

Emily Wendt

In the summer of 2009, I, along with all the eight-grade confirmands, attended the El Camino Pines church camp in Fraiser Park. Every night, we would go with our cabin and counselor after dinner, for an evening worship where all different types of sermons and activities were held. Sometimes worship would be in the sanctuary, anyplace outside or we'd hike up to the campfire. On the second night of camp, all the campers were called to the sanctuary. As we filed up the steps, a counselor would turn us around, and blindfold us with a bandana. They'd lead us into the sanctuary, and set us down in a specific spot. As I waited for everyone to come in, I started to feel lost and scared. I felt like my senses were deprived from me, and though I knew God was with me, I still felt alone. It began to get very quiet, and suddenly I felt a hand on my wrist pulling me up to my feet, and made me put my arms out to the side. One of the counselors began to speak from a script, but I didn't exactly understand what he was talking about at first. After about a minute, I understood that the script he was reading from was the story of Jesus' crucifixion. He told how Jesus was found in the garden, and captured by soldiers and taken to Galilee where he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be crucified. As the counselor read on of Jesus' sentence, he stated, "And they twisted together a crown thorns and set it on Him." Shortly after that was read, I jumped as I felt my forehead pricked with something sharp, and then pricked again. At this point I then realized that all the campers were not only being told the story of Jesus' death, but actually going through it ourselves. The counselor continued the story. When Jesus was put on the cross, and nails were put through His hands and feet, I received a nail in each hand. Jesus was raised on the cross, and just as His soldiers and spectators shouted at Him, all the counselors began screaming "He is not the Son of God; He is the King of Jews. If He is the True savior why doesn't he save himself?" When Jesus had been given wine vinegar on a sponge, water was flicked in my face. When Jesus had finally died on the cross, and his side was speared, a counselor brushed the side of my waist.

When the story was finished, the counselors said we could take off our blindfold. As I looked around and saw where I was, I felt relief and familiarity, but at the same time, I didn't know what to think; I didn't know what to do next. Like I was in a state of shock. We were told to find our cabin leader, and as I walked back to the cabin with my group, we all walked in silence. After we were ready for bed, our cabin leader Caitlin called us into our nightly group circle, to discuss our day. We talked about the worship that night, and what we felt about it. A lot of us started; I included. The two nails we each received, we got to make into a necklace, and as we put it together, we were told that whenever we wear or look at this necklace with the two crossed nails, we are to remember what we went through that night to get them, what God did for us, what Jesus went through for us, and to always remember that he died for us and our sins.]

I believe God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I believe I am a sinner, and always will be, but when I do sin, God is there to forgive me. He is there to hear my confession, whether it be out loud in Sunday service, prayer, or in my heart, and I know He will not judge me, for I am forever His child.

(Shows Necklace) "I know I will never forget that night at camp, where I learned what Jesus went through to bring me here to this day. I will never forget what God did for me; what Jesus did for me. I will never forget that He saved me. I will never forget that He is forever my Savior."

I believe God has given me tools and traits to help guide me through this crazy life. First, God has given me tremendous strength, not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually. With this spiritual strength, I have hope and faith, to fully trust in Him, though it is sometimes very hard to believe in Him, and all that He has done. I am given courage to be proud in my faith as a Christian-Lutheran, and strengthened everyday as I take responsibility in my faith and actions. I believe God himself, brought me to the church of confirmation classes, and all other events to learn of His wonders. I believe the Ten Commandments are ways to live by, as basic rules, and that teachings in the Holy Bible can be used as everyday "guidelines" to get through life. When I am lost, I can seek advice in its stories and parables, and when I lose hope, or faith in Him, I can be reassured I am never alone. I believe that Holy Communion is a dangerous meal. One of which, through baptism, I am able to receive every Sunday. Though it may seem like a small wafer, and shot of grape wine, as the body and blood of Jesus Christ, communion is a very powerful way of being strengthened through God.

I believe that my blood family, my friends, and my church family are all angels God has put on His Earth, to help guide me through all the tough times, and have fun in all the good times. I know that I absolutely could not do anything with my parents. My mum, the fighter that she always has been, had such strength and belief and faith in God for me when it wasn't certain that I was going to be here, alive, today, and her beauty and love, I know, will always keep me safe. And my dad, the solid rock in my life, that pushes me to be the best I can be, though sometimes tough, is still the daddy that promised no matter how old I am or how big I get, I can always sit in his lap and be his little girl. I love you guys so much. All the friends that I've made through moving, and traveling, are amazing. They are always there to help me get through school, and hard times, or just when I want to talk to someone, and I know they always will be there for me. I love them so much, and couldn't get through the days without them, for they are my world; my everything. And my new church family; my pastor, my youth directors, and the congregation, also has a large place in my heart. You all have helped me start a new way to live life with God, and have shown me so much kindness and compassion and love, and I am so thankful for all of you in my life.

I believe I have been called on by God, not only to experience and venture out into the world, following His path for me, but also to serve Him and others; to show people His love, and His words and deeds. One day, all the confirmands had a meeting to help us start our "I Believe" statements. In part of this meeting, we all took a "spiritual gifts" test. On the test, we had to rate a specific statement of serving action from 1 to 3; 1 being the lowest, 3 the highest. At the end, when we had to tally our scores, the result would show a column with highest point-rating that had a specific gift. I received the gifts of giving, mercy, and faith. Through this test, I believe the gifts I were given are true to what God has planned for me. I love the gift of giving, and serving my community, whether it is in church, or somewhere else. It's one of the greatest feelings in the world to serve God and His people, and is able to do it every day; spreading His words and deeds. The gift of mercy; to have compassion and forgiveness. Though this gift is one I admit I need to work on, I feel it is a strong gift to have, and one that I believe

God had a specific purpose for me to have. And ultimately, and gift of faith. The ability to have confidence in my beliefs and understandings as a Christian. My faith can't be shaken, and it can't be destroyed, and through faith, I am forever strong.

Finally, I believe God is my foundation. One that, like my faith, can not be broken or severed, or compromised. And I believe it will continue to grow stronger as I will in my faith, and become even more capable of not crumbling from sin. Everyday, from the moment I wake up, until I go to sleep again, and even through the night, I know God is with me. He walks along side me, with every step I take, and goes through my life by my side until the day I reach His gates. Though He created everything that happens to me, all intended with a greater purpose, He goes through the amazing times in my life, and also the bad. He is there when I need to talk to someone, when I seek advice, when I am hurt, when I pray for healing or forgiveness or just for waking me up to live the day he has given. I believe that in my life already, I have experienced more than most have or ever will, but I know there is far more to come. I am so excited to know there is a world out there that I can explore with God and the tools He has given me to accomplish those small things called dreams. I know that sometimes, it will be hard, and my faith will be tested, but with God I am strong. With God I have faith to fight for. With God, I have a life to look forward to and experience to the fullest, and with God all things are possible.

I believe in Romans chapter 8, verses 38 and 39:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Amen

Thank you. 😊