

ABBIE SMITH

CAN **YOU** KEEP **YOUR FAITH** IN **COLLEGE?**



STUDENTS FROM
50 CAMPUSES TELL YOU
HOW AND WHY

ABBIE SMITH

CAN **YOU** KEEP
YOUR FAITH
IN **COLLEGE?**

CAN YOU KEEP YOUR FAITH IN COLLEGE?

published by Multnomah Books

Published in association with VMI Publishers-Agency

© 2006 by Abbie Smith

International Standard Book Number: 978-1-59052-669-9

Cover design by Kirk DouPonce, DogEaredDesign.com

Interior design and typeset by Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from:

The Holy Bible, New International Version © 1973, 1984

by International Bible Society,

used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House

Other Scripture quotations are from:

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)

© 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Holy Bible, New King James Version (NKJV)

© 1984 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

The Message by Eugene H. Peterson © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000

Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the
Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

MULTNOMAH and its mountain colophon are registered trademarks
of Random House Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission.

For information:

MULTNOMAH BOOKS

12265 ORACLE BOULEVARD

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80921

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Smith, Abbie, 1981-

Can you keep your faith in college? / Abbie Smith.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-59052-669-4

1. College students--Religious life. I. Title.

BV4531.3.S65 2006

248.8'34--dc22

2005035657

10—10 9 8 7 6 5 4

THE JESUS-COLLEGE QUESTION

Your new life on campus. Many call it the best years of your life. No parents, no curfew, no authority—basically no rules. College is four years of football games, fraternity parties, late nights leading to hangovers, and maybe some calculus homework (in case the parents ask). Pretty much everything—who you are, who you will be, the “truth”—is up for grabs. And for the first time, you’re in charge.

But what many say are the best years, the church often calls the worst. Research says anywhere from 75 to 90 percent of high school seniors who call themselves Christians will abandon their faith by college graduation. That’s devastating, but it also makes sense. One invites you to Communion, the other to communal kegs. Jesus says, “I am the Truth,” while college says truth is personal and subjective, if anything at all.

I remember a guy in freshman lit saying, “You can’t know God until you’ve had sex.” I think what he meant was, “Do you wanna hook up?” but didn’t press the issue. Another said Jesus was a father, but then I got confused when a professor

said Jesus was gay and partnered with Buddha. Transitioning to university life is overwhelming as is. Add faith to the mix, and it can be pure chaos.

What's unusual about *Can You Keep Your Faith in College?* is that it introduces other students who are walking into that chaos with you. These voices aren't your youth pastor or parent. They're simply students like you, wanting to join in your conversations, assignments, coffee dates and late-night study sessions, where the spoken or unspoken question is: Can Jesus and college go together?

None of the contributors in *Can You Keep Your Faith in College?* pretend to have all the answers, and most still have huge unanswered questions. But at the core of these pages, there's a streamlined realization they don't want you to miss. In short, it's that God is alive and well across every campus of this country.

This book began with a chocolate Easter bunny. The bunny was me.

I was raised in a nonreligious home, and aside from an eating disorder and breaking an ankle in eighth grade, my life was perfect. I had loving parents and a great group of friends, and I seemed to do well in whatever I put my mind to. How could life get better?

Well, it did when I was asked to play tennis at Emory University, the college of my dreams. In simple terms, I left high school as the chocolate bunny you get at Easter. I was perfect, put together, and whole. But I was also hollow.

My journal called it a "void." I didn't even know if I believed in God at the time, but I started asking questions and realizing maybe this life wasn't *it*. Maybe there was something *beyond life* that I was missing? I'd grown up in the South and attended a

Catholic high school, so I'd heard the "Jesus bit," but never quite connected. One fall semester, three words changed that.

- 1) A crush. Yeah, I fell hard for a guy. I would go where he went and do what he did. But it became quickly apparent that it was Jesus *in the guy* who I'd actually fallen for.
- 2) Community. I'd been on a lot of teams and in a lot of close relationships, but had never known community quite like the group of Christians I was being drawn toward. Sure, the original crush got me there, but then Jesus started getting through to me. And the love I felt among His followers, for exactly who and where I was, caught me totally off guard.
- 3) Commitment. What I heard that semester wasn't "churchy." It didn't preach at, condemn, or ritualize me. It was about a relationship. It was about a pursuit of God, on the basis of His pursuit of me. Christ had gone to every extreme to defeat a death I couldn't escape and offer a life I could never attain on my own.

I didn't embark on this faith because it seemed good or sounded right. I did it because I encountered Jesus. As a college student and now a student of Christ, I wanted to hear more from people like me.

But there is no book written *for* and *by* college students about faith. So I started e-mailing all the Christians I knew (about fifteen) and asked some questions. What if we put together a collection of student voices on how to keep your faith during the college years? What could we say that would

really help? Oh, and would you be willing to contribute?

At first, writing a book *for* students *by* students seemed ingenious. But then it started to seem presumptuous. How could a bunch of twentysomethings who wondered about life and love and often seemed stuck in messes of our own makings give published advice? *We were still here*—still trying to graduate and figure out this Jesus-college mix. We lacked hindsight and had no retrospective wisdom.

Then again (and this brought us back to the ingenious side), *we're still here*—and that says a lot.

One thing led to the next. We put our thoughts together, and then joined our networks to find a broader pool of contributors. By my senior year, I got a call from a publisher.

That brings us to the book you're holding, *Can You Keep Your Faith in College?* The chapters ahead break into categories of life experience you'd find on any campus—Christian or secular. The entries range in tone and experience, like the people who wrote them. Some are funny, some sad, some more formal, some more bloglike. With permission, all entries have been edited for publication, and names and some other specifics have been changed for various reasons. But these people are real, and their stories are being lived out. (For more stories and resources, be sure to check out www.keepingyourfaith.com.)

For some reason, we've been placed on our campuses. Instead of asking only "why" questions, students you're about to meet think you should also ask "how?" *How, with few rules and all freedom, can we pursue the truth with no regrets and follow a Savior with no reserve?*

Following Christ is more than an option. It's a loaded opportunity we don't want to miss.

THE TRANSITION

Seems like there are two kinds of transitioners: One loved high school and is scared to death of college, and the other is sick of high school and ready for something new. Either way, though, it's bound to be lonely, overwhelming, and even scary at times. And either way, the transition will mark a huge change. You won't come out the same person you went in as.

College will hold things you've never imagined. You will hear more "isms" (pluralism, satanism, individualism) than you knew existed and face more addictions (drug, alcohol, porn, eating disorders) than you thought possible.

Something I doubt you'll see, though, is addiction to God. It sounds weird, but I don't think you'll find many students wasted on Christ or hungover from a long night of ministry. I'm not advocating it, whatever *it* might look like. I'm just curious why, on campuses so flooded with beliefs and crazy compulsions, this would be the case.

Maybe the new thing you'll encounter is a choice of faith—a choice to believe that Jesus is who He said He is and to cling

to the things He said about you. This transition won't be a cakewalk, but it also won't overwhelm God or catch Him off guard. If He's really God, it can't.

—*abbie*

*And my God will meet all your needs according
to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

IF I FAKE A SEIZURE, WILL THEY LET ME OFF?

SAN DIEGO STATE

Amanda L.

I don't like decisions. Healthy or unhealthy? Better for me or not better for me? God's will or not God's will? Staying undecided seems safer and more under my control.

I fluctuated between wanting to go to college and not wanting to. Mostly it was wanting to, but then there was the day my parents left me at San Diego State and I bawled in the back of my dad's Buick for an hour (that's the "not wanting to" part).

My friend compared it to a roller coaster, and as I thought about it, that analogy made more and more sense. You pay your money, you want to get on, you know it's going to be a thrill, people tell you how amazing it is...but as your turn approaches, your stomach drops. You have thoughts like, *I could duck out now*, or, *Am I really sure I want to do this?* But you stay in line. You're going to be on the next train, and your heart is now in your throat. You try to make light of it...joke a bit...look around at how unafraid everyone else is and think, *I can do this. People do this all the time.*

So you get in the car. Strap in. And you think, *What in the world am I doing? This is a bad idea.*

You can't just hop off, though, so you tell yourself to calm down. Train starts...*click, click, click*...until you find yourself at a more ridiculous angle than you had anticipated. Sweaty palmed, you hang on for dear life. Now you're desperate. You're thinking, *If I fake a seizure, will they let me off?*

Click, click, click...You swear to God you'll never ride one of these %\$#@ things again.

That's where I am right now. I am *click, click, clicking* my way to the top of a very scary, very unfamiliar roller coaster. I have no idea what is going to happen when I plunge over that edge. There are some major differences between the roller coaster and my situation though—the main one being that I can be completely confident in the designer, creator, owner, and operator of this particular ride. Instead of a terrifying “carnie” who hasn't seen a toothbrush in weeks, the operator of all these switches and levers is totally trustworthy, loves me beyond measure, and has promised me that He has my best interests at heart (“For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11).

I may have no idea where this ride will go, but my God, who designed it, built it, runs it, and strapped me securely into my seat, knows perfectly. Because I trust Him, I have nothing to fear. Because He is good, I know I can trust Him, and because I desire that the purpose of my life be to make His name famous, I will stay on this crazy train.

STRUGGLE TO BE REAL

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Bethany N.

About the first decision I made at my prestigious university was to check the “biology-concentrated pre-med” box for a major. I arrogantly figured I was up for a challenge. After all, I’d graduated in the top one percent of my high school class.

Not long after the first semester of college began, though, I discovered I hated biology, had no understanding of chemical processes, and could barely pass my tests. The semester was a huge wake-up call for me. Admitting that I would never become a successful doctor, I changed my major. I’ve changed it again since, but the first change was definitely the most drastic—from pre-med to elementary education.

Sometimes you have to understand what is *not* for you, in order to realize what *is* for you.

Looking back, I think I assumed I was some sort of omniscient human. I was a Christian all through high school, and I was sure God was just as interested in my “success” as I was.

My next big breakthrough: I realized I had picked the wrong prestigious university. I didn’t belong in some lofty Christian university. All of my best friends had chosen to attend the big

state school, where they spent weekends together, walked to classes in their pajamas, and got involved with sincere Christians who were real about their faith. Meanwhile, I was dressing up for class, spending weekends in the library, and attending church with pretentious Pharisees who seemed to have no depth to their faith at all. I figured I could waste a couple more years being miserable where I was, or I could humbly admit I belonged somewhere less...distinguished. I knew that in order to continue on the path of self-discovery, I would have to do it in a place that would allow for it.

So I transferred. I think my decision to transfer schools was the hardest and maybe the most important decision I have ever made. But I have come alive in this new environment, finding a course of study that I love and finding the few, but authentic, Christians on campus to encounter God with.

My life at college has also unearthed other, smaller discoveries. Having roommates has helped me learn some personal strengths and weaknesses in the context of a home. I have learned invaluable lessons about compromise, compassion, communication, and conflict resolution. Having boyfriends helped me understand my relational flaws. Having free hours during the day led me to stumble upon new hobbies, new interests, new passions. Having responsibilities taught me to keep a budget, keep my space clean, keep a healthy diet and exercise regimen, and keep my bills paid.

Now that my college days are about to end, I'm seeing that the most important discoveries about myself have been directly related to my discovering God...and not only discovering Him, but *encountering* Him. During my first two years at the private university, it was a fight to continue hearing the heartbeat of

God every day. It was a struggle to be real (which for me means admitting I'm weak most of the time) when facing those who seemed to have all the right answers about God. Realizing I *needed* Christ desperately led me to trust in Him more, instead of trusting in myself to make something of me. Making all of the changes, both large and small, took courage that came only from Jesus.

God has revealed Himself to me in textbooks, in the world, in roommates, in a community of believers, in professors, and in life. And now I understand that I don't really know anything about anything! That I need Christ to even breathe! That my desire for more of Jesus grows as I discover the greatness of Him, and discover the insignificance of me. That's why I feel that for me, all the big discoveries have been encounters with God Himself.

THE HARDER WAY

DUKE UNIVERSITY

James M.

I had just finished my junior year of high school. All I could think was, *Finally, summer is here. I can sleep in and play golf every day—this is gonna be great!* My father, however, saw things differently. Not more than a week after exams were done, we were on the road visiting colleges. We must have visited more than ten schools within a one-week time span. Every gym started looking the same, and every school's statistics began sounding identical. My frustrations came to an abrupt halt, however, when we made our last stop at what turned out to be the school of my dreams—Duke University.

My senior year passed quickly, while acceptance letters arrived and high school graduation came and went. August came, and I found myself moving into a Duke freshmen dorm. I gladly said good-bye to my parents, thrilled with the thought of finally being on my own.

It didn't take long for classes and the threats of college professors to abruptly put a damper on my excitement. I was managing my time with extreme diligence, not wasting a minute, but it still seemed that I would work all day and get nowhere. Although I was studying late into the nights, my

grades were lower than I was used to, and I quickly discovered that college wasn't the breeze high school had been. On top of that, I wasn't making many friends. Three weeks into the semester, the eighteen-year-old who couldn't wait to get out of the house was more homesick than ever.

There I was, the son of a retired army officer and a cadet enrolled in Air Force ROTC, crying tears of frustration and loneliness almost every day. I was (and still am) a very unemotional person, but at that point in my life, I honestly struggled to even walk into the cafeteria without breaking down. I was even more humbled by my inability to not burst into tears while speaking to my father on the phone. I had never been so unhappy in my life. I reached out for God during that time, and He gave me enough strength to persevere, but the depression stayed. By Thanksgiving, I had already applied to a state school back home, where I could join my old friends in the "fun" of college. I promised my parents that I would seriously pray before making my decision, but in all honesty, I had made up my mind.

One of my biggest struggles during this time was the awareness of my parents' disapproval of my transferring. This devastated me. Although my stubbornness and rebellious nature strengthened my resolve, I was crushed to not have their support. I had sought their approval my entire life. One afternoon during this time, I wrote a song with these lyrics:

*Why do rebellion and independence have to be so closely
linked?*

*Why does maturing require desertion from the army of family?
I have been raised to be released like an arrow from a bow,
Why does that release snap back on his arm as he lets me go?*

CHORUS

*It seems there is no choice that will end without some pain,
I can go where my heart leads me, and spit in the face of
my name.*

*Or I can march on, a soldier, to the cadence of command,
Only to wonder what might have been if I had lived as my
own man.*

*Why can't I see the direction that my hands and feet should go?
Should I follow the path that I see best or follow orders as I
was told?*

Will honor be lost if I disobey, and do as I believe?

*Will my choice throw mud on a love that could never again
be clean?*

Finally, the hurt I felt got the best of me, and I confronted my father. He apologized, we made amends, and then we began discussing the pros and cons of my decision. I remember him saying, “Don’t take the path of least resistance,” but that didn’t sit quite right. But then my dad asked me a question I will never forget: “Where in the Bible did God ever tell anyone to take the easier way? It was always the harder way.”

I paused and realized he was right, but immediately thought of several reasons why that didn’t apply to me. About two seconds later, before I ever spoke, the conviction of the Holy Spirit rushed upon me like the weight of the ocean. I found myself laying facedown on the floor, sobbing with the realization that he was right. God *did* want me to take the harder way, and I was to return to Duke. I was not going to “live as my own man”; I was going to live as God’s man. In that moment, I felt a closeness with both my heavenly Father and

my earthly father that I will never forget. It was the perfect picture of God calling His people to perseverance, while providing the strength and comfort to achieve it.

Upon returning to Duke, I was still scared. It took only a few hours, however, to completely feel God's peace and reassurance in my life, and only a few days to see the amazing evidence of God's promise. I ended up joining a fraternity and enjoying many new friendships, as well as witnessing opportunities that I never dreamed possible. As for the academics, they were still tough, though I managed to adjust and reprioritize my workload. I was also asked to join the leadership team for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The members of that team, as well as the rest of FCA, have turned out to be my closest friends.

My time at Duke has been the most challenging time of my life, but by far the most rewarding. The wisdom and maturity I have gained from the horrors of my freshman year have strengthened my faith in more ways than I can count. I can also see what Paul meant in Romans 8:28 a little more clearly: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Though the packages may look different, God remains the Giver of good gifts.

NORMAL—IT'S SO OVERRATED

PENN STATE

Annette M.

Transitioning to college was rough for me. On the one hand, there was nothing better than leaving home and finally having full independence. But on the other hand, there was nothing scarier than leaving home and having full independence. I didn't even know how to do my laundry.

I grew up in the church, constantly surrounded by Christians. Youth group felt like my middle name, and I'd been in some element of Sunday school since I could remember. But to be honest with you, I was sick of it. By the time I was a senior, I was more excited about "getting away" than pretty much anything else.

The actual transition was pretty abrupt, but I loved it. Literally, with the farewell wave of my hand, I was on my own. Completely on my own. This was the easy part. The harder part came, however, when I tried to figure out a) who was I? and b) what was mine?

Again, I was the church kid, so I just assumed my identity and purpose were solid. Not so much. I wasn't protected from fear, and I certainly wasn't invulnerable to the daily temptations

every college student seems to face. Clubs, sex, drinking, cheating, sex—did I already say that?—pornography, masturbation. You name it and it's here. Not here and hidden, but here, *here*. All of a sudden, it felt like so many things that used to seem awful were lurking at my doorstep. And the worst part was, I *wanted* to let them in.

For the first time since I was seven (still don't understand how kids get the whole Jesus thing, but I was one of 'em), I started questioning the most basic elements of Christianity. Plus, everyone always says God will love you regardless, so maybe this would be my "regardless" time.

I wrestled with God my entire freshman year. I kept my bare-minimum motions as a Christian, but the knocks at my door were a lot more appealing. I knew God and I weren't quite lovey-dovey, but I also knew I had all my life to take that route again. For now, though, I wanted to have sex. I wanted to go to parties, drink, and listen to degrading music with immoral lyrics. I wanted to believe the one-night stand would last. Simply put, I wanted to be like every other college student. I wanted to be "normal."

Thank God (literally) that didn't happen. Through His Word and a few committed people, God started peeling away the layers of my quest to be normal. First Peter 2:9 said it best to me: "You are a chosen person, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Wow! Two standouts in this became my benchmark.

First, God tells me *who I am*. I searched for almost a year, and every costume I tried on—as many as I could get my hands on—came up ridiculously short. When I learned/relearned who

I was in Christ, though, I realized no identity of this earth—let alone my campus—was going to satisfy. If I've put my faith in Christ, I've become a chosen one, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a person *belonging* to God. Uhhh, so much of my first year was about trying to belong to something or someone at my school. If God is really telling the truth, though, I no longer belong to this earth or to anything that wants to satisfy me in it. I belong to God. I belong to a set-apart family of His choosing.

Second, God goes on to tell me *why I'm here*—what my purpose is. And as much as I thought I was sick of being told what to do, I was really just sick of *who* was telling me what to do. I'm to “declare the praises of him” who brought me “out of darkness into his wonderful light.” If the light of Jesus really brought me out of darkness, I have every reason in the world (and desire) to talk about Him.

Once my heart got a hold of these big truths, my day-to-day existence literally 180'd. I'm far from perfect, but at least now I can recognize temptation's knock and consciously choose whether or not to open. And as for “normal,” I'm pretty happy without it. It's *so* overrated.

GO AHEAD AND SHAKE ME!

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Seth I.

My first few days at college rocked my self-worth and confidence to the core. I grew up with supportive parents who loved and encouraged me even when I made mistakes. I came from a church full of people who believed what I believed, acted like I acted, and valued what I valued. But when I got to college, I was separated from all that. I thought to be a good, successful person, you had to believe in Jesus and go to church, but most of my fellow students believed in relativity and frankly seemed to be doing just fine. If they didn't need Jesus, did I? I felt like my Religion 101 professor constantly misrepresented Christianity, and even though I tried, I didn't know how to defend it. Everything that gave me worth and meaning was being threatened.

It's like that dream where you find yourself standing in front of class without your clothes on. I felt exposed and defenseless as I woke up to the reality that I was in the minority...and that not every good, responsible, intelligent person believes in Christ. It

seemed like everything I held dear was being picked apart and deconstructed at every turn.

During that time I came across this passage in the Bible:

At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

HEBREWS 12:26–29, ESV

So two years ago my prayer became, “Okay, God, bring it on! I know You are in control, You have me in the palm of Your hand, and You have given me a kingdom that cannot be shaken. So go ahead and shake me! Shake everything off that can be shaken so that only what cannot be shaken may remain.”

Since then, I am convinced that what could have seriously damaged my faith became a trial that has made my faith stronger. God began stripping away what is merely man-made and cultural about my Christianity and started showing me who Jesus Christ is. He keeps my faith secure even when nothing makes sense. Many things have been shaken off that I thought were essential, but now I have a deep confidence in God that cannot be shaken.

WAIT-LISTED

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Erin T.

My college decision was far from what I expected. As my senior year of high school approached, I remember caring about one application only—the one to the University of Notre Dame. My entire family had gone there, I lived nearby, and I loved the school spirit. Everything fit perfectly. There were a million and one reasons why I knew this school had practically been built for me. Application submissions came and went, and by the end of my senior year, I had received acceptance letters from every school...except one. Notre Dame had placed me on a waiting list. I was shocked. I questioned whether God played any role in my college decision and if so, why He would make me sit in torture for the next three months (before I would, hopefully, be admitted to Notre Dame). Did He not care about my desires or my dreams to be in school at Notre Dame?

For the first time in my life, I was forced to sit back and trust God, waiting patiently for the next letter. Patience hasn't ever been my best quality. It wasn't until much later that I was reluctantly thankful for what God taught me during this process. The months passed, and I finally received the much-anticipated letter from Notre Dame. The opening line read, "We regret to inform

that you will not be a part of this year's freshmen class." I felt let down; I felt this new dread of the unknown seep into my stomach and heart. How had God not realized that this was what was best for me?

Come fall, I was one of the last to leave for school, leaving me plenty of time to think about how I was the only one of my friends to be attending a second-choice school. My loneliness and frustration only made matters worse. Transferring after first semester loomed as a strong possibility. When move-in day finally arrived, however, I was pleasantly surprised. My roommate was so sweet, and my dorm was beautiful. After the first month of school, I was even happily involved in one of the campus ministries. God was daily revealing to me the exact reasons He put me on this campus.

I'm sure Notre Dame would have been a lot of fun and certainly would have provided an enjoyable four years. I see now, however, that going to Notre Dame would have been comfortable. My old friends would have been down the hall, my family would have been a car ride away, and essentially, no overt challenges would have been in my life. From day one at Vanderbilt, I have been faced with new challenges in various arenas of my life—most importantly, my walk with God. Every day, I see more and more clearly God's reasoning in placing me here, a dark campus in so many ways, where He longs for His light to be seen.

CURVEBALL

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Tyler S.

I have always been very thankful for my family. Even as a child, I consistently thanked God for the family I had and assumed it would always be a stable force in my life. Then two weeks before I left for college, my parents sat my brother and me down. My brother and I were expecting the “with Todd going away to college, we’re really gonna have to watch our finances” speech. Instead, we received the biggest curveball of our entire lives. My parents said they were separating.

My dad gave everything the sense of being temporary, but I think we all knew none of this was going to be short lived. On that day, both my brother and I realized that the secure foundation we had grown up with was beginning to deteriorate beneath our feet.

Very shaken by the news, I left immediately and went over to a good friend’s house. I tried to hold back the tears, but I failed miserably. The looming separation made those final weeks before leaving for school some of the most awkward and difficult days of my life. On the surface, nothing had necessarily changed around the house, but we all knew the truth behind what was going on.

I was finally able to leave for school and temporarily forget what was going on at home. The biggest challenge for me was to accept all of this as a reality that wasn't going to change. The only thing I could—and can—do to continue my healing is to face the facts head-on. This isn't a nightmare I can wake up from and erase; it's a living part of my reality.

Another huge challenge was learning to accept my mother and father for who they were. Unfortunately, my parents battle the same sins that I do every day. It's hard to come to grips with the fact that your parents have weaknesses and imperfections and come from the same broken human race you do.

During my junior year in college, I finally began seeing a counselor who helped me talk about my feelings and thoughts. While I despised the idea of seeing a counselor, the encouragement of a few close friends to do so was such a blessing. I clearly needed guidance on the healing process and a willing ear to listen.

That same year, another curveball was thrown at me when my father remarried. Not only that, but at the wedding he announced the pregnancy of his new wife. I realize that the restoration and learning process of these events is far from complete, but in an unusual way, these circumstances have brought me closer to God. In short, it was easy for me to remain comfortable when my family was intact, but my need and dependency on God became much more apparent when this comfort was taken away.

I am by no means saying that divorce is good or will always have a positive impact on the people involved. I have struggled horribly with many things and continue to face challenges as they arise, none of which would have been an issue had my par-

ents not gotten a divorce. Thankfully, though, God, through Christ, is supreme over everything and somehow wants me to come to Him with my frustrations and troubles. Because of the relationship He wants me to have with Him, He alone serves as my refuge of strength and unfailing comfort. As St. Augustine wrote, “God is so powerful that he can create good out of evil.” In the same way, while the impact of divorce on anyone’s life would seem totally negative, through God’s awesome power and His incomprehensible love for us, He can use it for good.