

Senior Sermon:

Thomas doubted in Jesus because he couldn't believe in things he couldn't see. Faith was something new for him and something he wasn't sure about yet. I think that feeling parallels that of trying something new or putting yourself in a situation you might not be comfortable with. Many people when coming to PYF for the first time aren't sure what to expect and might need to make sure that their friends are going so they know someone who is there. I experienced the same thing when I started coming. I knew 2 people pretty well and I would consistently text them every Sunday to make sure they were going to be there. Putting myself out there was extremely difficult and scary for me. 3 years later I don't have to text anyone before PYF because I know that whatever group of people are there I can talk to. This group has meant so much to me throughout high school because it has become my place or rock outside of school. The group is extremely accepting of anyone from any background and at any point in their faith journey. There are definitely a few "doubting thomases" in the group, but that is ok because we are here to grow together.

One of the first times I realized that pyf was going to be my place was my sophomore year mission trip. It was definitely a little nerve wracking to go

on the trip when everyone already seemed so close with each other, but it's one of my favorite trips i've ever been on. My work crew happened to be all girls, some of whom I was extremely close with and many I had only known for a half a year. Very quickly I became close with the girls in my crew--we somehow convinced our adult leaders to take us to dairy queen every day and there's definitely some memories from those ice cream runs that we still talk about.

This group will build you up even when faced with tough times. We have all had issues come up in high school whether it be drama between friends or struggling to find our place but the group has always been there to help you get through stuff. I personally went through issues with friends towards the end of my junior year and struggled to understand why it was happening. I knew I could turn to the friends I had made in pyf because they have always been there to build be me up. The people here are my absolute best friends and they have become so much more than just my church friends. I can talk to them about anything and they will understand. Sometimes it might seem hard to relate to such a diverse group of people, since we are in different grades and participate in different activities at school, but getting to know each other through pyf brings us together.

The numerous retreats we've been on have led to long talks while walking through the woods or memories from staying up late playing card games. I think that the best part about getting to know people outside my typical group is getting to hear all their perspectives on topics, whether it be something happening at school or a topic from church. I cannot imagine leaving the friends I have made through PYF--this group is so much more than a youth group, it's more than just talking about our faith and hanging out once a week. I can truly say that these people standing here are my best friends.