

Religion: From Family Tradition to Personal Significance

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If I were to ask the secondary school students in this area if their family had any religious traditions while they were growing up, most would say yes. This is one experience that a large majority of students share to some extent. Many students have family-grown religious habits that have been a part of their lives ever since they were young. At boarding school, this all changes. Away from home, students generally live without the direct guidance or direction of their parents. What happens to their religion?

As it turns out, in this environment, religion can play staggeringly distinct roles in different students' lives. For some, it can be a link to the idea of home, a continuation of family traditions that have been ingrained from a young age. Their religious habits might continue, but only for the sake of tradition and family culture. For others, it can be something often forgotten, a remnant that has now become just yet another childhood memory. Caught up in the daily whirlwind of activities, it is easy to focus on everyday life's most urgent priorities and let old habits fade.

Yet I think there is another way to best handle religion when away at boarding school: make religion personally significant. I've found that forming religious habits and practices can be a vital spiritual outlet for students away from home. Let's face it—boarding school can be stressful. Even when most things do go successfully, the stress can mount even more with increased responsibilities and pressure to keep up the pace. By forming personal religious habits, students can stay refreshed, calmed, and reenergized to perform their best at school.

Personally, I've found setting up these religious habits for myself have made me feel much more confident and steady during my day. Even something as simple as a short word of prayer every morning does wonders for my mind. At boarding school, it can often be hard to escape from the rigors and noise of everyday life. Being able to take a step back and look at the bigger picture can give direction to aimlessness. It helps me to connect with my spiritual self and realign myself on the right path.

Secondary school is a time of transition, from childhood to adulthood. An important part of that transition is having the independence to make decisions for oneself, to be deliberate about the way life is led. So as we transition into the winter holidays, let's think: what truly is religion to us? Will we leave it as a family tradition, let it disappear into memory, or will we make it personal and embark down our own spiritual path?