

March 11, 2018.

Dear Libertas family,

Greetings from Tennessee! College is going well, but I definitely miss home and Libertas a lot. I finally found a good coffee shop in town but it still doesn't beat Starbucks with Miss Breeden. With almost a year of college studies under my belt I decided it was time to write home and let you know a little bit about the transition I personally faced coming out of high school. There are a few topics Mr. Davis and I have identified that I think are both relevant and important that I want to discuss in this letter.

First off, I want to address whether or not I experienced a consistent message between home, church, and school. For me personally, I definitely feel as though I experienced consistency in all three areas of my life. My family holds conservative beliefs when it comes to topics in Christianity such as the origin of life, the relevance of the Bible as a whole, and what it means to be a follower of Christ. These values are all things that were maintained throughout my high school experience, and that was not due to any lack of their presence in school. While at Libertas I was regularly talked to about these relevant topics and taught how to examine my beliefs for myself. I never felt as though what I was hearing at church and in my home was being challenged or disregarded in my school setting. For me, Libertas went above and beyond to actively strengthen both my personal faith and my understanding of Christianity throughout high school. Some of the things I learned in from Mr. Davis in apologetics I still find myself using regularly both at school and in my interaction with others. For me, apologetics solidified my beliefs by working to both eliminate confusion or doubt as well as to build my confidence in articulating my beliefs. This level of consistency was extremely important for me as I entered

college for several reasons. First, even at a Christian university, this is a time in my life where I have found that beliefs actively conflict. A lot of students entering college didn't take the time to solidify for themselves what they believed in high school, and so the new things they are hearing now are not subjects they are prepared to defend. Nobody can defend something they don't understand, and many college students simply don't understand what topics such as evolution or postmodernism really mean in relation to their faith. Secondly, the level of independence students are given in college absolutely requires them to understand what they believe from all angles. Every day I am having to make choices for myself without the input and wisdom of a parent or teacher, and those choices are a lot easier to make rationally because of the consistent foundation that was established throughout my high school years.

The second topic I want to address directly relates to the first, and that is the spiritual climate at Libertas. I definitely have to say that the atmosphere I experienced while attending Libertas was one that helped me dramatically. I can remember days in high school where I would come to class in the morning with something weighing on my heart and it never took long for a teacher or student to take the time to talk or pray with me. The family atmosphere between both the student body and faculty made me feel as though I was always being looked out for by people who genuinely cared, and who were willing to go the extra mile to take time for me as an individual. It was impossible for me to leave without a smile at the end of a school day, no matter how the day had started when I walked through those doors. That climate in high school definitely inspired me to be that person for others in college, and as a result I have been able to make valuable relationships here as well.

Lastly, I want to talk about how Libertas prepared me both academically and spiritually for entering the college environment. I can personally confirm the rumors that Rhetoric is way

harder than any required English class in college, including the “Honors Rhetoric” class I am taking this semester. The professor of that class allowed me to be done with the entire semester at spring break after she read my first essay. Thank goodness I don’t have to attend that class anymore this semester because it was inconveniently scheduled at 8:00 am ☺. During my first semester in English 101 the professor asked me where I attended high school and how I learned to write like that. Before Christmas break she asked if I would be interested in developing my previous essay further because she wanted to submit it for publication. My experience in the humanities has been that college professors love the classical approach, and I have never felt lost or ill-prepared for any assignments in these areas. Science is definitely a bit more challenging, but I can still testify that regardless of whether or not I was exposed to the material before coming to college, the critical thinking skills I obtained at Libertas are far more valuable for success in a STEM based class than anything else. My science classes are all basically concerned with one thing: problem solving. Because of the way Libertas trained me to approach problems, I am able to avoid a lot of the confusion and stress that my classmates struggle with. Overall, I have no doubt that I owe my success as a college freshman to the distinct skills and values I learned in high school.

Before I end this letter, I wanted to share a brief story that happened to me a few months ago while attending a dinner party. After dinner I was talking to an older gentleman with a few of my friends about what we were learning that semester. Somewhere in the conversation the topic of Christianity and the Bible came up, and the man immediately told us that he didn’t believe in the Old Testament, and that there was no way all of the “stories” in there could be preserved accurately into the written Bible we have today. My friends and I looked at each other awkwardly with “do we respond or walk away” kind of glance. And then it hit me (like a literal

light bulb turned on in my brain) and I was like “Oh my word Mr. Davis said this would happen in college and he was actually right!” I started to remember details we had studied my Junior year in apologetics about the historicity of the Bible and textual criticism. I looked at Lauren and Ally (my friends) and then back at the man and I slowly said to him that I wasn’t sure his claims were 100% accurate. I asked if we could talk about it and we talked for at least an hour about the Bible and its credibility. At the end of the conversation the man said two things to me. First, he told me that he had never heard someone my age address topics like that in such detail. Then he looked at us and said “I think I might have learned something today.” I can’t say that I definitively changed his mind about the Bible, but I can tell you that in that moment I was able to know for myself what I believed, and that I had an answer to give. That feeling of knowing what you believe and how to defend it is invaluable to me as a college student and a Christian woman.

I am praying for you all back home, have a fantastic rest of the school year!

Until next time,

Emily De Wind