

Andrew Mooney

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I was lucky to be brought up in a very loving household. As a family we went to a Catholic church until I was around 12 years old. After that, the concept of faith was something I didn’t really think about until I was 23. During those years I would have described myself as an atheist.

When I came to study at Nottingham some of the best friends I made happened to be Christians. Although they never pressured me into anything, I was always interested in having conversations with them about God and faith. I would regularly voice my struggles over issues like suffering that were barriers to my own belief.

Then one day, I found out my best friend Andy, who was a Christian, had been diagnosed with cancer. Andy’s diagnosis was very serious and it hit me very hard emotionally. The following months involved a lot of uncertainty and fear. I couldn’t understand how Andy stayed so strong mentally especially during the months of hard chemotherapy. Thankfully Andy got better, but a short time after he received the all-clear we had a conversation that shocked me. He said that throughout his illness he’d not been afraid of dying. I realised it was his faith in Jesus that gave Him strength.

From that point, I decided regardless of what I believed I wanted to learn more about my friends’ faith even if it just meant I could understand them better. I heard the Alpha course at Trent Vineyard was a good place to find out more, so I started coming along.

I was quite nervous before starting Alpha and actually sat in the car park on my own for 20 minutes before plucking up the courage to go in. I was made to feel very welcome though and really enjoyed exploring faith with fellow Alpha guests over the 9 weeks of the course. One week that really struck me was when we looked at the historical evidence of the Bible. We were shown how there’s greater evidence for the Bible than for other well known historical sources that no one questions.

Alpha gave me a lot of ‘head knowledge’, but since then I’ve gained a greater ‘heart knowledge’ of God and developed my own relationship with Him. This has come through experiencing the Holy Spirit. During times of singing at church I regularly feel connected to God. Another really key moment came when someone prayed for me and spoke incredibly accurate words they couldn’t have known about Andy’s illness and how that had affected my own journey of faith.

I know I still have a long way to go but I also know I’m on the right path. I’ve joined a small group and have made so many friends that I now feel at home at Trent Vineyard and really enjoy coming along every week. I feel much more content and peaceful than I did a year ago knowing that my life is in God’s hands.

