

If the leaves are off the trees, and I hold my head just right, I can see a church sign a quarter of a mile north of my parent's house from their back porch. It was at this church, among this body of believers, that God loved me, and pursued me and found me. It was here that I began to learn the books of the Bible, and simple Bible passages. It was here that I began to see the character of God. It was here that I learned the great hymns of the church and still remember them today. It was here that I learned and experienced what it meant to trust Jesus and follow Him with your life.

When I was ten years old I had an experience I see as a first step in the trusting of my life to Jesus Christ. During a traditional revival service, I and about 7 or 8 other kids wanted to get saved. "The Savior is Waiting" was being sung, and I didn't keep Him waiting long. For years after that, however, I struggled with that decision that I made as a 10 year old. What did it really mean? Did I mean it? As a teenager, I felt the overwhelming need for God in my life. I began to sense that God was working in my heart, and exposing my sin and calling me to Him for forgiveness. For the first time I truly began to understand what it meant to trust my life to Jesus and experience His grace and forgiveness. In the fall of 1987, I asked Jesus to come into my life and forgive me, and He did just that. In retrospect, that step I made towards Jesus as a ten year old was the beginning of hearing God call out to me, but it was when I trusted my life to Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord as a teenager when I truly met God in a saving relationship.

Very soon into the spring semester of my freshman year of College at the University of Alabama I began to sense that God had a purpose for me in vocational ministry. Where? I wasn't sure. How? I wasn't sure. But I was focused on discovering His will for my life both for the present and the future. I began to visit the Baptist Student Union (now called Baptist Campus Ministries or BCM). I really don't know why? Perhaps I had friends there, or someone invited me, or I heard about it through church involvement, but I went one Tuesday night. Delisha Huddleston met me at the door and welcomed me. It was home already. I don't think Delisha knew quite how important that greeting was in my life, spiritually and vocationally, and (for the worse) academically. The next four years quickly became centered on BCM and the active faith it motivated me to live out. I quickly became involved in drama ministries, missions, and worship planning. It was in this setting that I formed some of the most influential relationships for me as I explored my sense of calling.

The campus ministers and pastors I met during this period displayed a depth of faith and intellect that inspired me. They mobilized me to give time to serving in missions, and that subsequently changed my life. They provided steady mentors in a time of transition. They modeled a ministry style that I have quickly adapted as my own, as they supported me as I served on staff of a local church. They were close friends who introduced me to the richness of small group life in ministry.

The summer following my junior year at the University offered a challenge and opportunity in several ways. I spent my first summer as a part of the Smoky Mountain Resort Ministries as an Innovator Summer Missionary, ministering to those in the leisure lifestyle in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. I did day camps and worship services in camp grounds, Bible studies for area employees and worked at the Dairy Queen part time. It was here that I began to explore the mission life style as an option in ministry-- in other words being sent from the local church to do ministry. It was here that I developed some chaplaincy and preaching skills. It was here that I learned to work from scratch in ministry and not depend on a book or program. It was there that I learned that kids sometimes like cookies and Kool-Aid better than your Bible stories.

Later that same year I began another adventure in my life. I began serving on staff of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Cottdale, Alabama as youth minister. That experience was one that introduced me to the ministry of the local church, and honestly, sold me on that ministry. A small congregation, Mt Zion existed as a family congregation, both literally and figuratively. If you were not kin to someone you at least knew someone who was. It was joy to serve with those folk as I was able to seek ways to expand the ministry to youth, but also to the community at large. It truly introduced me to the multi-pronged tasks of outreach, growth, ministry and worship. After College, and after another stint as a Resort missionary in the Tennessee mountains where I served as a chaplain of the Mt. LeConte Wilderness Lodge, I began to pursue ministry training at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Through those years I continued to experience campus ministry work through internships at the University of Alabama, and Jefferson

Community College—Downtown in Louisville, Kentucky. It was through much prayer, searching and listening that I heard God calling me to Campus Ministry on the college campus. It is in the middle of that calling where I find myself today, at the University of South Alabama. God has placed before me an enormous mission field, and I am excited to be following Him in ministry here.