

My Path to God

Tyler Collins, Brown University Class of 2011, Varsity Football

I've always affiliated as a Christian, but I've only *truly* been a Christian for about 2 years now. Growing up, I went to church most Sundays, but I never really got the message. As I grew, my family went to church less and less and by the time I was ten, we were lucky to go four times a year other than Christmas and Easter. As a freshman in high school I was confirmed, something I only did because my friends, who were just as undedicated as I, were made to do it by their parents, and I thought I'd join them. I went to church every Sunday through the confirmation process and I also started going to the youth group one night a week. Even though we weren't frequent church-goers, I still got the random urge out of nowhere that told me "I should go to church this week". I believe this urge came mostly because I was under the belief that I was a good person and if I went to church here and there, then I would be considered worthy of heaven, which I was pretty sure I believed in. But, even though I believe most of the reason I went was to gain 'god points', I still enjoyed hearing the sermons and usually was happy I went afterwards. After freshman year ended, and confirmation with it, I returned to my pattern of hardly ever attending church or participating in any Christian activities. Even as a kid, I had always thought about eternity, the purpose of life, and tried to cope with the brevity of life in the context of the universe. I was also very interested in science and firmly rooted in physics. By my junior year in high school, all my thoughts, and several other frustrations I had with members of the church, had lead me to almost give up believing in God altogether. I believe I almost successfully outsmarted myself. Whenever I looked into the bible, I could not make it past Genesis without saying "well, everybody knows that's not possible" about thirty times. But, by my senior year, despite all the problems I thought I had with Christianity, the church, and the bible, I came to one simple conclusion: No matter how hard science tried to explain the origins of the universe with the big bang or any other theories they wanted, it didn't make sense. It was incomplete. There had to be a God that started everything (and although the question of who created the creator arises, it has to start somewhere, and even scientists will tell you the matter cannot come from nothing, but when talking about a divine creator, the rules don't apply, and it becomes a matter of faith anyways). Through that one simple conclusion, my whole view of everything about life, death, God, and the reasons for everything changed. I didn't go bursting into church immediately because I still found myself frustrated with people who attended and seemed to be hypocritical, but I remember that Christmas eve as the first time I sat down and truly praised God for what he did and I actually understood how amazing it was that he sent his son to earth for me, to save me and everybody else. My church attendance rose slowly for the rest of the year until I arrived at college and football took over my life. That first semester I didn't once think about anything in the context of God or religion or anything, I just wanted to survive the year. Midway through second semester, I saw pictures of the AIA nerf tournament online and decided it would good to get back involved with my religion. I went to the large group every Thursday, but didn't commit myself any farther, which really limited me in my growth. This year, I really got involved from the beginning of the semester, and I have grown more in my faith and as a person in general this past fall than any other time period of my life. Between Thursday night, our men's life group, the Monday night dinner discussions, all the other talks I have with people throughout the week, and the reading I started doing, I have felt myself move much closer to God and to becoming the person I know I need to be for him carry out his word and ministry on this earth. C.S. Lewis had an analogy that hit a note with the chess player in me: in his book, *Surprised By Joy*, where he discusses how he came to be a Christian, the chapters at the end were titled, 'Check', 'Checkmate', and 'The Beginning'. I believe I have said 'check'; I have come to understand the power of God and faith in him but I am not yet complete to the person I know I need to be for him.