

## College... The Beginning

In January 2003, I finally started college. Here I was, the new fish in a whole new world. I was struggling to find my classes on campus and still trying to figure myself out. I didn't test well in high school, so I ended up having to take extra classes in college just to complete my basic requirements. I had to drive an hour each way every day I went to school. That allowed me even more time in my little red truck. At that time, my radio was broken, and I would drive in silence. Honestly, those were some of my best driving times, working on my walk with God. I spent most of my time either in school or working my two jobs at the horse farm and doing landscaping.

I vividly remember one Friday while at school. I was sitting in class, and when it was time to leave, I needed to ask the teacher a question. I struggled to gather my things and get out the door in time. A large group of people started arriving, but it wasn't normal class time; it was a ministry group called BSU, short for Baptist Student Union. They held Bible studies and church services on campus. I had heard a little about them beforehand, but I hadn't really planned on joining. Now, here I was, awkwardly trying to leave when I was asked to stay. I believe God knew well enough to have it planned that way. I decided to give it a try and take a seat. A girl sat down in front of me, super friendly and full of life. She introduced herself and then asked me the weirdest first question I think I had ever been asked: "Where is Louisville?"

The question rang in my ears. I was slightly stunned by the look on her face. She was being serious. This wasn't a "Where in the state of Kentucky is it located?" kind of look. This was more of a "Where in the entire United States is it?" I looked at her and said, "As in, in the state of Kentucky?" Her eyes widened, and she said, "Oh! Louisville isn't a state?" Yes, folks, you read that right. This girl, super nice, but geographically inept. I later learned that many in the room knew this too. But there I was, in a room of people already laughing, feeling like I might fit in.

With the BSU, I went on to do my first of many mission trips, retreats, and seminars, all learning more about God. I drove that little red truck many miles, still with no radio. God used this group in many ways to help guide me down certain paths. I still have two really close friends from that part of my life.

During this time in my life, I was heading home late one night. I pulled into a local gas station and ran into an old classmate from high school who worked there. The store was fairly empty. He asked if I had a few minutes to wait until he went on break because he had a question for me. After a few minutes, he came around, and we sat down at a table. He proceeded to remind me of the kind of person I was in high school, but then also acknowledged the positive changes I had made. He simply asked, "What happened? What changed?" I was able to turn around and start sharing the gospel in the middle of the night at a gas station lobby. He refused Jesus that night, but seeds had been planted.

God used that as a reminder of all those years. I felt like no one ever noticed me, and I was always overlooked in school. But we are seen, in the good and the bad moments. What we do and say definitely can make a difference.

Sometime during college, I started dating a girl. Things were going well for a while, and then temptations set in. I quickly learned how weak I was in areas where I thought I was strong. Being too confident will get you in trouble quickly. This continued to be a battle for me for a while. All of this while I was still plugged into the BSU, my local church, and helping wherever I could. I went on to meet this girl's family and spend a lot of time with them. They did a good job of taking me in. I spent a lot of time with her father and continued to have these "snapshot" moments.

As we go into the next couple of blogs, this will be a time in my life that hurts in many ways. It's uncomfortable for me, but I still feel like God is wanting me to share so others can see His glory. By the time of writing this blog, we will have released several in this series and started podcasting about my life, plus doing some other topic-related question-and-answer sessions. These blogs have been helping me in ways I never would have thought—to heal and grow. I have had a lot of good, positive feedback from folks. I started writing these in my head, gearing them toward kids without fathers and the dads out there. But I never would have thought about everyone else this can impact. This allows me to understand a little more of God's direction for me and where all this might go one day.

I don't like being this raw about myself, but I am honored to have this platform to do so. In the next couple of blogs, we will see spiritual growth and decline, personal ups and downs, proposals, and heartbreak. As I look back at this part of my life, I miss some of those BSU moments, like the Bible studies and trips. These will be core memories and lessons for me for years to come. I hope and pray that as you continue to read about my life, it's not me you are reading about, but it's God you're searching for within the stories.