

Testimony - Sunday, July 20, 2014

Good morning my name is Amy Odom. My husband, Michael and son, Benry and I have been members here for over a year now. Jason asked me to speak to you all today and share a little about myself and our journey to this church. Now that I am standing here I am wondering what I have gotten myself into.

We have lived in Boone collectively for over 15 years now. We have been married for seven years and welcomed our son Benry into this world over 3 years ago. We are both very fortunate to have careers that we enjoy, to live in this beautiful sanctuary on top of the mountain and are surrounded by family and friends that love and support us.

With all that, we realized one day that something was still missing. We were both so happy but our lives were still incomplete. We knew we needed to find a church. We knew we needed to find a church family. So the search began.

We looked high and low-we visited several different churches, some without denominations and nothing felt like home. By happenstance, we met Jason one night at a social event. Halfway through the night when sharing what we did for a living, he casually mentioned that he was a pastor for a local church. And I thought...here we go. But that's where my anxiety ended. He planted the seed and like any good gardener he let it grow.

So several months later we gathered the courage to visit one more church. We were warmly welcomed and we sat through that service and I cried. I knew we were home. And I have cried almost every service since then. Not because Jason or Jeff bore me to tears. Not because we break out in song to Amazing Grace every week. Something about this place, the people...the energy...the children. Even the stained glass window that shines down on us all is alive with the spirit of the Lord. And that moves me to tears week after week.

One week in particular moved me more than others. Jason warned us all that the presentation of the Confirmands should guarantee there not to be one dry eye in the house. And then I knew I was in trouble considering my weekly emotional state. And the tears fell that day, but for once not for the reasons they usually sneak out of my eyes and down my face. I cried that day because I was sad. I was mourning something that I had missed. My own Confirmation. I immediately went home and emailed Jason and told him my story.

My parents divorced when I was eight years old. And by some unspoken agreement, we divorced the Methodist church we attended since I was a child. I continued to go to other churches with friends, neighbors and grandparents. The summer of 1993, I left for Camp Caswell, for a week long retreat. I was oblivious to what lied ahead as I traveled with the Calvary Baptist Church.

It was the big day, the auditorium was filled with pre-teen campers and then the two hour altar call began. Slowly every child filed up to the front to give their life to Jesus. I was confused and ashamed because my feet were carrying me to the front, I couldn't figure out why. I went through the motions

and professed my faith but only for fear that I would be the only one left in my seat. And I didn't want to go to hell by myself! After a week of intense indoctrination I went home even more confused and ashamed. And then I slowly forgot. And I slowly stopped going to church. And no one noticed.

This is the account of events that were filling my head and my heart while watching the beautiful video of the Confirmands making their proclamation in the river. And I was sad. Sad because I missed the chance to march up to the front on my own accord because I knew in my heart that I loved the Lord.

So like any good pastor, Jason responded to my email and invited me to breakfast. I knew what he was going to ask before he even said it. And I was scared to death. After I agreed to share my testimony with all of you, I kicked myself thinking, why didn't I just tell him I wanted to be dunked in the river!! But here I am, standing before you today, still scared and overjoyed that I get to share my story with you.

After I agreed to speak I went to work figuring out what I was going to say. We recently went on vacation, seven days with no cell phone, no internet and plenty of time to actually think. Benry and I were playing in the pool. I was trying to help ease his fear of the water, coaxing him to jump. And I realized he didn't trust that I would catch him. He was afraid of what would happen or worse what wouldn't happen. Why didn't he trust me? I'm his mother. Wasn't he born trusting in the person that brought him into this world? All the while, I pleaded with him to jump, I consoled him...told him to trust me. That I would catch him. I wouldn't let anything happen to him. Everything would be ok.

And then it hit me like a ton of bricks. This must be what God feels like every day. Pleading with ME to jump, consoling ME-telling me everything will be okay. Promising to catch me and to trust in HIM. So today I am jumping, feet first in the water. Because I know he will catch me. And everything will be ok. I encourage you all to do the same. The water feels just fine.

Amen