

Well, I have finally made it to my senior year, and every youth Sunday, seniors are asked to talk about their faith and how it has shaped their lives, and today, that's me. To be honest that is a little difficult to share as I don't have an "aha" moment when I accepted Jesus into my life. And, I'm not particularly admirable when it comes to reading scripture and making church a priority, just feel free to ask my father about the "it's the right thing to do" argument. In fact, I am questioning and figuring out my faith constantly. But, what I do feel strongly about and what I would like to share with you is what does move me spiritually and faithfully. While I speak I would like you to think about the quote,

"Fire doesn't just happen. It begins with a spark."

This radiates for me, and I'm wondering if it speaks to you, too.

When growing up we are told we are "the future" and that we should make a difference. I know that in theory and I want to do it, but I also know that it's not as easy as movies or books portray it to be. As a child, you believe in gigantic ideas like, "I'm going to end world hunger," or "I'm going to cure cancer!" and that's great. That's ambition and it is beautiful and it isn't harmful or regrettable to think like this. I remember watching documentaries and reading marine biology books about saving endangered fish and thinking, "I want to do that." I remember watching Presidents speak about bringing peace to Iraq and thinking, "I want to do that, too." But then, when I began to get older I realized that I was just one person and those ideas are sometimes just too big. As you get older, you realize how daunting it is to create real change. The world is a huge place, and there are so many people and causes that need help. Our parents may tell us that we can do anything we put our minds to, and that nothing can stop us. But still, we think,

"I am just one person."

I want to help my community and make the world a better place and I know that my gift is teaching. I believe it is what I born to do. Every one of us has a gift, and we all give back, but it's never too late or too little to think about helping more. Our lectionary reading this week talked about us, as believers, sharing all that we have. According to Google, there are nearly 49 million people in America struggling to put food on the table. We, as a congregation, can volunteer at the Food Bank or bring in canned food on the first Sunday of each month. Last week alone our congregation gathered 402 cans, and made an impact on that 49 million. You can decrease that number again by buying a homeless woman a sandwich. You may not be able to impact 49 million people but you can help her.

You are one person.

Pressure comes from many places like parents, school, peers and even society. There is so much pressure to do great things, but everyone's "great" might not be my "great." Romans 12 says that

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.
If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;
if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach.*

I am proud to have received my education from the Clarke County public school system. I have had many teachers who continue to inspire me, years after I've left their classrooms. They have made a lasting impression on me. I've known since I was 7 years old that I wanted to be a teacher, and I want to have that lasting impact on someone too. That's my "great". My 7th grade science teacher had that gift. She had the ability to make even the most boring aspects of environmental science interesting. At 8th grade graduation, she came up to me and said, "one day you'll take my place." I'm sure she had no idea how powerful that statement was to me.

Ms Hinson is just one person.

I see teaching as a privilege, and that is how I want to make a difference. Young children have a passion for learning. They are too young to have formed extreme opinions about the world, and so they want to know everything. They believe deep down that they can do anything. Just think about the children you see up here each week for children's message. They are hopeful and energetic and unstoppable. If each of us could look at the world through children's eyes, we would see all that's right instead of what's wrong. The thought that I would have the opportunity to work with children like that and teach them anything they want to know is a complete blessing.

I want to be their one person.

My generation thinks that we have to be this raging fire, but fire doesn't just happen. We just have to be a spark. And I know that's totally manageable.

So do something.

Sparks can be started by the young, old, weak, anyone.
Buy a woman a sandwich,
help clean and organize the Project Safe retail store,
read a book to preschoolers or
mentor a child.
It doesn't have to be huge.

It just has to be a spark.