



Kris McDaniel Spiritual Autobiography

I came to know Jesus when I was 15 years old, though I now see that He had been drawing me to Himself long before then. My mother became a Christian when I was very young, and she and I attended church regularly, primarily in non-denominational settings. The turning point for me came around age 15, when my father came to faith. Watching Jesus transform his life convinced me that the gospel was more than an idea—it was the power of God at work, reaching and transforming ordinary, broken people. Seeing that change in my dad awakened in me a desire to know Jesus for myself.

Soon afterward, I read the Bible from beginning to end for the first time. Until then I knew many Bible stories, but I had never understood the great story of Scripture. Reading the Bible cover to cover immersed me in God's redemptive story and changed the way I saw everything. Looking back, I didn't simply learn the Bible; I encountered God through it. He gave me a deep love for His Word that has remained one of the great anchors of my life. During this time, I also began to experience the love of God and life in the Holy Spirit. Akin to the experience of one of my heroes, John Wesley, my heart was *strangely warmed* as I grew in my faith.

Not long after, I began leading a Bible study at my public high school that eventually grew to around 70 students. I also became deeply involved in my church's youth ministry. Those experiences first awakened the possibility that Jesus might be calling me into pastoral ministry.

I attended Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee, where I experienced the gift of Christian community in a fresh way. A small group of close friends—including Marty Reardon, who now serves as Worship Pastor at Trinity—became an important source of encouragement in my life with God and helped confirm what I already sensed God was doing in my life.

Before finishing college, I accepted a ministry position at a Vineyard church in Atlanta. Looking back, I recognize that I made that decision too quickly. Leaving school early and entering an unhealthy ministry environment created wounds that took years to understand. At the same time, it was there that I met my wife, Karyn, with whom I have now shared nearly 30 years of marriage. In God's kindness, that season of regret and loss already held the seeds of redemption and healing. Only years later could I recognize that God had been quietly at work, bringing redemption even through that painful season. Today, I can see that this season helped shape the pastor I would become. Years later I was able to complete both my master's and doctoral degrees, redeeming something that had remained unfinished for many years.

Not long after we married, Karyn and I moved to rural England to work with youth in a small non-denominational church. Spiritually, this became one of the most significant seasons of my life. I had grown weary. I had seen enough brokenness in ministry that I found myself becoming cynical and afraid, and I quietly wondered if I was beginning to lose my faith.

It was during that time that I was introduced to Anglican worship. A faithful family in our community invited us to their village church in Penselwood, Somerset. I'll never forget walking into that tiny congregation for the first time. An overwhelming sense of peace and beauty settled over me. The worship wasn't built around personalities or performance. It was quiet, reverent, and deeply rooted. At this time a member of that family gave me my first Book of Common Prayer. She introduced me to the Daily Lectionary, helping me discover a rhythm of prayer that continues to sustain me today. I felt as though Jesus was gently reminding me that His Church had always been much bigger, older, and steadier than my own experience of it. Looking back, I can see that this was the beginning of a journey that would eventually lead both my family and our congregation into the Anglican tradition.

It was also around this time that Karyn and I welcomed our first child, Madelyn, into the world. We now have three adult children—Mady, Scout, and Finn. They are a joy to us, and my love for them through both difficult and joyful seasons has made me more aware of the love of the Father toward us.

When we returned to Atlanta, I joined the staff of the Atlanta Vineyard Church before being sent out to plant Trinity in the heart of the city. We began with a small group meeting in a living room. At the time of our planting, I was 26 old and often felt in over my head. During those years I quietly returned to the Book of Common Prayer that had been given to me in England. I continued to pray the Daily Office and follow the Daily Lectionary. Those rhythms sustained my own life with God long before they became part of our congregation's life together.

Eventually I told our leadership team that I had run out of clever ways to tell people Jesus loved them. I suggested that instead of relying on our own creativity, we allow the Scriptures to shape us through the Sunday Lectionary. Long before Trinity became Anglican, we began preaching through the three-year lectionary cycle, observing the Church Year, and continuing our practice of weekly Communion. Over time we discovered that these weren't simply Anglican practices; they were gifts that helped us know Jesus more deeply and rooted us more fully in the life of His Church.

Our eventual entrance into the Anglican Mission in the Americas under Bishop T. J. Johnston felt less like a change of direction than the natural continuation of a journey Jesus had already begun. Anglicanism gave language, shape, and a spiritual home to what God had already been patiently forming in us.

During those early years, Bishop T. J. was a trusted pastor and mentor in my life. One piece of counsel he gave me has remained with me through every season of ministry: *"Kris, you cannot lead people where you yourself are not going."* That simple sentence has never left me. Before I am called to lead the Church, I am called to follow Jesus and love Him with my whole life.

As the years have passed, God has entrusted me with responsibilities beyond the local parish through service within the Diocese of Churches for the Sake of Others. Yet I continue to understand myself first as a parish priest. Whatever opportunities for wider leadership I have been given have grown out of the ordinary work of preaching the gospel, shepherding a congregation, and loving the Church Jesus loves.

Across the years, I can see that Jesus has patiently led me every step of the way. He has met me through His Word, through His Church, through the sacraments, through faithful friendships, and through the ordinary rhythms of grace that have sustained me over the years. My hope is that, however many years of ministry the Lord gives me, I will simply keep following Him, loving His Church, and caring well for the people He entrusts to me.