Dallin Williams

Professor Nathan Williams

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Personal Religious History

I was born the 17th of August in 1999 to Dr. Tyson David Williams and Janelle Nadine Patterson Williams at the Trinity Hospital in Minot, North Dakota. My parents are 6th and 4th generation members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints respectively. My father has been a missionary, Boy Scout of America troop leader, a member of the bishopric, a bishop, and is currently the stake president of one of the two stakes in North Dakota. My mother has been a missionary, Primary teacher, a nursery leader, a Young Women’s president, a Relief Society teacher, secretary, and counselor, a ward food storage specialist, and a temple worker.

Eventually my family would grow to 8 children, 4 girls and 4 boys, all raised in the faith of our parents. We attended every church meeting on Sundays and all youth activities on Wednesdays. We held family home evenings on Mondays, prayed before every meal, and read scriptures and prayed again every night.

I went through all of the stages of membership growing up. Baptized at 8, deacon at 12, teacher at 14, and priest at 16 years old. I consciously followed the rules and guidance laid out for me by the church and my parents throughout these years. In my junior and senior years of high school, the majority of the male church members of my age group in my ward would pretend to be as pure as snow on Sundays whilst trying to violate as many gospel principles during the weekdays as possible.

Sickened by this shameless hypocrisy, I was disenfranchised with the church classes and youth activities that I shared with these young men. I tried to talk to my dad about it, who was a bishop at the time, but I do not think that he fully believed me. I do not blame him, for the outside world seemed to staunchly accept their façade. They were popular and admired, so no one else who was privy to their actions appeared uncaring.

Sometime about halfway through my senior year I stopped attending the morning seminary classes that I shared with them. I shirked my church classes and would miss one or two sacrament meetings a month. Suddenly, the congregation I knew and loved personally felt like a judgmental and callous mass, waiting with bated breath to see me fail in some spectacular fashion.

My parents were naturally concerned with my behavior, and instead of listening to me and talking to me about how I felt, they attempted to “fix” me by counseling me night and day with rehearsed lessons from church handbooks. This topped my perceived betrayal by my home ward and was more than I could stand. It was the canned laughter of the indifferent audience in a bitter sit-com, and it echoed in my ears.

A few weeks after my 18th birthday I moved out of my stifling parents’ home to a town, Williston, in the western most part of the state for a labor job in the oil field. I would work 12-hour night shifts for weeks on end there through the dark North Dakota winter until I became depressed.

During this time, I would visit my parents and siblings once or twice a month for a day, before returning to the endless cycle of sleep and work. For the first few weeks of living in Williston I would try to stay awake long enough on Sundays to attend sacrament meetings, but shortly after I arrived the schedule changed so the meetings were held in the middle of the day; in the middle of my time to rest before returning to work. Consequently, I stopped attending church.

The next religious experience I would have would be my enrollment and attendance at Brigham Young University-Idaho in the fall of 2018. I started attending church again and fell back into the religious habits of my childhood. However, I was changed from my prolonged absence at church and felt uncomfortable in situations with religious context. The handshakes felt contrived, the smiles forced, and the lessons repetitive.

By the end of the 2021 fall semester, I was so estranged from the church, that I decided that it was immoral to retain my membership status. I submitted my resignation directly to the Members Records Division in Salt Lake City, and within 5 days received confirmation of the termination of my membership. Obviously, this caused my ecclesiastical endorsement and acceptance to BYU-Idaho to be withdrawn.

I reapplied for enrollment and, after a review by the board of directors of BYU-Idaho and the chaplain of the university, I was allowed to return for the 2023 winter semester. I have been extended an offer by the First Presidency of the church to forgo the standard year-long waiting period to be rebaptized into the church, mainly at the behest of my father. I currently have no religious affiliation.