

One of the great truths of life is that everything has a beginning. Your career, your marriage, parenting – everything has a beginning. Faith has a beginning as well.

For most of us, the beginning of our faith happened in childhood. It could have been in a church or at Christian camp. Your parents may have read Bible stories to you and prayed with you. In that time you were given foundational blocks that were the beginnings for you to build your faith over the years.

Going to church on Sunday morning was something my uncle and I did every week. Typical of any youngster, I would question why we had to go every week. It was as though I was an attorney pleading my case based on the evidence at hand. I'd say things like,

- "It's snowing outside; do we have to go?"
- "I'm too tired to go."
- "What will happen if we miss one Sunday? I doubt if God will be mad."

To all my pleas in this figurative courtroom, my uncle would simply and patiently say, "We're going. It's what we do." Case closed. Would that more of us had parents or godparents like this!

For many of us, childhood faith began when we learned the stories about Adam and Eve, Noah, and Jesus. From those stories we learned that God is good, God punishes evil and rewards good, and God answers prayers. Childhood faith was simple and exciting!

Then...life happened. You grew up. The experiences of life and questions about God chipped away at those foundational building blocks.

- "If God is good, why did that disaster happen?"
- "God, I still can't get a job, but why does that person who is twice-divorced and a deadbeat parent get hired?"
- "I prayed to you, God. The cancer didn't leave and now my friend is dead."

Life experiences make childhood faith not relevant.

I struggle with my faith amid the challenges of life. Do you as well? How then does our faith begin to be relevant amid the realities of daily life?

The Bible describes many people who struggled in having relevant faith amid the realities of life. One man in particular was the epitome of this dilemma and his name was Peter.

Luke tells us that one day Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. As Jesus prayed, his appearance changed and his clothes became dazzling white. If that wasn't startling enough, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, talking to Jesus. This is a baffling section of scripture.

Peter and his companions were sleeping but woke up and saw this amazing spectacle. Peter then said, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" and then we read "not knowing what he said." In the New International Version there are even parentheses enclosing this statement: "He did not know what he was saying."

As children, we said some crazy things,

- "There's a monster underneath my bed" or
- "Suzy and I are getting married" (even though you were in the second grade).

As Christians, we say childish things as we gossip: "Did you know this about so and so?" Some Christians even say, "God doesn't love you" in regard to others who are different.

"Master, it is good for us to be here." Peter wanted to stay where he was comfortable and everything was good. In him we see a truth about all of us in that we want God to cater to us: our goals, our ideals, our beliefs.

Let's be honest, at the depths of our souls we want the best for us: our families, our lifestyle, our bank account, our political party, our school. To a degree, adults are not any different than children.

Luke says that the next day Jesus and the others came down the mountain. Before they ventured down, I envision Peter saying: "Jesus, let's just stay here. Why go back down into the mix of a hurting world? Do we have to?" With Jesus choosing to return to a broken world, he was showing his three closest disciples what it is he came to do. Not to

stay where everything is comfortable and good, but to show up in the lives of others to serve and share God's love.

That is what we are to do as followers of Jesus Christ: *grow up* in order to *show up*. We *grow up* with a developed faith that leads us to *show up* with a confidence, a conviction, a pervasive trust in God that touches our lives, and the lives of others, with God's presence.

I struggle with my faith amid the realities of life and I know you do as well. Peter did the same, but the one thing he did do was, *he followed Jesus down the mountain*. Regardless of his weaknesses, his past, and even his insecurity, he still never left Jesus' side. In that relationship, his faith grew when he put his needs aside in order that others would be blessed. He showed up to the point that the Christian church, the reason we are here to worship today, is because of Peter's leadership in sharing the gospel message in the world.

What God did for and through Peter is not only amazing, but it's also inspiring. Imagine what God can do for and through you. Imagine what God can do for and through all of us together!

God showed up in your life through someone else. Your faith grew over time through the challenges and joys of life. Mindful of all that Peter was able to do, I am excited at what you can do when you show up to live out your faith in your marriage, where you work, with your kids or grandkids, and elsewhere. Show up to speak a word of forgiveness to that relative you've been avoiding. Show up to pray with your kids or grandkids. Show up to give a co-worker a compliment.

Grow up to show up in living our faith. As Christians, that is what we do.