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The first time I made the conscious decision to follow Jesus was fifth grade. Before that, I had only been going to church because my parents went every Sunday, so I went with them. And everything from my relationship with God to my enjoyment of church activities was surface level. So when my Sunday school teacher told me about what it meant to be Christian, I accepted Jesus. But it was empty, and nothing changed. So I accepted Christ again when I was thirteen in eighth grade, hoping to do better, but the pandemic hit. COVID threw me off my path to Christ drastically, I was disconnected and alone and isolated. And being online so much exposed me to a world I was not prepared for as a kid coming out of middle school. Coronavirus and its fallout hold some of my lowest points mentally, emotionally, and physically. My mindset became cynical and jaded. I became quiet and moody and volatile and alone. Even when FCBC started doing online services, I never took in anything they were saying. It felt alien to me.

My story of truly receiving the gospel starts here. At my lowest point. I was already acutely aware of the gospel and its various interpretations and meanings when COVID hit, but they never meant anything personally to me. However my experiences with the world due to quarantine gave me a new perspective on the gospel once I returned to church in person. My first step was joining the youth praise team, and attending Friday night fellowships. These two things in conjunction helped me form a deeper appreciation for the kind of fellowship church can offer, and revitalized aspects of church that had begun to seem dull, such as worship music. All of this involvement in the church got me to really start thinking of the gospel as a whole, and with the perspective I gained after seeing all the things that happened in the world during COVID, I was able to parse and determine what the gospel meant to me. It is that, despite all the terrible things people do in the world to other people, and as much as the people of the earth don't deserve God's mercy and Jesus' death, he died for us anyways. The idea that even though none of us are even close to deserve His love, he died anyway. For us. This is what convicted me to follow Jesus, and what eventually influenced my decision to become baptized. Not just the community and fellowship, although that is a large factor, but to follow a God who gives grace to those who don't deserve it.