

Transitions and trust

Much as I cannot believe it, our older son is in fifth grade. And we're not all that far from the end of school.

On a school field trip this week, he and his fellow fifth graders climbed aboard school buses and traveled to the middle school they'll be attending in September.

Afterward, I asked a thousand questions. Did you see the gym? What was the cafeteria like? Will you have a locker? How was the bus ride? What did the other kids think? Did you see any students?

I'm much more curious about the transition than he is. Mothers always are. Change is coming, and I don't know what to expect. Middle school is a vague memory for me. It was a different time and a different place. I have a million questions and almost zero advice.

For as long as I've been able, I've tried to prepare our children for the next step—especially the big ones. I give them as much information as I have about what lies ahead. But I can't always ease the transitions. We don't always know what's going to happen. And, I found myself thinking that sometimes there is a gift in not really knowing what lies ahead and just trying to be open to what might come.

When we were preparing to adopt, we read and read books about toddler adoption. I followed online forums. Every family's story was different. Some adoption situations seemed far beyond what we could ever handle. Others seemed more manageable, but still daunting to a couple who had never been parents. But none of the stories were ours. Finally, I set the books aside.

"If we had read a book about everything that could go wrong in a marriage," I told my husband, "we would never have gotten married."

But we did get married. And no book could have described the journey that we would walk together as a couple, a journey that has twice taken us to the other side of the world to become parents. Every day as we turn the page of our own family book, not knowing what awaits us, we have to trust that God is on the next page, too.

He always is.

As we look ahead to Holy Week, I find myself thinking of the apostles and other followers of Jesus. They didn't know how they would be tested, how Jesus would suffer, how they would watch Him die. Maybe it was better, though, that they didn't know. God prepares us for life in ways we don't always recognize until we are in the moment. And when we aren't ready, He fills in the gaps.

I can't prepare our 11-year-old for middle school. As with his fifth-grade homework and trumpet practice and getting the family out the door on time for elementary school, this is a transition he is going to handle on his own. And, with a mixture of wistfulness and pride, I'm OK with that.