

Good morning, everyone.

I want to start by saying thank you for being here. Whether you're here out of habit, curiosity, or because someone promised you brunch afterward—I'm glad you came. Because today, I want to talk about something that's deeply personal, a little messy, and incredibly important: faith.

Now, talking about how faith is formed feels a bit like trying to explain how a smoothie gets made. You toss in love, community, Scripture, a few campfires, a splash of confusion, and somehow... it turns out to be nourishing. Not always pretty, but nourishing.

When I reflect on my own faith journey, I realize it's less like a neatly organized photo album and more like a scrapbook full of sticky notes, smudged prayers, and coffee stains. There are moments I'd frame and hang on the wall—and others I'd rather shove in a drawer. But in all of it, there's been grace. And that grace has shown up in people, in places, and in moments I didn't expect.

It Started at Home

My journey began at home. My parents didn't just talk about faith—they lived it. And not in a “perfect family devotional every night” kind of way. More like “we're tired, stressed, and still choosing kindness” kind of way. They showed me that faith isn't just for Sunday mornings—it's for the messy, ordinary, everyday moments. When life handed them challenges that would make most people shout into a pillow, they responded with quiet consistency and love.

They taught me that you don't need a halo to walk with God—you just need patience, compassion, and maybe a good sense of humor. Their faith wasn't flashy, but it was real. And that kind of faith sticks. It planted seeds in me that would grow slowly, sometimes painfully, but always with purpose.

Then Came Camp Silver Lake

Then came Camp Silver Lake Mennonite. I've been going for years, and let me just say: it's basically a spiritual upgrade. Like downloading the latest version of yourself—with fewer bugs. Whether it was worshiping by the lake, misplacing my toothbrush every year, or learning deep truths during small groups under the stars, camp became the place where faith went from being something I inherited to something I claimed.

Camp wasn't just fun—it was formative. It was where I first felt God's presence in a way that was personal. Where I realized that faith could be joyful, communal, and deeply rooted in love. I'm incredibly grateful to my church for giving me the opportunity to become a Silver Lake camp member. Without their support, I might never have encountered such a transformative environment—one that continues to shape me year after year.

There's something about being surrounded by nature, unplugged from distractions, and immersed in community that opens your heart in ways you didn't expect. Camp taught me that faith isn't just about believing—it's about belonging. It's about showing up, even when you're unsure. It's about singing worship songs out of tune but with full conviction—and realizing God doesn't mind our off-key notes when our hearts are in tune.

Friendship as a Mirror of Grace

Allie, my best friend, has seriously impacted my faith journey. She's like a mix of a Bible expert, a counselor, and a caffeine-fueled superhero. Her faith pushes me, and our friendship helps me grow. We go from laughing together to having deep talks about God, which is the best way to do it.

She's someone who reminds me that faith isn't about having all the answers—it's about asking the right questions and walking through them together. She's been a mirror of grace in my life, reflecting back the love and patience I sometimes forget I need. And she's proof that God often works through relationships to shape us, challenge us, and remind us we're not alone.

Campfire Theology and Community

And then there are my camp friends. Let's be real: nothing says spiritual bonding like roasting marshmallows and sharing testimonies by flashlight. They've taught me that faith isn't just about personal growth—it's about community. About laughing and crying and figuring things out together. About holding space for each other's doubts and celebrating each other's breakthroughs.

Some of my most meaningful spiritual moments didn't happen in a church building—they happened around a campfire. In whispered prayers. In shared silence. In the kind of vulnerability that only comes when you feel safe enough to be real. Those moments reminded me that God isn't just found in sermons and songs—He's found in friendship, in laughter, in late-night talks under the stars.

The Quiet Work of Grace

Through all these experiences, I've learned that faith doesn't always come in grand revelations. Sometimes it shows up in quiet moments—in the stillness, in the struggle, in the questions. It's not always easy. There have been seasons of doubt, of pain, of wondering if I was even on the right path. But even in those moments, something kept me going. A whisper of grace. A reminder that I wasn't alone.

And in those times, one verse has stayed with me. Romans 8:18: *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* That verse? It's

pure hope. It's like God saying, "I know things are hard, but hang tight—you haven't seen the best part yet."

It reminds me that pain isn't pointless. That what we go through now is shaping something beautiful. Kind of like spiritual leg day—it hurts, but the strength that comes is worth it

The Journey Isn't Over

So as I stand here and share this with you, I want to say that my faith journey isn't finished—and neither is yours. We're all still growing, still tripping sometimes, still wondering if God hears us when we mutter confused prayers into the void. Spoiler alert: He does.

Faith isn't perfect. It's not always polished. But it's powerful. And it's worth pursuing.

So I encourage you—look back at your own journey. Who helped shape your faith? What moments made it real? What carried you through? Let those memories remind you that God has been with you all along—and He's not done yet.

And if you're in a season of doubt or confusion, know this: you're not broken. You're becoming. Faith isn't about being flawless—it's about being faithful. About showing up, even when it's hard. About trusting that grace is still at work, even when you can't see it.

Closing Reflection

So take a moment. Think about your own story. The messy parts. The beautiful parts. The parts you're still figuring out. And know that every step, every stumble, every small act of love—it all matters. It's all part of the journey.

Faith is formed in the fire and the quiet. In the laughter and the tears. In the campfires and the coffee stains. And through it all, grace is weaving something beautiful.

Amen.