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“Believing is Seeing”

Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, the wife of one of America’s Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, deserves much credit for how many challenges she put up with and faced head on during her lifetime. She was a Christian woman, pretty strong in her faith and raised her kids believing. She was cheated on by her husband, she ran the household on her own because Alexander Hamilton was a strong political figure who was busy establishing the national bank. In 1801, her sister Peggy died and her son Philip died in a duel later on during that year. Her husband then died in a duel in 1804 and then her father died later that year.

Instead of sulking and complaining about how she had experienced so much pain in her life, she turned her challenges into her strengths. She helped to found the first private orphanage in New York City, which is still around today. She also recorded history out by saving Alexander Hamilton’s writings and letters and anything else important.

Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton is one of the most underrated people who were most likely challenged in their Christian faith. Even though she was a wife of a Founding Father, she had her challenges like everyone else.

Sometimes we forget that everyone has times in their faith that aren’t as strong and have trouble if what they believe is truly right, at any age.

I’m now a senior in high school in my second semester, I’m ready to graduate. I’ve had a lot of time to think about what I’ve done in high school and the experiences that I’ve learned from. One thing that I have found interesting in high school is how much my faith has been challenged, even though I’m still young. My faith has been challenged by multiple events from a bad relationship, people that I feel aren’t supportive of me wanting to be a pastor, the Parkland shooting. The biggest challenge that I have faced was during my freshman year in my art class.

I was going through confirmation during the time, but I hadn’t been confirmed yet. I was getting pretty excited because I thought I knew all the answers and even though my faith was stronger than ever, I was not ready for the blow that I received.

There was a junior in my class and one day he found out that I was a Christian. He looked at me and asked me “Alexa, why are you a Christian?” Now, Freshman me was scared out of my mind because he was an upperclassmen and I had never faced this type of question before. I was getting ready to be confirmed, I should be able to answer this like it was no big deal, but instead I found this question to be confusing.

I found it to be a question that had many other questions within it:

“Why do you believe in God?”

“Why do you believe in Jesus and why do you think he for sure died and forgave you of your sins?”

“Why do you think what you believe in is correct?”

I had no idea what to tell him, I figured I should just give an answer that was detailed and had my evidence. Instead, I just told him that I was a Christian because I had this feeling that God was real and that He sent Jesus to die for us and cleanse us of all of our sins.

My answer was not what he wanted, that junior bugged me the entire semester with that question. For the entire semester we argued with each other and he turned out to be a really nice person, but he wanted more than the best answer that I could give him. He wanted facts and statistics that I didn’t have to prove that Christianity was right.

He didn’t understand how I could rely on a gut feeling and experiences that I’ve had is the reason why I think God is real and loves us all.

This past Valentine’s Day, when the Parkland shooting happened, I didn’t even want to come to the Lent service, I couldn’t even imagine going to church. Not wanting to go to church is not like me. I love going to church, but for some reason I felt like I didn’t care. All I could think about was the fact that 17 people wouldn’t be going home to their families and how upset that made me.

My mom made me come to church that night and I’m glad she did, because I found my peace at church and knew that God was with me. I still can’t even begin to imagine what challenges the Parkland students and community had after the shooting and still today what they face. The Parkland shooting has been an event that has challenged students all across the United States, some probably in their faith too.

The more I think about what happened, the more I know that sometimes in the challenges in our faith we so badly want this proof that we can reach out and touch and say “I know why God is real.” We want to be able to show others and prove that we are right. We are creatures that want proof with data and statistics to back up our proof. We think that if we don’t have some sort of evidence that we can replicate over and over again, that it isn’t real.

We become like Doubting Thomas, wanting proof that Jesus did rise and that God indeed was forgiving us of our sins. We don’t even realize that we are becoming like Thomas wanting to see in order to believe. Thomas gets picked on so much, for doing what all humans do. Doubt.

We can’t judge Thomas for doubting that Jesus had actually risen from the dead because sometimes we do too.

God loves us enough to forgive us when we doubt, but he wants us to believe before seeing. In the Romans passage, it says that we must believe and are justified. What we see may help us believe, but you don’t believe with your eyes, you believe and feel that God is real and loves you with your heart. You don’t love God with your eyes.

One of my favorite movies is the Santa Clause movies. Amelia and I play it repeatedly throughout the Christmas season and we usually watch the same one multiple times in one day. Scott Calvin, a businessman, is really surprised when he becomes Santa Clause because he stopped believing in him a long time ago. He faces this challenge of realizing that he has become this man that he didn’t even believe existed. Scott Calvin never saw Santa Clause, so he didn’t think he was real and that there was no point in believing in him. It takes one of the elves to tell him that he was wrong:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8YxwlofIvQ>

Can you imagine what this guy is going through? He’s becoming a person that he didn’t think existed. Even though he’s seeing, he’s still not believing because he’s trying to believe with his eyes, instead of his heart. It’s not until he opens his heart and believes that he truly sees it: that he has become Santa Clause and the North Pole is a real place where elves work.

I remember a challenging conversation with my grandma. She was telling me and my family that she had a friend who had lost both her son and husband to cancer, so she didn’t want to believe in God anymore. My 10 year old self was disturbed by this because I knew if she just believed in God and had that faith, she would be more at peace.

My grandma and I fought about this, she said that I just didn’t understand. She was right, I didn’t know how her friend felt at all. My grandma told me that she hadn’t seen anything or had anything happen to her that proved that God was real. I kept telling my grandma that if she just believed even a little bit, everything would turn out okay. My grandma never accepted what I was saying, she just got mad at me.

But as you get older, you begin to experience more things and you become more challenged. I think back to this conversation a lot and how when I was a little kid, with a childlike faith, I didn’t need any proof that my God was real, I just knew. Sometimes I wish I could go back to this time because I had very small challenges in my faith, but not enough for me to try and look for all proof that I need.

Now that I’ve had bigger challenges in my faith, I know that they are crucial to strengthen my faith and make that feeling that I know God is real. Just because I’m young doesn’t mean I’ve had those moments where I’m searching for any proof that I can that God is real. Everyone has those at some point.

We sometimes need to be reminded that we didn’t start believing in God because of some sort of data that we were showed, we started believing in God because we felt something deep down inside that told us he was real. You could have started believing because of an event that you experienced and saw, like a friend or a family member being healed over time or having a complete change of heart. But in every case of believing and coming to Jesus, you believed first and then you saw. You saw the love of God and how he gave his only son to die for us so that we could have eternal life. Even when you feel like your faith has completely disappeared and that there is no way that you can keep believing, if you believe just a little bit, you will see again. You will see the love of God and all of the grace he gives. You will see that you are forgiven and he still loves you no matter what you have done. You will see that amidst your challenges, God is there for us all and that his mercy is more than we will ever deserve. To see God, all you have to do is believe.