

***On Sunday July 30th, our youth group -- called One80 -- led our worship service. It was a powerful time of worship music, video inspiration and personal testimonies. To hear all four of the testimonies we heard, click the MP3 option on this page. Following is the text of one of those testimonies. Written and delivered by Kelly Daugherty, this is an amazing story of God's ability to walk with a student through her trials while helping her to understand her own faith.***

My faith is centered around two passages in the Bible. The first being 1 Corinthians 13, specifically verse 13: “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love”. This passage is the basis of my “simple faith”. The second passage is Psalms 121, but I’ll get into that later. My name is Kelly Daugherty. I’m sixteen and a rising junior in high school. I have one sister, Jaime. I love my family. I always have. I have always loved Jesus. Some people may not believe this, and others may shake their head at such a childish notion, but the faith I had as a child was engraved so deeply into my being by those who cared for me that it lives in me to this day. It is the faith of the child we are supposed to have, not the skeptical and criticizing disbelief of those bent on finding a plot hole in the Bible.

Ever since I was little, I strived to make the right decision to every decision. When I was old enough to understand that the *Pinocchio* character Jiminy Cricket wasn’t just a cricket, I was convinced I had three consciences, or Jiminy Crickets. Don’t ask me to describe them – they’re complicated. But they always helped me make the right decision, or if I made the wrong one, they’d bug me incessantly until I either make amends or did the right thing. I was an interesting child. Apart from being completely and uttering fascinated by movies, I was the loving ruler abider for years. I still am. My friends don’t think it’s anywhere as cool as they did back then when the biggest problems

we faced were which lunch to choose or which we wanted to spend our recess doing: swinging or building houses for ants. Life changes quickly. Clocks are slow; time is fast.

So - I'll skip my whole middle school experience by saying that there were good times and there were bad - that's everyone's story. Everyone remembers the isolation. But then high school comes along with a whole new wave of people – a chance to start over and countless possibilities to make new friends...and get hurt.

I entered high school determined to stick to my morals. I had gathered a pretty moralistic, Christian group of friends in middle school and luckily they made it through to high school with me. But I soon found out that things just get more serious as you grow up. I was good at band and I was great at marching. To make an excruciating story short, band turned out to be a pitfall for me. People at school that I had come to cherish as mentors and friends suddenly, and without warning, threw me out into the cold. I learned quickly that people will let you down. Even people who you love. Even people who claim to love you.

During this time, I said prayers each night. I tried to make the best decisions I could. I felt safe in my faith. But I didn't feel it helping me. I didn't feel God at all until I prayed at night. I would be curled up under the covers, crying from the wounds of rejection, and when I prayed I felt protected. I felt as if everything was perfect in that single moment. Sure, that feeling was gone in the morning. But it was those feelings of protection and love and peace that sustained me through the worst days. Despite this, I fell into depression before the end of ninth grade. I went to counselors. I took medicine to help. I went to more counselors. I prayed for everyone. I prayed for myself last. I was scared of the help God might provide. Sometimes pain can be a much more appealing

companion than help, but pain doesn't want to hug you; it wants to consume you. And once it consumes you, it crushes you and everything you are into anger and despair. It closes the doors that are opened for you by making you fear what lies beyond them. It isolates you from anything that might hurt you. But it isn't helping you.

During this time, I built a wall around my heart and myself. It was a thick wall of fear and guilt and uncertainty. But, at the suggestion of my mother, I started reading Psalms. That's where the second passage of my faith comes in: Psalms 121: "I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore". This passage comforted me in a way I cannot explain once I read it. I would read it over and over again and its words struck a chord in my heart. Still, with my depression, I was also suffering from an eating disorder and thoughts of suicide. And I won't lie to you. I didn't ask God to make everything better. I didn't tell him to butt out either.

In January my father died. He died on a Sunday. The next day I went to school. I went to school to save my grade. To be with my friends. To gain support from a teacher I respect. She listened and gave me advice based on Christian belief. She even told me that, by caring for me, her prayer life, which was once dry, had been renewed by praying

for me consistently. That's a blessing. The rest of that story – the story of my father's death – is still being written. I'm not sure when or where it will end.

But for the rest of it - there are things in my life I am not proud of. Things I wish I hadn't said and things I would do differently if I could. But doors do open and opportunities do arise to start over. A teacher at school showed me that. My faith is simple. "But the greatest of these is love". Love will always prevail. God is always there – God is love. His presence in my life is not as extravagant as it may be in the lives of others, but He is in me. He is in my every decision and my every word. He is in my tears and in my smiles. And even though the world may abandon me, I will not fear – for He never will.