

## Spiritual Biography

I am a son, a brother, a husband, and recently, a father. Those titles help define me, but the one that defines me most is *Christian*. For me, that means that every day, I challenge myself to be more loving, forgiving, joyful, and thankful in word, thought, and action. It also means I believe people are fundamentally good, yet broken. We all have the ingredients of righteousness inside us, but our souls need to be tended to by one another and by the Holy Spirit. My faith has been nurtured in the communities I've participated in, from church, to seminary, and beyond. Those communities have also helped me develop a sense of call to ministry. As a result of them, my spirit has been cultivated to value love, mission, service, ecumenism, and ministry that is relational and intergenerational.

In Sunday school I was taught to love all people. That was the groundwork on which I was built. Later, youth ministry demonstrated the importance of relationships and mission. It is where I first felt seen and invited by name into a Christian community, and where I first saw myself participating in acts of service and mission in God's name. All ministry should strive to be as inclusive, affirming, and equipping as youth group was for me. The Church needs to be authentic like the Bible on the human experience—like mission work in the face of need.

Mission is *central* to my sense of call. That has been affirmed on every youth mission trip I've taken—even the adult mission trip to Haiti that was interrupted by a terrible earthquake. While I saw loss and devastation on a massive scale, I also witnessed God at work among the suffering. I witnessed a strength of faith yet unknown to me. Through all this, I realized I feel closest to God and God's people when I am involved in some form of mission work or act of service. I am whole when participating in Christ's mission of teaching, healing, and redeeming. For me, "mission" is faith in action. It is purpose revealed.

During my "supervised ministry experience" at *Broad Street Ministry*, I learned more about the significance of empathy in ministry. Empathy is a gift from God, best demonstrated by the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, we should go *to* those in need instead of making them come to us. When done right, I believe mission teaches us about one another and brings us closer to each other and to God. We used the "Trauma Informed Harm Reduction" model as we served meals to people in Center City Philadelphia's homeless community. In short, that means to best help another person, we need to learn where they're coming from, because Christian ministry should be like Jesus' ministry: inspired by love.

Over the course of my seminary career, especially my chaplaincy internship, I came to better understand the importance of intergenerational ministry and ecumenism. I spoke with patients of all ages, denominations, and religions. Regardless of those differences, they were all undergoing some form of spiritual labor. Perhaps, trying to find purpose in their lives, make sense of the world around them, or wondering how God fits into the mess. "Spiritual Midwifery" is the Socratic method we used for humbly recognizing the individual before us as well as the spiritual labor they are undergoing. Outside of the church within any given community, there is great deal of this labor, and I believe I am called to assist in it.