



Tulips, Tomatoes, Toddlers & Teens

Yolanda White Powell

As spring unfolds, I am excited about my flower and vegetable garden. With all the outdoor magazines showcasing bright flowers and ripened fruits, I grow even more motivated to ‘rush the process.’

Being an amateur gardener, I find myself brooding over the hidden seeds. With anxious desire to see fruitfulness, I over saturate the ground with water or pour on too much fertilizer. What appears to be dotting affection turns out to be disastrous overkill. I’m learning this lesson slowly.

Unfortunately, we sometimes do a similar “rush job” on our children. We push them along through the various phases of life from the womb to the classroom. As they wobble and toddle, our constant whisper becomes, “Grow up! Grow up!”

When our son Joseph (who turns 14 this spring) was 7 years old, I found myself anxious and distressed over his impetuous ways. As a first grader he was hyper-active, self-absorbed and disconnected from the structures of school. Every *other* day notes poured in from his weary teacher. In church he was equally as busy and agitating. My tears were plentiful and regular. Oh! how I questioned myself, my parenting, my God!

During a Bible study at work, (where I was a part-time radio announcer) I went on and on sharing my deep concerns about Joseph’s life and his ultimate future. After listening intently, the general manager of the station finally chimed in. He shared some “gardening” advise with me that forever changed my perspective on parenting. With aged wisdom, he counseled me:

I’ve been listening to you talk about Joseph, who’s

*only seven years old—by the way. And it sounds
like there's a lot of talent there. But, I hear the Lord saying,*

“Just give the flower time to bloom.”

The Lord calmed my fears that day and delivered me from the anxiety of “slowed offspring growth.” That became my term for it! I prayerfully gave Joseph time to stretch and grow. Today, he is a “full-bodied teenager” who is an inch taller than me. He’s still hyper-active and a annoyingly self-absorbed at times. But, he’s grown mature in many ways. This past year he’s made straight A’s and is working skillfully on a interesting research project. He is organizing a Christian boy’s camp at our house this summer and is a dinner whiz-kid in the kitchen. Are you anxious about your tulips or tomatoes, toddler or teen? Relax! Time has a way of bringing ‘hidden seeds’ to full bloom!

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