

I was born over thirty years ago into a loving family who live in Lancaster County, PA. While we were not rich in wealth or possessions when I was young, we were rich in love, joy and adventure. My parents showered my siblings and I with care, attention and affection all of my life, and it was through their love for me that I began to understand what real love is.

My parents are both Mennonite, and both of their families were as well. Because of this, and because of their personal devotion to Christ, they raised me and my siblings to know God's love personally. We prayed together each night before bed, and read scriptures together. We listened to Christian radio in the car, and read Christian books like the Chronicles of Narnia together. These were important parts of our lives, but the center piece of all of our family's spiritual life was participating in the life of the church. We went to our church, which is still my parents' church, every Sunday almost without fail. At church we studied God's word with our peers, worshipped together, prayed together, fellowshiped with our friends, and took care of one another. Our family lived for church, and attended basically every program and event that they had.

Through this spiritual foundation (my parents love, teaching, and modeling faith in Christ, and through the relationships and nourishment of my church) I can honestly say that I knew God loved me as far back as I remember. It wasn't until I was about seven or eight that I made sense of what that meant, and that I began to understand the extent of Christ's love for me, which in turn led me to truly become a disciple of Christ. From that point on, I continued to grow in my understanding of God and the Scriptures, and grew to truly love reading God's word throughout my middle and high school years. However, it was about this time that I undertook the endeavor of trying to earn God's love. I tried to perfectly follow God's commands so I could deserve to be loved by God as much as I knew I was. However, I found myself again and again messing up, and getting ever more angry with myself for my faults. It wasn't until later in high school, and heading into college, that I began to really understand and own that God's love for me was unconditional and constant. There is nothing I could do for God to love me more, and nothing I could do that would make God love me less. This is the first time I really understood God's grace, and it began to free me from the bonds of shame and guilt that I felt for my imperfections.

It was later in high school that I first began to sense God's call for me. Through my experience of being a leader in my church's youth group, I saw how much joy I got from helping and serving my peers. This started me down a path that led me to heading to Eastern University, a small christian college in the Philadelphia suburbs, where I studied youth ministry. I found I loved my Bible classes so much, and I started to acquire the skills to teach God's word to others. In my last two years there, I ended up doing an internship at Wayne Presbyterian because of doors God had opened for me. I did it unsuspectingly, thinking I was just fulfilling some college credits and having fun with teens, but little did I know that this place would become my next spiritual home for the next 13 years.

Out of college I was hired at Wayne Presbyterian as their Middle School Youth Director. I got to see first hand the joys and struggles church work. About at the same time I started dating, and later married, my wife Sarah, who has become my companion and best friend. She ended up working along side me at WPC in youth ministry. While there, through her influence on me and through the encouragement of some of our pastors, I discerned God was calling me to Seminary. I went somewhat reluctantly at first, because I still wrestled with insecurities personally and with my pastoral identity, feeling as though I may not be cut out for it. But God

made it clear to me quickly that Palmer Seminary was indeed the place and community for me. I found I loved almost every class I took, and unearth gifts and passions for ministry that I didn't even know I had. I found that I not only had a passion for youth ministry, but for the Church in general. I also began to understand that I was not Mennonite anymore. Through my experiences at Wayne Presbyterian, and at Palmer, I realized thought like like a Reformed thinker. I had been wrestling for some years as to whether I was Mennonite or Presbyterian, but through reading the Book of Order for one of my classes, I realized how much agreed with it, and dare I say even loved it. From that moment on, I have resolutely pursued pastoral ministry in the Presbyterian church, convinced that God had called me and equipped me for ministry there among God's people.

I continue to grow in my faith each day. I have heard God speaking to me lately about His love of me as my Father, and His love for all of his children (especially those suffering). I look forward to the new ways God will continue to reveal God's mercies to me, and to see how God will use me and my family in this new chapter we are writing together.