

Jeremiah Carlson - Young Adults Pastor

"Growing up my Dad taught my brothers and I about Jesus and how if we asked him into our hearts, we would go to Heaven when we died. That always seemed like an attractive idea to me, so I asked Jesus into my heart about a hundred times as a little boy. Even though my Dad held this value of sharing Jesus with us boys, church and being a godly house was not much of a value at all. My understanding of Jesus was more cultural than religious and it definitely wasn't relational. My freshman year in high school was one of the hardest years of my life as I struggled with horrible anxiety, dreadful thoughts and having not gone through puberty yet, was about a hundred pounds soaking wet. This made me an easy target for bullies. Even my friends made fun of me. This and a deep traumatic wound from having been sexually abused as a 5 year old gave the Devil a real foot hold in how I viewed myself. Towards the end of my freshman year I was ready to end it all. I had spent that year confused as to why I felt like I was going crazy. I would cry out to God every night and ask him to heal me but with no success. Then one random summer day after freshman year had ended, I woke up one morning and felt perfectly at peace. The anxiety and dreadful thoughts were completely gone! I had no idea why and for the next couple days couldn't figure it out. Then one morning I had a random desire to start reading the Bible. At the time my family only owned a massive KJV Bible that had been tucked away in our junk closet. I grabbed it and spent the next two weeks alone in my bedroom reading the gospels. Being 15 and trying to understand a KJV Bible was a real challenge. I really only understood about two percent of it, but the one thing I recognized when I read about Jesus was that he loved people who felt like I did. People who were society's rejects were the ones who ended up walking closest to him and ultimately changing the world. It would be over the next couple months that as I read scripture it was like it was reading me. I felt Jesus speaking clearly to me inviting me to walk near him like his "chosen" nobodies. I was madly in love and I gladly accepted his invitation and haven't looked back since."