came, she still had a job, and I still had to go to school for the first time. I put on my very plain school uniform, picked up my sack lunch and prayed a new prayer on my way to school that morning "God please let the rapture happen in the next hour." But God had bigger things in store for my life.

I went to school, and I hated every moment of it. The kids called me "Tarzan" because I was white, and from Africa. After a long and terrible first day of school, I complained to my

mom about it all night. She told me “Complaining won’t make anything better.” and she was right. However that was not going to stop me from letting her know how much I hated it. Time passed, and I got used to school. I made a few friends, got involved. Six years later I graduated from that school; I was student body president, lead of the school musical, baseball team captain and subsequently accepted into Southeastern University, where I just finished my first year. Throughout my time in school God had his hand on my life. My education changed everything about my future.

So what now? I have this life that I can look back on, but what do I do with it? When I started writing this essay, I set out searching for answers or some sort of revelation that would be life altering. Now I think that perhaps my life is a collection of life-changing moments. I have been blessed to live and now I live with life more abundantly than before because I see the many times God has been there to change my everything when it suited His perfect plan. God is not around to impress or entertain us with his omnipotence. Too often I have found myself looking to God to change everything in my life when it fits into my plan. I know now that the reason I exist is so that God can exist in me, so that I can write different moments in my life in essay and realize that there is no one specific moment that I can say altered my life forever. God has been continually revising me and I pray that He never stops. I hope that the day God decides that there is nothing left for Him to change in me is the day that I die. I am done writing now, and after looking back and re-reading, I am confident that these words are more than just me rambling about my life. I have done what I set out to do: I have discovered that answering a question like “what has changed everything in my life?” is not able to be done with a description of a single moment, but rather a description of the way a person has lived their life.