

John 8: 3-11:

“The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, “Teacher this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. So what do you say?” This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them , “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you: go, and from now on sin no more.”

You'd think speaking in front of only 5 people would calm my nerves, but now I realize how unnerving it is to know that people are watching me, even though I can't see them.

When I was asked if I would like to give a sermon, well first I didn't answer for a while, and then I finally agreed. The next few days were fine and then it dawned on me I would actually have to WRITE about something for this sermon, and my initial thought was, I have nothing important to say. And as soon as I thought it, it was like God told me that I knew that wasn't true. God also sent me a sign telling me I could do this, as I was driving home from work this week, I was stressing about how to continue writing my

sermon, when a new song came on Spotify, and there was a line in the song that said “Katie calm down. You know there'll come a time you think you can't handle it. But dig deep and know that you can handle it. Breathe, it'll be okay.” Yes my name was actually used in the song.

And although that line wasn't referring to God, it reminded me that as long as you have your faith in God, you're never stuck in one situation. Sometimes it might take a little push/motivation from Him, but you can always pick yourself back up and persevere.

So I'm going to take this time now to talk about my experience at Search, since whenever I come back from the Search weekend and Jeff puts me on the spot during the children's sermon, asking about how it was and what we did, I panic and all I can think to say is “we sang and danced”. But Search is so much more than JUST singing and dancing.

When I think about my time at Search, the first thing I remember is how accepting and loving everyone was. That was one of the most important parts of Search for me. Going back to real life was always tough after the weekend, because I felt like I had to be conscious about everything I did in front of people or else I'd be judged. At Search, everyone is your friend, and WANTS to be your friend. I am just overwhelmed with love when I'm there, I never want to leave.

The first year you go to Search, you are considered a candidate, like you're a candidate to receive God's love. My second year at Search, which would be my first year on the

Kit Kat 7/10/20 7:48 PM

Comment [1]: more than God's love?

Search Team, I was nominated to give a talk, something similar to a sermon. I was assigned the Jesus talk, one of the more difficult talks to give. Discussing Jesus was a challenge.

Jesus is a gift from God, but he is different from God in ways. Jesus is human.

God loves us enough to give human beings the gift of life and everything else around us. He even shared Himself by sending His own son down to Earth to us in human form, whom we all know as Jesus. Since Jesus has lived and experienced what it is like to live life here on Earth, he knows human emotions, like anger and sadness. He can empathize with us and understand our feelings when no one else is there to comfort you. He knows what you are going through. Sometimes I like to pray specifically to Jesus instead of God. It's easier sometimes, to tell Him your sins or troubles when he knows what it's like... Even though He is depicted as the perfect human who we strive to be who does not sin, this does not mean we should be intimidated by Him. He understands and forgives when we sin.

I think forgiveness is one of the greatest gifts Jesus gives to us, and that's why I chose the scripture passage I read to you earlier. We have to know God loves us as we are, and is always there to comfort and strengthen us, and we have to know God forgives us in order to believe God loves us. The story of Jesus forgiving the woman caught in the act of adultery may be the most powerful of many Bible stories that assure us of God's forgiveness.

This expresses how people should not be intimidated to be part of the church.

I said earlier that, after returning from a Search weekend, I felt I had to be extra careful to be good all the time. I wonder how many people stay away from church, and even God, because they don't want to feel the pressure of having to be good all the time. Well, God doesn't want us to feel that pressure, because God knows our weakness. Instead, what God wants is for us to hear Jesus' words of forgiveness, and then also hear his other word--his command to "go and sin no more."

We don't have to feel criticized at all to come into the church, because Jesus will not condemn us. He is accepting. The last thing He wants is the church to chase people away thinking we have to be perfect to be welcomed. Jesus loves us just the way we are.

The Search community helped me strengthen my love for God as well as my love for myself. It's important that we remind ourselves that we are loved--by God, who is always with us, and by the people of this church, and possibly other Godly communities of which we may be a part.

Through the Jesus talk I came to appreciate His presence a bit more. When I am in need of comfort I feel Him next to me, and when I am happy I try my best to remember to thank Him later for the wonderful opportunities He's given me.

Search has helped me learn to be more accepting and open to love. It's made me want to love a little more, judge a little less. It's only natural/human nature to judge people, but it's how we handle our initial judgements and shift our mindset that shows what kind of people we are.

Kit Kat 7/11/20 2:30 AM

Comment [2]: I'm iffy about this

Kit Kat 7/10/20 6:59 PM

Comment [3]: not the right words I want to use

And yes, we do sing and dance at Search, but it's not as awkward or dreadful as you'd think it would be. The songs we sing are uplifting and most are upbeat and easy to dance to. The slow ones, expect to put your arms around each other and sway back and forth for the whole song. It may sound cheesy, but I've never felt closer to God/Jesus than in those moments. Credit to Tim Booth, Search wouldn't be the same without his music.

I sadly will not have time to participate on the Search team this year, but it would be amazing to see the younger teens that I was in youth group with these past couple years go to Search and experience the same life-changing weekend. I made so many great friends there who I can always be myself around, and who know my biggest secrets and mistakes but love me for who I am as a person. I also met my boyfriend of one year and counting there, so maybe that'll motivate some of you to go (wink)

After going through Search for 4 years, and even writing another talk on Prayer this past Search weekend, I would love to say I pray every night, and frequently write in my prayer journal nowadays, but to tell the truth, I don't. It's difficult for most people, as we are all human, to stick to everything **the Lord wants us to do**. But that doesn't make us bad Christians. Not only should we forgive others, but we must remember to forgive ourselves too when we make mistakes. God made each and every one of us for a purpose, and our mistakes help us grow and find that purpose.

If you feel like you're stuck on the wrong path, or on no path at all, first off, you're not alone. Second, you won't stay there forever. God has a plan for you, and if you are looking to Him for guidance, He will lead you to the right path you were meant to be on.

Some of you may know, I'm going to college in about a month to study Nursing. I settled on nursing as my major towards the end of my junior year, which I think is pretty early to decide what you want to do for the rest of your life. Some of my friends had chosen their majors even before high school started, and some are going in undecided. Everyone takes their own time to find which direction they want their path to go. I'm not 100% I want to be a nurse for the rest of my life, but it seemed to be the right way for me to go at the moment. I know I'll find my way, whether it's in some branch of nursing, or something healthcare related. I'm not certain about the future, but I'm not worried. Many people can probably relate to being uncertain about the future, as there are many uncharted territories that our current world is swimming through. But the way I see it, we shouldn't be worried. God has a plan, He knows what He is doing and He will take care of each of us.

Every time I'm lonely, stressed, and in search of comfort, I remember that Jesus is with me every step of the way. I'm going to end with one of my favorite poems, Footprints in the Sand:

One night I dreamed a dream.

I was walking along the beach with my Lord.

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

When the last scene of my life shot before me,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

There was only one set of footprints.

I realized that this was at the lowest

and saddest times of my life.

This always bothered me

and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma.

“Lord, You told me when I decided to follow You,

You would walk and talk with me all the way.

But I’m aware that during the most troublesome times of my life,

there is only one set of footprints.

I just don’t understand why, when I need You most,

You leave me.”

He whispered, “My precious child, I love you

and will never leave you, never, ever,

during your trials and testings.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you.”

Thank you.

I like it, Katie: it sounds genuine, and I can hear you saying the words. There are a couple awkward sentences, and a few unfinished ideas, so see if you can find them and clean up those spots. Also, read it aloud as though it is Sunday morning at the church: that may help you find the awkward sentences and incomplete thoughts. Read it all the way through and time it. If it runs over 10 minutes, I'd recommend trimming it by cutting those early sentences about procrastinating, but if you like them, keep them.

Tomorrow morning, before 10:30 a.m. (I have the watercolor ZOOM class at 11), I'll read and comment again.

Have a peaceful night, and thank you for sharing part of yourself and your ideas with me and the rest of the congregation. Blessings

Oh, one more thing--I recommend adding an ending that summarizes your own path of spiritual growth with the Search ministry in focus. I think that would be a better way to end--summarizing the testimonial aspects of your sermon, in addition to the exhortation that comprises your current ending.

Thank you so much for your input, Fred. I mostly started out with the procrastinating sentences to get myself started, seeing something helps me not freak out at a blank screen. I definitely have to connect some points better, find better transitions, and I was thinking of ending with one of my favorite poems, Footprints in the Sand. I'll probably add a little more about Search too.

There's a big chunk of writing I highlighted on page 3, should I keep that in there?

Okay, Katie, I've made some adjustments in this italicized font in the midst of your sermon, as well as these comments here at the end. Let's not be wedded to the scripture verse that is in the bulletin. I'm going to suggest you use the story of the woman caught in adultery as your scripture verse; so that big section you highlighted will actually be eliminated from the sermon and you will read that passage from the Bible as your scripture reading just before you start your sermon.

Why don't you think about what I've suggested so far, take what you like and leave behind what you don't like about my advice and my words, and let me know when you have finished another draft?

I like the changes you've made so far and I see two points coming through loud and clear: the need to accept forgiveness and accept God's love and comfort and strength,

and the faith to remind ourselves that the choices we make never take us beyond God's love and guidance. Sharing something about what Search did for you, and your choice (and your openness to change course in the future) to embark on a new journey toward a career in nursing, Are important parts of your sermon also and you weave them well into your major points.

I'm sorry I chopped out your words and replaced them with mine when I should have simply highlighted yours and suggested my substitutions in parentheses. But I guess you can rewrite it anyway you like and, as I said, not use my words when they don't seem to fit you. TTYL

Thank you for looking over my sermon again, I really appreciate your suggestions. I'm glad you rephrased a couple parts because sometimes my words don't sound the best. The same idea is there. Should I still recite the verses I chose from Romans 12 or should I just use the story about the woman adulterer?
Also, do you think the way I ended it is fine?