

I was saved when I was 14 years old at Sagmount Baptist Church Camp. Twice before I had proclaimed Christ the Lord of my life in shallow words only, but did not understand my need for a savior. As a young girl at my grandma's church I repeated the pastor's prayer and believed I was doing a good thing without recognizing that I was a sinner in need of God to spare me from the eternal consequences of my sin. I went forward each following week to get saved all over again during children's church. I had no idea that Jesus died once for all my sins, and that I just needed to trust in what He had already done for me. I thought "getting saved" was something I had to do. After several years out of church, I was invited to Hillside Baptist Church. During a children's church invitation, I raised my hand. With a volunteer I bowed my head and asked God to save me again. I remember wanting to please and impress those around me. I cared more about what my teacher and church friends thought of me than I cared about Jesus Christ.

Neither of my previous proclamations were from a sincere sinner's broken heart. For months leading up to our pre-camp youth rally at Sagmount I felt conviction. I pulled my pastor's wife aside a couple times and told her I was saved, but asked how one could know that they know for sure. I wanted to know what the evidences of salvation were. At the pre-camp youth rally, God used a devotion led by Mrs. Kristen Bingham and Mrs. Linda Whitecotten to convict my heart. The devotion was about keeping our closets clean, but I knew this wasn't something I could do on my own anymore. Without salvation all my efforts were vain. I knew I needed to once and for all admit that there was nothing I could do to earn the love and forgiveness of my creator. I finally cared more about what God thought of me than I cared about what others thought, and I realized that God didn't yet see my sins under the blood of Jesus. I begged God to forgive me and I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior and the new Lord of my life. I was finally His and wasn't pretending. Today I am confident of my salvation, not because of anything I did, but because of what Jesus did for me.

While I was studying to be a teacher, I became interested in the Dominican Republic. I learned about the severe physical and spiritual poverty of so many Dominicans and Haitians living there. I also became increasingly convicted that God wanted me to do something different than be a public school teacher. I'd surrendered my life to obey His leading and was continually more sure that God had a plan of ministry for my life. After months of asking God where He wants me to serve Him, I shared my heart with Joshua. When I shared with him that I'd been praying about the Dominican Republic, Joshua broke down and told me that is where He believed God wanted him. We continued in prayer for assurance, which soon came, and our desire to serve God in the Dominican Republic has grown over the past few years. After a mission trip there during the summer of 2014, I knew that being a missionary in the Dominican takes me outside of my comfort zone, but that if I were to stay in the states and ignore God's calling I'd never be comfortable again. I also learned on that trip that the safest place I can possibly be is in the will of God. I want to get back to the Dominican Republic as soon as possible.