



Always With Us. Always Among Us.



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Every day we encounter a myriad of people in the workplace, in our classes or in our neighborhoods. We walk or drive by numerous buildings and sites that have become a part of our daily routines. At the rate that we travel through life, we often are able to see things only at face value. Friend. Parent. Church. School. By taking a second look at the people and places that are etched into our lives, we may find that more lies beneath the surface.

The chapel on my college campus has always been a place of comfort for me. Inside this nearly 100-year-old structure, I have repeatedly poured my heart and soul out to God asking for guidance, peace and forgiveness. My faith life blossomed when I began to attend services my freshman year. The chapel spoke to me in a way that my church at home did not. This was my spiritual home, and as I transitioned into the next chapter of my life, I received support from my peers sitting in the pews around me who were also passionate about their faith and spirituality. I found a genuine relationship with God amidst the beauty of the chapel, and it has been a true love affair ever since.

The chapel, composed of russet-colored bricks and brilliant stained glass windows, stands proudly in the central part of campus. The grandeur of the structure is matched only by the beauty of the marble, bronze and oak inside its walls. I have walked past the chapel at least 10 times a day since my first day of college. The window in my sophomore dorm room even looked right out at the chapel, allowing me to soak in its presence as I worked through novels and term papers. In the winter, the chapel was covered in blankets of snow, and I wondered how it could look so beautiful amidst such a grey and weary backdrop.

One such winter evening, with the chapel surrounded by mounds of fresh snow, my friend Tim and I embarked on an adventure that impacted my faith life in a profound way – we spun doughnuts in his big Chevy truck in a few parking lots. At each location, he would throw the truck into park, say, “Here we go!” and reverse with the steering wheel cranked all the way to one side. After a few runs, Tim gently told me that the experience might be more enjoyable if my eyes were opened. I obliged, for the most part, and took in the exhilarating spinning and swerving like a sky diver in the midst of a free fall.

My light-hearted, yet daring, experience in the passenger seat of Tim’s truck led me to wonder what other parts of my life had more meaning and depth than what I previously thought. The beautiful chapel immediately came to mind. After spending multiple seasons admiring its beauty, I now know that my love affair has not really been with the chapel, but with God, whom the chapel represents. God’s greatness far surpasses my academic accomplishments, my social life and my future career, just as the chapel sits proudly above the other buildings on campus. God’s love is constant and unconditional. Even if I feel like I cannot face God, he always meets me with open arms, just as the chapel consistently beckoned me to walk through its doors. It took nearly four years for me to open my eyes and see the chapel for what it really was.

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During this gradual period of reflection brought on by the time spent in the chapel, my experience with Tim made me think about the times in which I have put my faith life aside due to a busy schedule, a hectic workload or just outright laziness. Yet, my concept of time is not the same as God’s. I may stray for months, years or an entire lifetime, but God still takes me back every time.

No questions, no judgment and no criticism. My life may seem stressful or even out of control at times, like the adventure in the truck, but I can also feel safe in the same situation when I surrender my will and plan for life to God, who knows my heart and future. God always leads me on the right path and gives me stability for the journey. God takes me on adventures every day, testing me to build my faith and trust.

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The most profound thing I learned with Tim that night was that God constantly brings events, people and experiences into my life to remind me to “open my eyes.” He shows himself in glorious sunsets, meaningful conversation and intense prayer. God wants me to enjoy the ride. He wants me to face the unknown with my head held high and eyes focused on him. His guidance will always see me through the uncertainties and complexities of life. And God, just like Tim, promises to always drop me off safely.

It is easy to think of God as a far-off being, guiding me from a distant place. He is not physically walking next to me as I go about my day, and he is not a phone call or a text message away – he is so much more than that. If I truly open my eyes, I will be able to see him as I walk to class, as I drive to work and as I spend time with friends. I found God amidst a simple daily walk and a night of spinning doughnuts in the snow. Even in the chapel, a beautiful place of worship, I discovered something deeper than merely a place to frequent every Sunday. He is enshrined in every aspect of my life. Living with my eyes open will reveal the pieces of God that exist amidst everyday experiences and will allow me to truly invite him into my life.



Jessica Zimanske, contributing writer, enjoys vanilla lattes, dreaming about owning a Summit Avenue mansion and buying season tickets at Tiger Field.

