

Brendan Prout
Spiritual Biography
2021 update

Warning: this account is probably way too much information for some people. Many would say people need to put their best foot forward in sharing their testimony of faith, and I come at it from another angle: I believe being authentic is far more necessary in sharing the story of one's spiritual journey. Bumps, bruises, the good, the bad, the ugly... I'm not holding anything back here. That's how I live my life, in a transparent manner that is an open book for any who would desire to look in – and that's how I'm going to share my story.

I was raised in a mixed church setting with religious but not spiritual parents: my father was Catholic and my mother was Greek Orthodox, and I spent a great deal of time at both churches growing up. Being also a military family, we moved often and the church we went to largely depended on where we were living at the time, and which one was more convenient. Sometimes the Greek church was close enough to make it a comfortable drive, sometimes not. Mom preferred to go to Greek church, but Catholic was just fine with her too.

My mom was usually the motivator in getting us to church... my dad held strong convictions, but the Navy kept him long hours so sometimes he'd just as soon sleep in on Sundays (his only day off). We went to a lot of catholic Saturday evening services so that we wouldn't have to get up and go to church on Sunday mornings.

I was baptized as an infant in the Greek Orthodox church, and from preschool until Jr. High I was a regular attendee at Greek Sunday school. I even won an award one year for perfect attendance: a gold and silver cross! (I still have it) My parents got me a Picture Bible and I loved to read it, especially when my mom would be reading hers. We would sit next to each other and read our Bibles together often. As a result of going to so much Sunday school and reading the Bible so much, I was well versed in the scripture as a kid.

The Greek church was pretty and ornate, steeped in tradition, but I didn't speak fluent Greek and besides I was a hyperactive child and had difficulty listening to the sermons preached half in English, half in Greek. I don't recall any sermons I ever heard at a Greek church. I just remember the elegance of the church (and the 4 hour long services! bleah! i'm trying to block those out of my memory.... I digress)

As far as liturgies went, I liked the Catholic church for its brevity. With certain priests we were guaranteed to be in and out in less than half an hour! Plus there were usually donuts after the services, so I was pretty excited to get to go to Catholic church when we did. The biggest complaint I had about

Catholic Church was all the up, down, & kneeling action associated with the Eucharist Mass. I would have much preferred to be able to just sit there for half an hour and do without the calisthenics.

When I was a child, I had a kind of blind faith that I think a lot of kids brought up in Christian homes have. I didn't start questioning my beliefs until Jr. High. I remember vividly, staying up one night scared sleepless from the thought of dying. I didn't want to die; I wasn't sure there was anything after death, and if there was, I wasn't sure of where I would end up.

In high school my parents gave me the choice of going to church only if I wanted to, and I started checking out other churches. I ended up going to a Baptist church within walking distance of my house. Location was very important, since I didn't drive yet. Also of importance was the fact that I knew some very pretty girls from my school went there. So yes, it was pretty girls that God used to start me going to church on my own.

Besides the pretty girls I was interested in, quite a few of my friends went there, and we had an active little youth group. I was socially happy, and since I had a pretty decent knowledge of the Bible I fit in nicely with the kids who were "real Christians". I didn't have the convictions of the knowledge I carried in me, so I faked it. I pretended to be as devoted to God as everyone else seemed to be; I pretended to know what it meant to be saved; I pretended to have strong beliefs when in fact I questioned just about everything.

I went to the youth group mainly for the social aspects, for the activities the group did. I had many doubts about God, but I didn't voice them.

In my junior year of high school my family moved to San Diego. An old friend of mine learned I liked to participate in church youth group, and introduced me to a big one he knew of... at 1st Assembly of God. With an attendance of 150 kids it was way bigger than any group I'd seen before (my previous one was 12 strong) and had a lot more going on. I was welcomed into the group right off the bat, and was quite content with the social scene.

I soon became jealous of all the kids there who were deeply committed to living out their beliefs, the kids who professed to actually have a personal relationship with God. I was angry that they could have so much faith and I didn't. I made it a goal to try to understand the nature of their faith and attain it for myself. I wanted very badly to believe; I just didn't know how. It was a long, gradual process of coming to understanding my own beliefs and fears, eventually leading to the realization that I could have faith without understanding all the answers.

I made a decision to follow Christ on a winter retreat with the youth group, began being mentored in a discipleship group, and began serving in the worship and tech ministry, eventually becoming a worship leader.

Throughout college I had the opportunity to grow in faith and service, being a worship leader with InterVarsity, Campus Crusades for Christ, Calvary Chapel, and eventually joining the staff ministry team at a small church plant then called Canyon View Christian Fellowship, now called Newbreak. At

this church the lead pastor identified in me a call to vocational ministry, and following my graduation from SDSU, I began seminary at Azusa Pacific University, and became ordained as a pastor as I continued to serve on staff. The Lord opened opportunities for me to serve a number of San Diego churches on their pastoral staff teams over the next 20 years.

Over my decades of ministry experience, I have been responsible for ministry leadership during periods of tumultuous congregational change and transition. I have been responsible for oversight of ministry teams comprised over 200 people operating 25 different teams in 11 different venues, and I have trained dozens of ministry leaders as Timothy's, empowering them to grow in their gifts and serve the church. I formed outreach ministry teams from scratch, casting vision, gathering volunteers, planning and executing events in the local community. I oversaw all aspects of the worship services of each church, including the media and usher ministries, revamping and improving the way we did things while executing the vision and directives of my lead pastor and elder council. I performed the duties of executive pastor, coordinating all aspects of service planning and execution. I was responsible for planning and executing church-wide community events, with the focus on training and equipping the saints to do the work of ministry they are called to individually. I performed the administration of licensing, musical arrangement, scheduling, directing rehearsals, working directly with all members of worship teams to develop musical gifting in worship. I provided spiritual care and mentoring of worship team members, especially in the area of leadership development. I performed marriage and family counseling and grief counseling, weddings, funerals, baptisms, and baby dedications. I directed the media & programming teams, as the one responsible for the technical overhaul and upkeep of main sanctuary and secondary auditorium technology, redesign and implementation, and renewal of vision for worship ministry. I wrote our Philosophy of Worship for the church in partnership with my lead pastor. I also co-wrote the Marriage Counseling Manual in partnership with him, and wrote the Usher Manual and Worship Ministry Manual. Through the Bible Institute, I taught college level classes, and was also afforded the opportunity to preach for the main congregation, men's ministry, young adults ministry, and youth ministry. I also served at AWANA, our midweek children's ministry, taught our Griefshare group regularly, and did the lion's share of hospice & hospital visits and emergency response on behalf of the staff and elders. I was a founding member of the Preaching Society, a group that trains and equips men who feel called to be teaching pastors. At each church I served, I completed the work God had for me for that time and season; I have raised my Timothy's, replaced myself, and left the church stronger and in better shape than I found it.

My heart to train and equip others has led me to begin a series of online and in person training workshops, where I created content to teach on various aspects of ministry leadership, and I've had the opportunity to teach and speak at conferences worldwide. Additionally I have had the opportunity to write for Worship Leader Magazine for over a decade, contributing articles serving to build up and

encourage those serving in ministry at their local churches, with a monthly readership of hundreds of thousands.

I have also made it a personal discipline to seek out mentorship for myself, to continue to grow and be refreshed and encouraged. Over the past decade especially, I've been blessed to connect with Tony Baron, Mickey Stonier, Chuck Allers, John Wickham, Rick Muchow and Paul Baloché as friends and mentors.

My heart is to continue to reach people for Jesus and show them His great love for them, and to train and equip the saints for the work of ministry they were created to do. Both my wife and I desire to have an impact in the lives of people by showing them God's love in action -- not just telling them about Jesus' love for them but showing them tangibly through our involvement in their lives. God is continuously remolding and shaping me into who He wants me to be through my relationship with him in His son Jesus, and I believe His plan for me is to serve His Church continuously in ministry as long as I draw breath: leading and mentoring leaders as I am myself mentored, serving as an example following Christ, influencing believers through teaching & shepherding, and impacting the world for Jesus.

-Brendan Prout