

A PEACE & PURPOSE

By **Chris White** | Minister to Students



Growing up, life was simple. I was raised in a tiny, East Texas community called Nogalus Prairie. Nogalus (no-gal-us) is located 30 minutes from Lufkin, Texas, and also the nearest Walmart! For the majority of my childhood, our family attended a small, independent Baptist church in the community. We lived on the same 18-acre lot as my paternal grandparents, and my maternal grandparents lived two miles away, a short 5-minute drive down a dirt road. Our entire lives revolved around family and community in Nogalus.

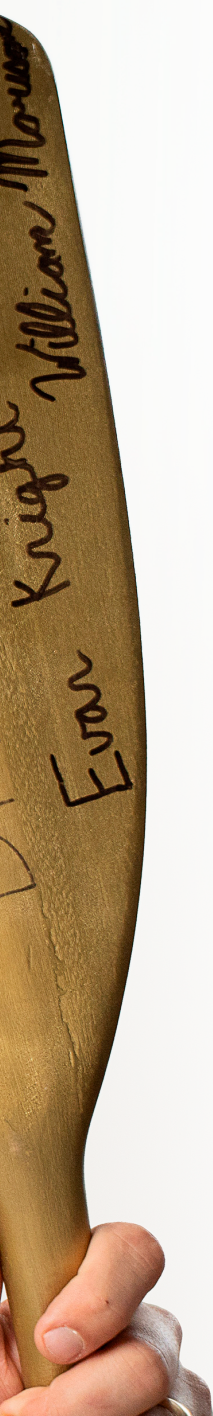
When I was 9 years-old, my grandfather passed away. Though I recognized the gravity of his passing, I had no clue how his death would profoundly impact the rest of my life. Soon after my grandfather's death, my family was invited to attend a church called Southside Baptist Church, in Lufkin, Texas (a 30-minute drive from our home). We began attending Southside regularly and quickly found it to be a refuge for our family. During a season of life that brought many changes, Southside provided community for our family as we searched for a new normal. A year after our first visit at Southside, we moved to Lufkin to avoid driving 30 minutes one way every time we attended church.

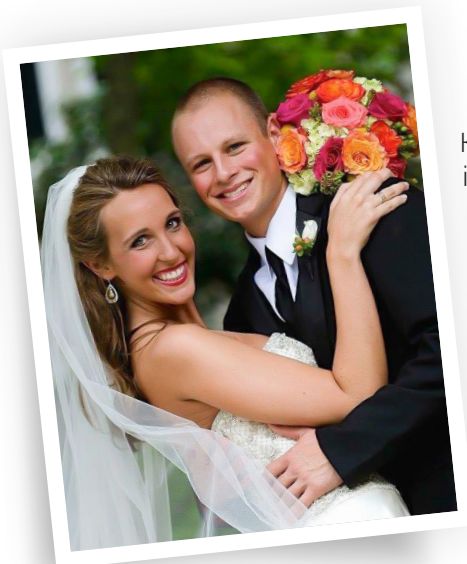
I thank God for Southside Baptist Church, for her people and influence in my life. I'm also thankful for our family's move to Lufkin. The move proved to be monumental for the future direction of my life, as it provided a community and discipleship that my family never experienced before. Though I knew God was real, I allowed death and divorce to harden my heart towards God's grace. It wasn't until the summer after my senior year of high school that the Lord would reveal to me the sin and bitterness in my life. He used the combination of a student camp in New Orleans and intentional discipleship from my student pastor to highlight my need for Him. The Wednesday night of camp, I surrendered my life to God, recognizing that I needed God's peace and forgiveness.

God radically changed my life that week in New Orleans. I discovered a newfound peace and purpose I had been longing for. A call from God to ministry would follow soon after my salvation. Though I continued with my plans to attend Texas A&M, I soon began to feel a nudge in a different direction. After attending A&M for one semester, I moved back to Lufkin to attend a nearby community college and help with Southside's student ministry. Over the course of that semester, I became increasingly involved in the student ministry and developed a love for serving the church community. God would use my involvement with Southside's student ministry to call me into full-time ministry.

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The move back home also allowed me to meet my wife, Kayla. Kayla also served Southside's student ministry in the summer of 2012. Shortly thereafter, I moved to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, in Spring 2013. Kayla and I became engaged (Spring 2014), we graduated from Liberty (Fall 2014), and moved to First Baptist Church in Cleveland, Mississippi, to serve as their Minister to Students (Spring 2015).

Since then, I have been blessed to finish my Master of Divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and begin a PhD at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition, Kayla and I have been blessed with our son, Grayson (2), and Madilyn Kaye, due at the end of

January 2020! It is also by God's grace that in September 2019, He led us to Dawson to serve as Minister to Students.

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From my salvation in 2011 and call to ministry in 2012, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 has been a linchpin in my life: For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so

that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

I am amazed when I look back at my life. This is not the path I would have chosen for myself—I would have definitely chosen a simpler course. However, I am thankful for 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and the encouragement it gives and reminds me that God often uses the most unlikely of people. I am thankful that God's plans are often much different than our own. If my life had played out the way I planned, I would have missed so many of the joys I've experienced since my salvation, one of those being the joy of serving Dawson as Minister to Students. Throughout the course of my life, God has continued to pour His faithfulness over

my family and gracefully lead us into each season. I am grateful for my call to ministry, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside our family of faith here at Dawson! †



Chris White is married to Kayla. They have one son, Grayson who is two years-old, and a new daughter, Madilyn Kaye, who was born on January 30, 2020.