

# To be a Pioneer Speech

By Jillian Brown

Hello everyone, my name is Jillian Brown and I have been attending Hill-Murray since 8th grade. This original transition to Hill-Murray was fairly seamless, and I was lucky enough to be immediately introduced to people who are now my second family. Shoutout to my best friends. However, things took a big turn my freshmen year. I started to deal with immense anxiety, and at times this would lead me to panic attacks. From school, to my hobbies, to my relationships the things that were once easy became extremely difficult very quickly. I wasn't acting myself, but I wanted to hide it from others. While I tried so hard to do so, this only made things worse. I needed to change something in my life, I needed to get out of the darkness I was submerged in.

I used to view this time in my life as such a negative thing, and yes it was my worst individual time. However, this time period would be pivotal as it produced my most important realizations and personality traits.

I realized there was one way to get out of this, I needed God. I grew up in a Christian household, I went to church, but I didn't have a close relationship with Him. It was the winter of my freshman year when I began spending time with God. My sister gave me my own bible, and I started to read scripture, journal, and pray to God at night, and this is a routine I still carry out every day. I leaned on my faith that God was good even when life was not, and I learned all chapters of life have a purpose. I found peace in knowing this time would pass, and there was a reason for it. The more time I spent with God, the better I felt. I felt God work his way in my life, and the good things became great, the bad became bearable, and I began to feel like myself quickly. As written in 1st John Chapter 1 verse 5, "God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all." God was the light at the end of the darkest tunnel. Obviously, during the course of the last three years of my life, I have had ups and downs, but I find comfort rooted in the truth that I have a God who put me in these situations or moments, and he will get me through them too. So, no matter what you are going through now, in the future, or in the past, everyone in this room has a creator who loves them, a God who is the light.

My past provoked me to deepen my relationship with God and led me to develop one of my most prominent personality traits: empathy. I recall trying so hard to hide things out of either insecurity or embarrassment, even from some of the people closest to me. Sharing this today I know this isn't a unique experience. At some point, we have all tried to hide something for various reasons. However, the way I had this first-hand experience further proved to me that all people have things going on that we will never know about, and that you can never understand what goes on behind closed doors. Knowing this, I suggest you be kind to everyone. If they do trust you to tell you their struggles openly, put yourself in their shoes and be supportive. If someone is acting off, acting differently, maybe they are facing a battle they are simply looking to hide. Although as humans we cannot replicate the illumination of God's light, we can add extra brightness to it. So, be a reflection of God's love; be patient, be kind. We walk around these hallways every day and see so many different people, but think about how few people you know what's going on in their personal lives. This only further emphasizes the importance of being kind to others, because you never know how much that little gesture of kindness may mean to someone.

So, from my time at Hill-Murray, being a Pioneer has meant a few things. First, it means going to God and trusting his plan. Believing that He is putting you in these situations; both good and bad for a reason, and that it will lead to your future glory. Knowing that even in your darkest times, there is no such thing as the pitch black. In high school, no matter who you are, there is going to come a time when things get tough, but you still have God. You still have light. Being a Pioneer means being empathetic and understanding of our classmates, no matter how well you know them, or what you may think of them, not allowing that to dictate your kindness. So, whether you're a 6th grader or a 12th grader, know that even the little things, such as a smile or holding the door open may be the extra light someone needs that day, just like God would want.

Thank you.