Reading Response Journal 1

 After reading and reflecting on the opening three chapters of Barbara Brown’s *Leaving Church*, I was struck by her strong faith and her devotion to God. In the opening of chapter three, for instance, Brown describes how her mother initially dissuaded her from going into the seminary by telling her daughter that she would “get over” (21) her desire to join. Many people would likely give up their desires if faced with just parental dismissal, but Brown continues nevertheless, demonstrating her sincerity in forming a life devoted to religion and, by extension, God. What is even more impressive about Brown’s journey is that she was not raised in the any church, and so her feelings must have emanated from inside of her as she sought to explain the natural world around her and learn a “language for what happened in that golden-lit field” (23) that she marveled at when she was younger. Indeed, as Brown grows older and passes from high school into college, her feelings did not wane, but, to the contrary, grew stronger as she turned her energies to opposing the Vietnam War and looking to improve her society.

Brown’s unrelenting love for God despite challenges in some respects mirrors my own. Although I am not Christian – I am, in fact, Muslim – I have a strong sense of God and adhere to the tenets of Islam. Even still, I have often been told that I belief too strongly or that I should reevaluate my beliefs given that we are now in the 21st-century and, as such, should modernize and not hold onto beliefs that many regard as superstitious or outdated. I have thought over what I have been told many times, but in the end I have only come back to my beliefs more forcefully, particularly because they provide me sustenance and comfort. Like Brown, I have a strong affinity to God and believe that God guides me in a positive way, one that improves my life and that lives of people around me. For this reason, despite what people say, I know that I will continue to believe as I do and continue to hold steadfast in what has guided me until this point in my life.