

**Writing Prompt 1: Tell a story from your childhood – or early faith development – that sticks out to you as being important or impactful in your relationship with Christ. And explain why.**

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Matthew 18:12-14 NLT. “If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others on the hills and go out to search for the one that is lost? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he will rejoice over it more than over the ninety-nine that didn't wander away!

My faith story is a compilation of God never letting me go.

I was raised in the THFBC church, where praying must have been instilled in me from the very beginning. I remember praying for my family and my pets as a very young child. When our church relocated, my parents stopped attending when I was five years old. Even so, the Thrasher family continued to invite me to the church's weeklong VBS program. I am certain these sweet people missed our family being there, and Mary and Julie were most likely concerned about my relationship with Christ.

In middle school, I met two friends who both invited me to visit their churches. One of these young ladies explained what it meant to ask Jesus into your heart. It seemed so easy, so simple. I asked Jesus into my heart in my little bedroom when I was ten years old. There was no fanfare, no public moment—just a little girl having a heart-to-heart conversation with her Savior.

In high school, I struggled to fit in at a school that felt too large. I often felt like just a number. My choice of friends was not always the best, and during that time I learned that death and tragedy can take away both the young and the old. Those experiences helped me realize there was something far more important than trying to fit into a system that was never meant for me.

Around that time, I started joining my sister, who had recently returned to THFBC after struggling through the loss of her best friend, Rita. I reconnected with the church family from my childhood—the same people who had always brought me warmth and grounding. They welcomed me back even though our family had chosen not to return years before. They took me under their wings, even though my choices had not always been wise.

Through these church friends and the new young adult leaders at THFBC, I found a healthy source of fun, belonging, and encouragement. Their patience with me was unwavering. (Thank you, Bernie!) I was baptized by Rev. Showen in my early twenties. The Bible studies, retreats, card playing (Nertz!), impromptu singing around the piano, and wholesome fun all gave me an unshakable, adult foundation that forged a lifelong walk with Jesus.

I could have easily never made my way back to Christ, but caring people were consistently placed in my life to pull me back in. There is nothing particularly special about me or what I have done with my life, but God's love gave me what I needed to choose a walk with Him.

*\*This submission is 2,756 characters. The StoryTellers limit, per submission, is 8,000.*