

Alex Bucklin
Brown University Class of 2012
Varsity Soccer

Growing up, Sunday mornings were spent piling into the family suburban and going to the little white Methodist church in downtown Greenwich. Once there, after opening hymns my younger sister and I were led to the old classrooms in the annex, where Sunday school would commence. We were taught stories of a man named Moses, who parted the seas, the boy David who defeated the giant Goliath with one swing of his slingshot, and a particularly special person named Jesus who was not only kind and compassionate but also happened to be the Son of God (and Man). Complete with storybook illustrations and coloring activities, I came to know the stories of the Old Testament. One year, I starred as Mary in the annual production of the Nativity play, but was unfortunately outshone by my youngest sister, who as an angel stole baby Jesus from the manger and began to play with him in front of the congregation.

As the years passed, and soccer became more competitive and time-demanding, those family trips in the suburban every Sunday were fewer and fewer, until they were only on Easter Sunday, and then never. Instead, my parents devoted all of their time to ensuring that my four siblings and I could make all of the many weekend athletic commitments we had lined up. Suddenly, the Bible I had received from the pastor of my church, personally inscribed to me for becoming an “adult” in the eyes of the church, as well as my awareness of Jesus Christ began collecting dust, distant memories of my past that were no longer central parts of my daily existence.

In the summer of 2007, I set off for Brown University, to a new, exciting life of rigorous academics and athletics. As soon as I arrived, I relished the freedom that was suddenly mine, finally no longer controlled by parental mandates and curfews, with the ability to do whatever I wanted when I wanted. Never having experienced anything close to this level of independence before, I enjoyed the ability to socialize and not have to be home by 11 pm. School, and in many instances, sports, took a backseat to friends and “going out”. God wasn’t even on the radar at this point, covered in such a thick layer of dust and so far removed from me that the memories of church began to seem like fleeting dreams whose last impression was fading for good. By the end of the school year, I felt thoroughly empty. I had friends, I had fun, yet I was wholly unsatisfied.

As I returned home for my summer break, I knew an evaluation of my priorities for the previous year was in order. I spent much time in self-reflection, throwing all of my energy into working out and hanging out with my family, hoping to find completion somehow. The idea of starting to attend church again popped into my head, although I’m not sure from where or why. Looking back now, I can recognize that the Holy Spirit was convicting me to dust off my old Bible and bring Jesus back into my life.

Returning to Brown for my sophomore year, I decided to attend the fall activities fair which was primarily geared towards freshmen, with the hopes of finding activities that would allow me to get involved with the school in a manner other than sports. I made sure to pick up any and all information from Christian groups I came across, and then as I was making my way past the final tables I saw the Athletes in Action group. Approaching the table, I picked up some information and free mints, and left filled with hope and high expectations for the upcoming meeting on Thursday.

Since then I can honestly say my walk with God fell naturally into place. I threw myself into reading the free Bible we received during the first AIA meeting, as the one I received as a young girl was still under years of dust somewhere back home. I checked out numerous books from the Rock on apologetics and Christianity, seeking to quench the insatiable thirst I had developed to know God and learn about Him and His love and promises. I loaded my iPod with Christian music, reveling in the beautiful lyrics praising the Father I had found again, and downloaded free sermons from online which also satisfied my desire to completely seek the Lord with every ounce of my being. Finally, I eagerly attended Monday night dinner discussions, Tuesday night life group meetings, Thursday night AIA large group meetings, and Sunday church sermons.

Somewhere along the way that semester, I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior, although I cannot pinpoint the exact time or place. I was completely consumed by my renewed passion for God and my desire to live to glorify His name. Every single day became filled with interactions with Him, to the point where my recollections of the previous six months consist of one continuous dialogue with my Lord and Savior. Needless to say, almost instantly after committing my life to Christ, the empty place in my heart that could not be filled with friends, nor school, nor soccer, nor going out, became whole again, overflowing with so much love that I continue to be amazed at the powerful way in which God can mold us if we only give ourselves up to Him.