

# SCOTT DALTON

I was brought up in a Christian home with strong parents who loved each other and loved God. My dad was a strong leader and loving in the ways he parented my brother and I and in marriage with my mom. However, my dad was never extremely vocal about his faith, although he believed strongly. He had the mentality that faith was our journey and not something he could just hand to us. He was aware that we would have to be drawn by the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. God was sometimes discussed at the dinner table but most of the growth was left for church.

Even though growth was left mostly for church, my church attendance growing up was sparse because I played competitive ice hockey where I travelled 3 out of 4 weekends a month (often more) from the months of September to March. That basically left my church attendance for Summer and Spring and occasionally during an off-week in the winter months. This schedule was the same from 2nd to 8th grade for me. I was bothered, though, by how rarely I went to church and yet how much I “knew” when I was in Sunday School. I had never really read my Bible, never really paid much attention to sermons on Sundays, and yet whenever I answered questions in Sunday School, I seemed to be right most of the time. I was frustrated that Christianity seemed to be too easy. I reasoned that there had to be more than simply saying “Jesus” over and over again.

My junior year of high school I finally got a taste of the depth of the Christian faith and experienced God and his grace for the first time. I was leading a small group on a retreat for middle schoolers and I was supposed to lead them in a discussion about a skit they had just seen where the Gospel was supposed to have been articulated. The skit was more “good advice” than “good news,” and I felt like it intellectually demeaned the kids in my group. Middle schoolers are smarter than they appear. So, I asked them if they had any “real” questions about Christianity or the Bible (not that I had read any of it – certainly not any book in its entirety). After a few seconds of silence one student piped up, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” another student chimed in almost indignantly “Yeah, and why do babies die?” I was at a loss for words. These questions were questions I had thought myself but never had the courage to ask anyone because I didn’t think Christianity could offer any sort of concrete or coherent

response. I fumbled through a “Jesus loves you and God has a plan” response. When the group broke, I went to one of the youth leaders who seemed to really know his stuff and asked him those questions. He said that he has answers for me and that I should bring my questions and meet with him after the students were in bed and that we could discuss them. I brought another student-leader with me who was intrigued by the conversation and another youth leader joined us as well. We started with “Why do bad things happen to good people?” and this leader (his name was Teddy) fielded my innumerable questions for 4 hours until we were all too exhausted to continue. I was amazed that we were turning to Scripture (mostly Romans, which I had never heard of before) for answers and that answers were there! Scripture was actually clear on some issues, which shocked me. I walked out of that room, sat on the floor, and wept. Something had happened to me, the power of the Gospel had moved me. I had tasted of Grace for the first time. The Holy Spirit gripped me in that moment and my life had changed.

I am often frustrated with God’s timing, however, the time he chose to save me was certainly perfect just as He is in all of His ways. I’ll abbreviate this portion because it is too long, but I want this to be known as well. Several months after being saved, my dad was diagnosed with one of those extremely rare, confusing-to-doctors, types of cancer. He battled with it through my senior year of high school and I was vaulted into manhood trying to take care of my new adult responsibilities with my brother off in college. He got better the summer after my senior year and then cancer came back angrily that fall. He died in March of my freshman year of college. Throughout the trials that came with my dad’s illness and death, I was never angry with God. I never got to a fist-shaking moment or in a yelling match with Him. I just had questions. I was exploding with questions that I knew there were answers to, but that leaders in my church could never really seem to answer. I later learned that they were failing to take a firm theological stance anywhere, so it was difficult to know who God really was.

After praying for the first time in what was probably months, I came before God confused and broken, hardly recognizing myself anymore for turning my back on Him and feeling lost. I asked questions, I wrestled with God why all of this had happened to me. I was working in Dallas and living alone. I had never been to Texas before that, and was in a new place far from home (Nashville) and was hurting. To abbreviate, I felt a strange urge to transfer to Baylor University in search of community that I saw one of my friends had. I applied, was accepted, and enrolled. I called back home and told my mom I had enrolled in Baylor because I wanted to follow Jesus. She said that was as good of a reason as any, so I stayed in Texas.

Questions have always been a huge part of my journey following Jesus. The reason I tell my story in the way that I do is because questions have always been central to my growth. I have always delighted in having discussions with people about who God is, what his nature is, and how he operates. From the beginning, my soul would leap when people would open up the Bible and unleash the Truth and power of God. There has been nothing more amazing to me than the power of Scripture to mend broken hearts, to stimulate minds, and to facilitate growth in myself and the Christians I talk to. There is something about studying Scripture, reading books, listening to sermons, and simply learning about God that sparks a wonder in me that other subjects do not. Since being a Christian I have found immeasurable joy in learning about theology, preaching, liturgy, worship music, the intersection of faith and work, and many other topics that I still want to learn so much more about.

I have felt a deep desire to continue my theological education from close to the first few moments of being a believer. Even though in college I have studied business, I have always tinkered around with theology books, taken religion classes where I can, and sought leaders in the church to learn from. I didn't think that continuing my theological education would be possible because I was set on a career path for business. As I went to God in prayer, he started steering me in another way entirely. Though I fought Him on it, God continued to drive me in a direction toward continuing theological education. After months of prayer, I gave in, and while I don't think we're always 100% sure of anything, I feel so strongly that continuing my education in this area is no longer something that I want to do, but rather that is something that I must do.