

Elizabeth's journal

1 Week One

2 Oxymoron

3 An oxymoron is where two opposite or contradictory ideas are combined. To
4 me my life has been one big oxymoron with opposite or contradictory
5 thoughts, feelings and actions being experienced in the same moments. Or at
6 least it sure feels like it. My childhood was relaxed, safe, secure and
7 sheltered, but my future is uncertain. I think of my past with happiness but
8 when I think of my future, fear overwhelms me. One moment I am blissfully
9 happy about where my life is going and the next I am so scared about taking
10 the next step towards adulthood. There are parts of my life and myself I am
11 very happy with and others I am not happy about. My interaction with others
12 and God is also an oxymoron. Sometimes when I think I am doing something
13 good I really make things worse. Sometimes I feel so comfortable around my
14 friends and other times I feel insecure. When one moment I feel so secure
15 and sure about my faith in God, the next moment things seem so unfair and I
16 question God and I don't feel so sure about my faith.

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18 My Life In Chapters

19 *Chapter One: Enter Stage Left To Receive Your Gift*

20 This chapter is my birth, and the environment that I was born into. The stage
21 is my life, entering my birth. "The gift" is the family that I was born into. I am
22 so thankful to God for giving me my parents and brothers and sister. They
23 have helped shape me into the person that I am and I believe that every good
24 quality that I have is because of their great influence on my life. I am also
25 very thankful for being born into a Christian family, who has taught me about
26 our loving God all my life. It is the greatest birth gift I could imagine.

27 *Chapter Two: Moulded Under Blue Skies and Sunshine*

28 This chapter represents my early childhood, which was very happy and loving
29 (the 'blue skies and sunshine'). 'Moulded' represents my parents and older
30 siblings who taught me about life and about being a good person. They
31 guided and moulded me to be the best person I can be, and taught me without
32 even knowing it with their great example. I am what my parents moulded me
33 into.

34 *Chapter Three: The White Fairy Visits Me*

35 The white fairy (at least I think she is called the white fairy) is the fairy from
36 *Pinocchio* who turns him from a lifeless puppet into a real boy. Chapter Three
37 represents my later childhood and early teenage years when I began to think
38 for myself and be more independent of my parents. I was turned from a
39 'puppet' who did all my parents said and did into a being who could think for
40 myself and make my own decisions. Of course, Pinocchio made many
41 mistakes and needed Gepetto to teach and guide him. I still needed (and still
42 do) my parents' guidance and support.

43

44 *Chapter Four: Ginger Beer On the Kitchen Bench*

45 The first sign of my sister's pregnancy was always terrible morning sickness.
 46 The first sign of this morning sickness was always bottles of ginger beer which
 47 were never seen in our house otherwise. My nieces and nephews (I have 5
 48 now) were the first people whom I was a great example for, and they taught
 49 me to love something that often will not give that love back. They also
 50 represent a time in my life when I was given greater responsibility, even the
 51 responsibility for another person's life in my hands.

52 *Chapter Five: Getting Them While They're Young*

53 This chapter represents my involvement with the Lutheran Youth as a leader
 54 and older member rather than a camper or youth member. I learnt a great
 55 deal about myself and what I could do when I put my mind to something
 56 through leading camps and youth. It also represents me beginning to share
 57 my faith and teach others about God rather than being taught.

58 *Chapter Six: I Think I Can I Think I Can*

59 This chapter represents my TEE and the end of my schooling life. It shows
 60 what I can achieve when I try and it shows the rewards you can get out of
 61 hard work. It also represents my ability to survive huge pressure. It also
 62 represents my growth from a school girl to a young adult.

63 *Chapter Seven: Butterfly*

64 This chapter represents the growth and change that I have experienced since
 65 I left school. I have learnt so much from so many people and I feel like I have
 66 changed and grown into a better person. My friends from school have taught
 67 me to be so much more accepting of all people no matter who they are or
 68 what they do. My Christian friends have taught me so much about God and
 69 how to live my life. I have become so much more independent through
 70 earning my own money and being responsible for a lot more of my life. My
 71 involvement with LYWA has also increased, so much so that it takes up a lot
 72 of my time. I think it has brought out so many good qualities in me and I am
 73 always proud when I manage to pull something off successfully.

74 God and Religion play a huge part in all chapters of my story. From the time I
 75 was born my parents told me about my heavenly Father, and I have prayed to
 76 him and he has been in my life for as long as I can remember. In my younger
 77 years, I had a rather childish faith, praying when I needed to or when I had
 78 time. As I have grown, I have learnt more and God has played a bigger role in
 79 my life. It became a more active faith as I tried to seek answers to questions I
 80 didn't know and as I tried to integrate God into my every day life to have a
 81 positive effect on my actions.

82 The chapter that God has played the biggest part in is the last chapter. Being
 83 in LYWA has placed me in many new situations in which I was forced to think
 84 about and enhance my faith. I have also been put into some bad situations
 85 where I made wrong choices. The healing process and growth I experienced
 86 from this has really brought God closer to me. (I even asked someone to pray
 87 with me about it, a really big step for me!) I have become a lot closer to some

88 people who have been a huge influence on me. My Christian friends have
89 taught me by example how to make God a huge part of my life and have
90 helped me through some difficult issues in relation to God. Right now I feel
91 very sure in my faith and I know no matter what I do I can always come back
92 to our loving God who loves me unconditionally.

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95 Week Two

96 There have been many moments in my life when I was convinced that God
97 exists. One time that had quite a big impact on me was when I was, I think,
98 about 13 or 14 years old. I was tossing and turning in my bed, crying and
99 worrying over some teenage problem no doubt, that I can't even remember
100 now. I was being very quiet, I remember, because that's how everybody cries
101 when they are crying alone. I thought that I should just pray about it, and I
102 did, but it didn't change the way I felt, or take away that horrible upset feeling.
103 I was angry and upset, and wished that God could come down and hold me in
104 his arms. I wished that God was physical for me. Almost immediately after
105 thinking this my door opened and my Mum came in. I don't remember either
106 of us saying a word – words weren't what were needed in this instance. She
107 just lay next to me and held me until I fell asleep. It hit me then that this was
108 too much of a coincidence and I remembered that God sends others to do his
109 work.

110 One of the major beliefs or things about God that I have now is that God is
111 much greater than us that we can't even begin to understand him. Bear with
112 me a second. I will try to explain. Have you ever read the book *1984* by
113 George Orwell? In it, the government controlled the lives of the citizens
114 completely. They were slowly removing words from the English language so
115 the citizens could no longer even understand the concepts. For example, if
116 they removed the word 'freedom' and all words you could use to describe
117 freedom, how could the citizens comprehend the concept of freedom? They
118 couldn't, so they would stay content with the restricted life they were allowed.
119 Well, God is like this.

120 God is not human, he is greater than human. In fact, he is so much greater
121 and more awesome than us that we humans can't even begin to understand
122 his form, his ways, or him. That is why he uses human images or stories to
123 explain certain aspects of himself. For example, the human image of a
124 mother hen doesn't mean he is a hen, but protects us just like a mother hen
125 protects her chicks. This occurrence with my Mum kind of began this
126 understanding in me. God sends other people (in this case, my Mum) to do
127 his work. If I come across something about God that seems unanswerable
128 and you often just have to forget about it, and trust that it's just something you
129 can't understand. An example of this is the Trinity. It is impossible to be
130 completely explained, because it's a concept we don't have the words to
131 describe. Anyway, I don't want a god that I can explain because that would
132 mean I have a god that is only as great as me.

133 Sometimes I wonder how God could care for me when there are millions of
134 people in the world and I sometimes do things that are so horrible. And I
135 wonder how I could be such a mean person. But I don't worry for very long,
136 because I know that God cares for me. How could he love everyone as much
137 as a human loves his/her favourite person? Because he has more love to
138 give than you or I could ever begin to understand. And I know that he forgives
139 me no matter what I do because he has more patience and kindness and
140 grace than any human has or could understand, so much so in fact that he

141 died for me. So when God looks at me now he doesn't see the horrible
142 person I know I am sometimes, but he sees Jesus.

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145 Week Three

146 I tried so hard to think of an RE lesson in which I learnt something that
147 changed my faith but I couldn't. I can honestly say that I have never heard
148 anything in RE that I didn't already know. If I didn't know it already I down
149 right disagreed with it. I'm sure that there must have been times when I could
150 have learnt something that would enrich my faith, but to tell you the truth, I
151 went into almost every religion lesson with the attitude that it was a waste of
152 time, and that any Catholic belief that differed from my own was wrong and
153 outdated. Wrong, yes I know. I regret this, and wonder what I could have got
154 out of religious education if I really tried. However, my faith has been
155 challenged and changed and has grown due to many different people
156 teaching me about my faith. Many of these lessons were taught through
157 example, but some were taught in the traditional 'lesson' way. I have a very
158 good friend called Katy. She is the president of the Lutheran Youth of
159 Western Australia and she is a role model for me as well as a good friend and
160 lots of fun. I have learnt from her attitude towards God and the way she lives
161 with him in her life. I will give you an example of one lesson she taught me.
162 At the last camp we ran together we were making popcorn for the youth who
163 were watching a movie. We just threw heaps of oil in one massive pot, put a
164 bag of popping corn in, put on the lid and hoped for the best. It turned out
165 really good, and there was heaps for everyone. I was thinking "Wow, we are
166 really good." and then I heard Katy say, "Thankyou, Jesus!" That stuck in my
167 mind and I wondered at how much God is an everyday part of her life. I used
168 to live my ordinary life going from day to day. I would spend time with God
169 when I was in trouble, or on days like Sunday, but he wasn't a part of every
170 minute of my day. I didn't realise or associate God with all parts of my day,
171 and realise that every good thing that happens no matter how small is
172 because of him. I am slowly beginning to remember him more often, and
173 make him more a part of my everyday life.

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176 Week Four

177 When you turn around what kind of shadow is cast by the light?

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179 This is a line from a song by my favourite band The Tea Party. I think that it
180 means when you turn around and look at your past and see yourself properly
181 (take a good hard look at yourself) what do you see? Do you like the person
182 that you have become? I have chosen this as the title of the next chapter in
183 my story (my future) because I want it to be my growth into the best possible
184 person that I can be. When I turn around I want to like the shadow that is cast
185 by the light. So the main theme I would like the next chapter to be about is
186 growth. I have these lines written on my bedroom wall to remind me of this.
187 Sometimes I hate to turn around, because I know that I'm not going to like the
188 shadow that is cast by the light. There are so many things that I do and so
189 many things about me that I hate, but the important thing is that I try to
190 address the problem and fix it. It is a very hard thing to do, but slowly my
191 shadow turns from something I hate to see to something that I'm beginning to
192 like.

193 A part of my growth or what I would like to become includes how I interact with
194 others. I know that people you hardly know often upset you or you don't like
195 them for a small reason that could have been avoided. I guess what I'm trying
196 to say is that I would like to make a difference to people's lives in small ways.
197 I want people to think of me with a smile because this one time I did
198 something nice for them they didn't expect. I see my future growth as also
199 including continuing my involvement with LYWA, and improving my
200 organisational and leadership skills (maybe even get the minutes out on
201 time!!!). I also see the occupation I hope to have (midwifery) as playing a big
202 part in my future. I want to help new mothers adjust and make it a smooth
203 transition. I suppose I could say I want to change the world (who doesn't) but
204 I'm going to change it one person at a time.

205 I would like my relationship with God to be a part of my growth process. I
206 think it is the most important part because it forms the base or foundation for
207 all the other qualities or things I want to do or possess. I would like to
208 continue learning more and seeking answers. I want to learn how to discuss
209 my faith more with all people, but particularly with those who are not Christian.
210 I want to strengthen the feelings and beliefs I have in God. I know that with
211 him I can do anything. I want to find some way to ease the doubts I feel about
212 my faith, to find a way to answer the questions that seem unanswerable. I
213 think that with a lot of hard work this kind of relationship with God is possible.
214 I know that I have the persistence and will to learn more about him.

215 Recently I experienced the first time in my life I was ready to give the whole
216 Christian thing away because it seemed so unfair. I was very angry at God.
217 But I didn't leave it at that. After my own research didn't help or get any
218 answers, I went to talk to some of my Christian friends who are my age and
219 understand the struggle. They helped me through this difficult time and my
220 relationship with God was strengthened because I doubted but came back to
221 him. My friend Serica said that that shows real faith. If I can stick with God

222 and he sticks with me after a “fight” like that, I know that we can do anything
223 together.

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226 Concluding Remarks

227 I would like to try and express the huge debt I owe to God for all of the
228 wonderful gifts he has given me so far in my life and for sticking with me when
229 I stuffed up or didn't want to have anything to do with him anymore.

230 I would also like to try to explain how much it helps to know that he is always
231 there and willing to help. When I have big decisions that I have to make
232 coming up in my life, it helps to know that he is there to guide and help me no
233 matter where I am.