

Starting Point Part 1: “The Most Important Thing”

Scripture used: 1 Corinthians 15:2-8 (NLT)

OVERVIEW

Big Idea: Everyone’s faith has a starting point.

This week’s message is the first of six in the Starting Point series where we will explore the essentials of what it means to follow Jesus and get connected in community. Many of us grew up with frameworks of faith, from songs, prayers, and rituals, yet the simple faith of childhood often does not stand the test of adult life. This is when we need a “hard reset” - clearing everything we know about faith, and finding our new starting point, both within ourselves and as part of a community of faith.

KEY POINTS

1) **Early Framework of Faith**

Many of us who grew up in the Church believe some truths to be self-evident: that God is good and all powerful; that God punishes evil and rewards goodness; and that God hears and answers our prayers. We went to Sunday school and we also went to “Monday school” (our regular academic education). For some of us, we were stagnating in Sunday school, while we continued to progress and learn new things in Monday school. One day we realized the gap between the two experiences. We faced the terrible crises in our lives and in the world. We faced scientific and historical questions. This is when many Christians continue to come to church once in awhile, but don’t believe, or don’t see the church as the key platform to grow in wisdom and faith.

2) **Who is Jesus?**

In our Scripture, Paul welcomes the skepticism of the new emerging Christian community in Corinth. He wants them to focus on the most important facts of the Church: that Christ died for our sins; and that He rose from the dead. It goes beyond a philosophical story - it is a historical event that realizes the prediction of the old Scriptures. The Bible is a perspective of faith; it is God’s story rolling out through human history.

3) **How Can I Believe?**

The Gospel contains many profiles in skepticism. Each asks “How can I believe?” in his own way. Peter grapples with disappointment. The Twelve, Thomas among them, are grounded in realism and asking for empirical proof. The Five-Hundred deal with suffering. James, the brother of Jesus, struggles with familiarity, and a sort of resignation that life rarely brings good surprises. Jesus ends up offering a new starting point to each person. After the September 11 attacks, churches were packed as people searched for hope, and what they believed was not strong enough to reassure them in a world changed forever.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Read 1 Corinthians 15:2-9 to engage with God’s Word. What stands out from Scripture and from the message? What has been your profile in skepticism, and your hope for a new starting point?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - How can you lay the foundation for this new starting point? What attitudes and expectations do you need to reset to clear the way for this new start?
- 3) **DO** - Find two or three others to compare your profile and journey with God. How and when did your faith journey begin? How has it held up? How can you help each other?