

Good morning, thank you for having me this morning! My name is **Sarah Swantner** and it is a joy to be here with you sharing how I came to The Story and how God has used this ministry in my life.

I grew up and went to school in Austin, TX. In 2013, after 23 wonderful years, I left kicking and screaming to follow my husband, Daniel, to Houston. My whole life was in Austin. My family, my friends, and church community were all there and I couldn't see how anything I found in Houston would ever compare.

We took our time finding a new church home. We both grew up in a traditional Methodist church so we thought we should try St. Lukes! Immediately all the traditions came flooding back and we thought this would be it for us, but I still felt something was missing. I knew God was stirring me to keep looking for that feeling I felt at church in Austin, full of people who are searching and questioning, where the music is so loud you need ear plugs. Not long after coming to St. Lukes, a friend recommended The Story. "It's right behind St. Lukes...just follow the people in jeans!!"

The next week we walked into the gym and found a couple seats in the back. Not 1 minute later did Pastor Eric plop down in front of us, "Hi welcome to The Story, I'm the pastor here, would you like to help with communion?" I couldn't believe the pastor was personally introducing himself to us, I felt like a VIP, and him asking us to help participate in the service made me feel like we had been attending for months. For the first time in 3 years I felt like I belonged somewhere. God brought us to a place in Houston where we felt like important members of a family and not just strangers.

It has almost been 2 years since that first visit and we are now leading a couple's chapter group, have participated in leadership trainings, spoken at church, and will be teaching the new member class in November.

I am amazed when I think about how God has been working in our lives. Daniel and I both would say that we have been Christians our whole lives. But I know that it hasn't been until recently that I have really recognized the work God has done in our lives over the past couple years. I have seen Daniel become a spiritual leader for our family and our chapter, and I feel confident sharing the gospel and my own faith with others. We are excited to be a part of a church with such a compelling mission: to inspire nonreligious Houstonians to play their part in the unfolding story of God's love in Jesus Christ. More than ever we speak openly about our faith and I feel like our marriage is stronger than it has ever been. We were lost in a big city and God lead us to this amazing community where we found a home and a purpose...to share the love of Jesus.