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Can I Be a Christian Among Christians?

BY RYAN JARVIS

I have not been made fun of for my beliefs by someone who is not Adventist — not yet anyway. When I was younger, I anxiously told anyone, with listening ears, what story I learned at Sabbath school earlier that week. During a swimming class, I explained how Moses shut the Red Sea by play-acting with water in a pool. People always seemed to be willing to listen respectfully to, or at least put up with, what I had to say. I have always felt more free and accepted, and as if I am not judged for what I believe by those outside my religion. However, this is not always the case with Adventists.

Throughout high school, I was offered pork, weed, alcohol, or whatever else comes to mind when you hear “Adventist should not partake in....” When I said “no,” people would ask “Why?” and I answered without feeling an ounce of judgment. However, in the Adventist Church, I sometimes feel quite the opposite. Now, this is not at any particular location but an overlaying feeling I experience with our generation today. This is the struggle I face with my peers and my Church: How can I be comfortable being a Christian among Christians?

I have compared my beliefs to those of others and have been confused as to why mine were not the same as theirs. I have felt weird having to explain my Adventist beliefs to other Adventists because I was under the assumption that all Adventists believe the same thing. At times, like most teenagers, I fell to peer pressure and compromised my beliefs just because I did not want to feel left out.

Mentioning prayer in an Adventist group of friends also was very difficult. It came to the point where it was more comfortable for me to pray with strangers or non-Adventists, because it was much easier than mentioning prayer to Adventist peers. I

was very confused because I knew this should not be the case. I should be more comfortable about my religion with people that share my religion, right? I struggled on and off for years until I came to college where I found my answer.

Although we have a firm, never-changing God, the Christian experience is not black and white. Each human being is at a different position in their journey with God. Hence, this is why it seems that God is different for everyone. The key I’ve learned is that you must know where *you* are with God and follow what he impresses you to do, according to the Bible. I also have found friends who experience God the same way, and this definitely has kept me grounded.

It is all about mindset. To this day, it is still quite difficult but this is how God helps me grow. My belief is like a new pair of shoes. It takes a while for me to get used to them, but soon they will be the very things that keep my feet comfortable on my Christian walk.

Ryan Jarvis was born and raised in Toronto, Canada. He is currently a junior at Andrews University, studying Business Administration while in the Pre-Medical program. His dream is to become a doctor to help others through sickness. Ryan spends his free time enjoying different musical activities and loves being silly with his friends.

