

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Holding Out for Hope

By Adam Trest
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Trest

I started drawing when I was three, or at least that's what my mom always told me. She was an English teacher, but she could never find it in her heart to get on to me when I would color over the illustrations in my story books. She always said that I was just trying to make them better.

Having that type of support system is dangerous for an artist, because I grew up with the Spiderman way of thinking. *With great power comes great responsibility*, right? Only in my family, we replaced "power" with "talent."

The "T" word was thrown at me my whole life, and to some extent I really do believe some people have greater talents than others, but I really prefer the term *gift*. What I have is so much more than an ability that I was born with. I believe that the Lord gifted me with a desire to create. Between that desire and the encouragement of my family, I was given the perfect equation for becoming an artist.

When I look back at my life thus far, the hardest times were when I've not trusted that the Lord gave me adequate gifts to carry out his plan for my life. It was the years I spent in architecture school dealing with anxiety and depression

because I thought I knew that being an architect was going to make me happy.

I was given amazing opportunities to intern in West Palm Beach and design actual buildings – all things that are dreams for architecture students, but I found myself lost and struggling.

Returning to school that fall after my internship, I was drowning with my decision about what to do with my life. I truly believe that the Lord put a professor named Brent in my life to help put me back on my path. Sitting in his office, broken, he mentored me through the toughest decision of my life, and for the first time in my college career I saw a glimmer of hope.

I changed my major and poured myself into studio work. I honed the gifts the Lord blessed me with, and used my remaining time in college as a springboard into my professional life.

The roller coaster of life has been full of highs and lows. Seasons of hopefulness and hopelessness. Hindsight has always proven those peaks were when I was trusting in my gifts, knowing that the Lord would provide because I was honoring him through those talents... until December 4, 2011.

I talked to her an hour before we got the call. There had been an accident and just like that, my mom was gone. My number one cheerleader, my encourager, my toughest critic. Hopeless doesn't begin to describe the feeling. When you've had that kind of support taken away, it feels like the floor has been pulled out from under you. I moved home. I stopped painting. I was hopeless.

I remember sitting in the front pew of the funeral home and seeing the chapel bursting at the seams, because that is something that you should know about my mom: She used her gifts as a teacher to touch so many lives. I saw the physical accumulation of her gift fill that room: generations of

students, parents, and coworkers that she touched. It was a glimmer of hope.

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That day was long, and so was that following week. As a family we celebrated family birthdays and anniversaries, followed by our first Christmas without her. As hard as those days were, there was also a celebration of a life well lived. In that celebration of stories and memories, the glimmer of hope grew into a challenge to live my life using my gifts to honor the One who gave them to me.

My mom lived that every day, and for the last nine years I have tried to do the same. The artwork I create doesn’t have anything to do with my talents or abilities. My work is a gift that I get to share, because I find my hope in Christ.

Trest, a member of Crosspointe Church, Laurel, is a full-time studio artist working and living in Laurel with his wife Lily and daughters Fincher and Poppy.