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## Jordan Smart

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I was born in Rochester, New York, the child of Jamaican parents. I didn't realize it until later, but my parents sacrificed so much in coming to the United States to give my brother and me the life they wanted for us. And they were amazing, too, at watching what I had an interest in and then encouraging that interest. For example, in my early childhood my mother saw how much I loved to draw, so she got me all I needed to create pictures. But soon those weren't pictures on their own. I started to develop piles of pictures—rather like cartoons—and made them into stories. That is where I think my love of stories and my belief in the power of storytelling started. I was sure I wanted to be a cartoonist or photojournalist.

The structure of school life and the social pressure to qualify for a job that made money really drove my life in later childhood and into college, and I recently graduated with a degree in psychology. However, while studying psychology I only recognized more and more the power of storytelling and the unique value of everyone's story. I also became convicted that storytelling is a gift God has given me and that whatever I do, that will be a medium I use.

There are many great storytellers I have known, and a lot are on this campus: Donnie Keele and Jonathan Leonardo, for example, really influenced me by their stories. Movies and books, such as "Tuesdays with Morrie" and "Catcher in the Rye," have helped me understand how good storytelling reaches into our hearts and our souls and often helps us understand a world we didn't know before or shows us a different perspective on a difficult issue. With that in mind, my hobby is to do podcasts that try to tell stories that will help people understand issues and maybe solve problems. I have also recently gotten back into art. I bought a sketchbook and am creating three-panel comic strip stories with the same idea in mind—telling a story to talk about important issues.

Of course, I have a paid job, too, and that is being a recruiter for Andrews University. It is a great way of telling stories—helping inspire students to be interested in Andrews through the power of the stories of Andrews. Much as I enjoy my job, however, I likely won't be a recruiter forever. What do I dream for the future? Working for NPR—telling stories in that forum to help people, to make them aware and to, in a real way, give them a path to maybe change their worlds. And if not NPR, then maybe Hope Channel.

I should end by telling you how my passion for storytelling fits in with my journey of faith. The Bible is full of amazing stories. If I was to choose my favorite, it would be the story of doubting Thomas. This story says a lot about God, but for me it raises that predicament of faith. For Thomas, faith was difficult, and sometimes faith is difficult for me, too. But just as Christ questioned Thomas because of his doubt, I am challenged by also being questioned about my doubts. Why shouldn't I have faith? The greatest storyteller in the world makes it clear through story after story that there is every reason for it!



Jordan Smart