

Cassie Sandberg

My faith story starts out very early in my life. The family God placed me in was one that had a long line of Christians before me. I was blessed to have Grandparents, Great-Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles who were all strong in their own faiths. So when it comes to my years before knowing God, it's always been hard to pinpoint exactly how my life was different. I knew from day one that I needed him, it was more or less just a matter of when.

The story goes that I prayed my prayer of faith and acceptance when I was about three, on the way home from Awana. However, the memory I have most vividly is when I was about four or five. I'd been sent away from the dinner table to my room for disobeying my parents in some way. I remember sitting on my bed and knowing that what I'd done was wrong, but I didn't know why I'd done it. So I closed my eyes and prayed, "God, I know I've probably already said this, but just in case it didn't work or I did something the wrong way, I'm asking again. Please come into my heart."

The years pass as I attended church and youth group. When I first prayed, I had assumed that my life would be great from now on, because I'd done what I had to do. However, I was faced with another turning point when I was in eighth grade. After being homeschooled for most of my education, my parents and I decided that I should attend a co-op. I started taking classes one day a week at a church in Barrington. At this co-op I was required to take a Biblical Theology class. In it we were going through a book called Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem.

I'd never really read about the different Doctrines of Christianity. My world was rocked as I learned about how many view Christianity had. I never knew there were so many ways to believe in the same God. I felt the need to figure out exactly what I believed or I'd be called a bad Christian. However, I didn't know how to figure out which views were the right ones and which were wrong.

But, just like He always does, God had a plan. I have always loved my Youth Group, but the year before I'd been required to take the Bible class, things had started to get rough and there were almost no people showing up anymore. So the next year there were huge changes, especially in the leadership roles. I came back, not really expecting it to be much better. But I found myself in the very capable hands of amazing teachers like Keith, Lori, and Jason. I also had the best small group leaders, Melissa and a high school senior, Cori. That year I learned what Christian fellowship felt like and I found the place I could question my faith without being told I was a bad Christian.

As I was seeking my answers, God threw another curve ball my way. My Grandpa was diagnosed with a form of Leukemia. He started going to the hospital for treatments and all kinds of stuff. My Grandma barely spent time at home and things started to change. Because of the distance between us and my Grandparents, we weren't able to visit very often. I wanted so badly to run up to my Papa and give him a hug, because I knew if I could do that, somehow things would get better. Things didn't get better. My Grandpa got sicker and in June of 2011 he passed away. I never got my hug.

During his months at the hospital, I'd emailed my Grandpa. I was frustrated and scared so I asked him why. I asked him why such a good person could get sick on God's watch. I asked him why everything was so hard. I asked him why God hadn't made life easier. And I remember getting an answer back. It didn't have the answers to my questions, it wasn't something that made me see the light, but it was full of hope. My Grandpa who was sick and dying was hopeful. He told me to trust God's timing and to let my life rely on him. But he wasn't scared or angry or hurt.

As I progressed into high school I was still asking questions, but by this point they'd gotten a whole lot harder to answer. I got a new small group leader, Sandy. She was there for me when I had a million questions. When I couldn't understand something and I didn't know how to comprehend the things I was hearing, she was there with wise words and a comforting hand. She prayed for me so many times and even brought me to Pastor Adam. In the end I wasn't able to answer most of my questions, but I did learn that some questions you just couldn't answer.

I've been through some stressful months over the past four years. I've had troubles with my faith, but I've always had Reverb to come to when I needed help. Whenever I feel tired or self-conscious I know that it

doesn't matter what I feel like, if I come to Reverb I will feel loved and blessed.

My story is far from over. As much as I don't want to admit it, my walk isn't perfect. It's not ever where I wish it could be. Every day is a struggle. There are days that I forget to acknowledge God in the simple things in my life. But I'm working towards a better goal. The college that I've chosen is one that I know will grow and challenge me in the same ways I've been challenged before, just in a different way.

Every day I remind myself of my favorite verse in the Bible. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." I have a plan for my future, but I know who holds my future in his hands and I can't wait.