

## Kyle's Testimony

My name is Kyle Hoadley and I am a senior at Ash Grove High School. I have been going to Redeemer Lutheran Church for a bit more than a year and a half now. During that time I have focused on learning the Word of God and going to church every week, and this has changed my life for the better. But before I started going to church, I never even thought about God.

For a while my mom was raising myself and my brother by herself and still had jobs where she worked very long hours. Sadly during that time I often found myself getting into trouble with friends, having low grades if not failing my classes, and I didn't believe in God. My mom tried her hardest to keep me out of trouble - grounding me, trying to talk to me, anything to get me to learn from my mistakes - but as we all know teenagers have a tendency to do dumb things. My grades kept going down. I was more focused on hanging out with friends and playing video games, even though my mom tried to be on top with me with my grades.

One day, during the middle of my sophomore year, I was suspended from school for 14 days. My mom was mad like no other, and honestly was lost on what to do with me. I know I have brought her so much stress, and I am so sorry for the things I have done. But out of desperation of what to do, she pulled me out of school to be homeschooled, and told me that I had to go to church.

I dreaded homeschooling, especially since I already had trouble paying attention. Now I had to listen to very boring lectures through a TV screen. My mom took me from one church to another, just trying to find a church that we both liked. It wasn't until my mom's friend Heather Bizzaro suggested Redeemer Lutheran Church that we found a place we liked. I sat in the same pew I have for the last year and a half, and at first I didn't even like the idea of going to church.

But the more I came to church, the more I understood the Word of God and the more I believed. It went from going to church because I was forced to go, to going because I believed in God and worked on my faith.

Leading up to today, I have studied my faith for a long time, and I wanted to truly understand what baptism is. Now I truly believe in baptism and believe that this is a gift that God wants to give me.

But before I get baptized, there are some people I want to thank for getting me here and being here for me for so long, for caring about me, and always supporting me.

First, I want to thank my mom, she has always been there for me, no matter how mad she was, or how busy she was. She is always here to love and support me, and she also kept me going in my faith, even when I doubted it. She is the reason why I started going to church in the first place. I want to thank her for putting up with the dumb decisions I have made in my past. I literally wouldn't be here without you.

I also want to thank the youth group, for most of my life I have struggled having friends I can trust and genuinely love. Before all of you guys, I never had someone that I could talk to when I truly needed someone. For so long I would bottle up what I was feeling and never talk to anyone, hoping that my problems would just go away. Before you guys, I never had true friends that I truly loved and cared about, even if what I was complaining about was the most annoying and ridiculous thing. I love every single one of you. From Cooper Juneau – being weird, funny, and always able to cheer me up – to Anna Choate – always ready to be there to listen to all of my ridiculous problems and to help and give me advice and just lighten up my day – to Italy Burk – who has always been there for me, even at my lowest points and never judged me for who I am or was and who has always cared about me. All of you are the greatest friends I could

ever ask for. I can give each of you essay length letters about how great you all have been to me, but we would be here for hours. I could never ask for better friends. Friends I can call family.

Thank you so much.

Lastly, I want to thank Hannah Hayden. She has been here and encouraged me in my faith. She was the first one to introduce me to the youth group and has been there as someone I can talk to in low points. She has helped me be able to open up and be more open to others. I can't think of a better DCE.

I was worried about getting baptized for a while, because I thought there was more to it. I thought that since I haven't been going to church since I was a kid that I wouldn't be saved. I believed that I wasn't good enough for God's gift. But what I want you all to take away from today, is that God is always there. No matter how much you have sinned, no matter how hard your day is, and no matter how mad you are, no matter your pain, sadness, and tears; God is always there for you.