

### **Fall Fellowship Dinner Testimony**

My name is Katelin Kramm. I am a 2002 graduate of BMS, so this year marks 20 years for me, which is really cool for our class. I am married to Andrew Kramm. We have 3 children: Lucas is in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade here, Mathew is in kindergarten, and our daughter Abigail is 4. Lord willing, she'll join her brothers, her "boys" as she calls them, next year here at school. I am also very humbled and very honored to serve as a board member here at the school.

I want to set all of that aside for a little bit and I want to talk to you as "Kate". I love the stories that were shared. It's really cool to hear how BMS has impacted those who were here years ago and those who are here right now. Today I want to talk to you about why I'm back. I couldn't really picture myself being back. But I want to tell you why I'm here.

A few months ago, I had the really cool opportunity to be here and to serve breakfast to our teachers the day before school. I shared with them for a few minutes and as I looked around, I saw a handful of them who taught me when I was here. Can we just stop for a second and recognize what a gift and treasure it is to have teachers who have committed 20, 30, 30+ years to BMS? What an honor that is!

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I had this picture in my mind of those teachers working alongside my parents and our church and whoever else was in my life at that time, to lay bricks in my foundation. I'm looking at this room of teachers in front of me and the teachers who have joined the faculty since. And now they are working alongside my husband and I and our church to lay bricks in our kids' foundation.

As I went home that day, I thought of the story of Nehemiah in the Old Testament. If you haven't read Nehemiah, I would encourage you to do it. It's a good story. In summary, Nehemiah was a Jew, living far away from Jerusalem. He was serving King Artaxerxes as the cup bearer. One day, Nehemiah's brother and a couple guys from Judah show up to visit. And he says, "Hey, the Jews that went back to settle in Jerusalem after the exile ... How are they? What's going on back there?" He gets this terrible report. The people are in distress. The walls are crumbling, and the gates are coming down. It's just a really bad situation. Nehemiah is grieved by this, and he mourns it, and he repents. He feels this thing rise up in him, which I believe was the call of the Lord. And he said, "I must go and rebuild that wall."

He approaches the king. He gets permission to go. And he leaves. He gets back to Jerusalem and surveys the damage and we come to this verse in Nehemiah 2:17 - "Do you see the distress we are in?" I'm thinking, Nehemiah has nothing in this. He's living his best life back over here in this other city with the king with all this wealth and all this power. But in a moment, he took hold of what was important to the Lord. He took hold of restoring and protecting Jerusalem and its people. He took it and made it important to himself. He made it his own.

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He goes on and enlists each family in Jerusalem. So you have kids, and parents, and grandparents. And they're each building. Their task was to build a section of the wall. For a lot of them, it was the section right in front of their house. And all this stuff is coming against them. There were times when half of the people were building and half of them were defending against the enemies who were attacking. There were even times when one person had a building tool in one hand and some sort of defensive weapon in the other, because they had to build and defend at the same time.

There is so much more to the story; you should really check it out. Ultimately, they built the wall in 52 days around the city of Jerusalem, which is unheard of and undeniably a miracle. As I was pondering this story about Nehemiah, I thought of myself. Now a disclaimer: BMS is not Jerusalem. We are not in distress. Our walls are not falling down. We are doing very well.

I connected with Nehemiah. Because when I graduated, I put space between myself and BMS. I didn't even leave the area, except to go to college. I live here; I live in Burnham now. I was familiar with what was happening here because Gwen and people like her who are good at their job keep our alumni informed. But there was not a connection, there was not an attachment here. And I have to say that I never really intended for there to be again.

But then fast forward to August of 2020. Andrew and I are preparing to send our first child to school – in 2020. He was enrolled in public school. That was always the plan, but as we were going through the summer, something just wasn't right. I reached this level of anxiety and internal tension over this that was crazy. I've learned that I only feel that way when I am going the very wrong way.

So, I kept praying that there would be some divine Option C that the Holy Spirit would give to the public school board that would essentially make it great for my son and comfortable for me. But it wasn't happening. I want to say that I completely respect the Mifflin County School Board. I respect the role that they have in our community. I honor the work that they do, but it was very clear that our family was being called to something else.

One day, the Lord broke in and said, "What about BMS?" to me. I realized that I had been given that divine Option C that I wasn't really looking for at the time. I think it was exactly a week from when I called Gwen to get initial information, that we had applied, were interviewed, and were enrolled, that we were sitting at Back to School Night with our son ready for kindergarten.

But from the moment that I heard the Lord say, "What about BMS?" everything in me was all in. You had my time, my resources, my energy and I knew in that moment that I was going to be Nick Wilson and this faculty's biggest cheerleader and biggest encourager. It wasn't just about BMS. It was so much bigger than that, because my husband and I see that it is vital to take a clear stand and get behind what the Lord is doing; to make what is important to Him important to us and join with his vision.

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I'm going to be really direct with you for a second. We are living in a time when the created ones, the created people have the audacity to believe that they know better than the Creator. So much so that they are willing to override His original design and redefine gender, marriage, family, life, and truth itself to make it more subjective, more palatable, and more comfortable. Let me tell you that grieves me.

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So when I come here and see teachers who are willing to pray for and with my kids. When I come here and Beth Peachey looks at my son and says, "This is the way the Lord made your brain." When I come here and see a school who has a Biblical Statement of Faith and Biblical Statement of Marriage & Sexuality on a public facing website, who will unashamedly and unapologetically stand for and teach a Biblical Worldview and Christian values, I will get behind that every time.

Do we all attend the same church? No. Do we all live in the same community? No. Do we all interpret every single scripture verse in exactly the same way? No. But we are not in this room tonight because we agree on everything. We are here because we agree on Him. And we don't come together over agreement; we come together over Jesus. **So, I am standing for Jesus and if BMS is standing for Jesus, then I will stand with BMS and I will build and I will defend with them.**

The verse for this weekend is Philippians 1:9. It reads, "I pray that your love will overflow more and more and that you will keep growing in knowledge and understanding. And if we read on to verse 10, it says, "For I want you to understand what really matters so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return."

I believe that what should really matter to us are the things that really matter to Him. As we live out of the overflow of His love, we get to see the truth in love; the truth of His word; the truth of his heart. As a parent, thank you for partnering with me and my family. When Nehemiah was working in Jerusalem, each family only built a section, so if the families hadn't all been working together, none of them and none of their children would have had a safe place to live.

**Thank you for helping my family build and defend. And I am honored to do the same for you and your family. But also, as a fellow believer and follower of Christ, thanks for standing with me for Jesus; for His truth, for His heart. Thank you for being here, because honestly guys, it can feel very lonely to stand on truth when we have a very loud crowd going the other way. But tonight, I am reminded that I am not standing alone. Thanks for getting behind what the Lord is doing, and thanks for making what is important to Him, important to you.**

