



My life

By Aubrey Johnston

Associate Minister to Students

is not my own.

AS A TEENAGER, ABOVE MY BED HUNG A HANDMADE COLLAGE FULL OF MAGAZINE CLIPPINGS, PURPLE PAINT, AND A QUOTE BY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT THAT READ, "SINCE EVERYBODY IS AN INDIVIDUAL NOBODY CAN BE YOU. YOU ARE UNIQUE. YOUR LIFE IS YOUR OWN. YOU MOLD IT. YOU MAKE IT."

This saying gives perfect commentary on who I was as a young teenager; looking for identity in my uniqueness, while searching for what my purpose would be in life. And if you told teenage Aubrey, that 26-year-old Aubrey is a Minister to Students, she would laugh in your face. I don't think if I was "molding" my life on my own I would have chosen this specific path. But since giving my life to Jesus in the 5th grade, my life hasn't been my own. Praise the Lord, He is a much better author of my life.

I grew up in a suburb of Saint Louis, Missouri, in a home full of the love and grace of Jesus Christ. My parents, both believers, raised me and my two siblings in the church and were committed to teaching us Christian values. We started getting really involved in our home church when I entered the Student Ministry. The church culture I grew up in emphasized the grace and love of God and community but didn't encourage deep growth through the Bible and personal holiness. Thankfully, my parents sent me to Kanakuk Kamps, in Branson, MO, where I gave my life to Christ in the 5th grade and was later baptized in the lake at sixteen. Throughout the years, Kamp was a sweet place of growth for me as a teenager. It was a place of deep Christian community, something I didn't have a ton of at home.

When it came time to look for colleges, I felt that a smaller Christian college may strengthen me in my faith more than going to the state school where all of my high school friends were going. As I started to look, I realized that I couldn't make this type of decision without seeking the Lord's guidance. It would have been more comfortable to stay near my family and go to a school where I knew a ton of people, but I could tell that the Lord was steering me to seek something different.

Over the summer of 2012 my family took a trip to Hilton Head, requiring us to drive through Birmingham, creating the perfect time to stop for a tour at Samford University. From the moment I stepped on campus, I knew it was the place for me. Leaving Saint Louis was a step of boldness that only came from the confidence I had in God writing a better story for my life than I could. Upon entering college, I majored in Human Development and Family Education and later added a minor in Sociology and Religion. I knew the Lord gifted me with a love for people and a desire to serve families, but I really didn't know what that would mean as a career. Throughout my four years at Samford, the Lord refined me through many trials of differing sizes and scopes, but all teaching me to release control and allow Him to shape my story. Some of the most challenging struggles came from the distance between me and my family as they walked through a difficult season of addiction, depression, and sorrow. I wished so badly to be able to control my siblings' choices in the midst of their mental health crises, but I now see that the Lord was teaching me to turn to prayer and trust, instead of control and anxiety.

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One of the biggest blessings I experienced during my time in college was God's guidance in leading me to a ministry called **Delight**. In my sophomore year, I received a random call from a Tennessee number. The person asked me if I would consider writing a chapter in a college women's devotional book for a newer college ministry called Delight. Delight is a women's ministry focused on "inviting college women into Christ-centered community that fosters vulnerability and transforms stories." After writing the devotion on "identity," I grew interested in starting a Delight chapter on my own campus.



And, through a God-ordained chain of events, I was able to start a chapter at Samford. Over those next two and a half years I jumped into ministry head-first. I was leading a team of my peers (now some of my life-long best friends), discipling younger girls, and teaching regularly to a group of girls who gathered weekly at our chapter meetings. I learned quickly that the Lord had made me "to do" life with others, to walk alongside those who are struggling, and to encourage them in the Gospel. Without that random phone call, I am confident that I would not be doing full time ministry now.

As my senior year approached, I was wrestling between pursuing family counseling or getting my Master of Divinity. Honestly, I had no idea what to do other than to pray and trust that the Lord would make my path straight. After touring several graduate schools and seeking wisdom from my mentors,

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I realized that the most important next step for me was to be rooted deeply in Scripture. The opportunity to grow in the knowledge of God's Word, to learn about the Church throughout the ages, and to study practical ministry seemed most available to me at Beeson Divinity School. Even though I knew I would be in the minority as a woman at Beeson seeking my M.Div., it seemed the Lord wasn't giving me another option. So, after wise counsel and words of affirmation, I entered seminary with no idea what the Lord would have in store.

Looking back at this decision, I see the Lord so clearly directing me in a path I wouldn't have chosen for myself. One that would be full of spiritual, emotional, relational, and academic hardships.

During my time at Beeson, I often felt the Lord refining me through fire. Not only was Beeson an incredibly intense academic environment, but it was also a very trying time spiritually. Learning the ancient languages, preaching in front of rooms of only male peers, leading other students who were more than 20 years my senior, definitely put me out of my comfort zone. But it also grew my personal relationship with the Lord.

While at Beeson, I worked as a Ministry Assistant at The Church at Brook Hills and then moved to Mountain Brook Community Church to serve as the College Associate. Through my time at these churches, I grew to understand what it looks like to do ministry well.



I learned to love and disciple young women with a passion that can only come from desiring others to know God's love and love Him in return. I soon began to see what it would mean to give my life to vocational ministry. When I look back, I can see the way the Lord was specifically preparing me for this job at Dawson.

So now I'm here at Dawson, serving as the Associate Minister to Students! Some of life's biggest blessings come simply from taking the next God-directed step, and this is one of those for me. Getting to know the students and love on the girls of this church, and being involved in the lives of the families are ways I see the Lord blessing me in the role already. I love working alongside our amazing DSM team. God is doing really cool things here in and through our students. It's a gift to serve the students in Birmingham and share the good news of Jesus Christ!

While it's obvious to see the Lord's molding of my life in my career calling and path, I also see it in my everyday life. He has gifted me with deep friendships in Birmingham over the past eight years. I am so thankful to live life alongside my two best friends from college as my roommates, as well as spend my weekends with our married friends and their new families.

The Lord is also teaching me to prioritize the slow moments with Him, which include lots of walking, hiking, backpacking, and trips home to stay at my family's cabin. He is teaching me to create balance in my daily routine, through things like making time to work out, cooking tasty food (when I'm not eating pizza at The LOFT), reading good books, and growing in my relationships with my boyfriend and friends. Each day is a chance to surrender to the Lord's molding and making of my life.

Philippians 1:6 reads: *"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* I hope my life is marked more by this passage of Scripture than by the quote hanging on my teenage wall. For while I know I am uniquely myself, made in God's image, my life is not my own. Rather, it is God's to mold and make. Praise the Lord that His ways are better than mine.



Aubrey Johnston is the Associate Minister to Students. She loves investing in and caring for the 6th–12th grade girls, while serving alongside the DSM team.