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# A Journey

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## A Journey

BY EMILY FERGUSON

I grew up about as Seventh-day Adventist as they come. My dad is a pastor, my grandfather is a pastor and my great-grandfather was a pastor. This was the beginning of my love/hate relationship with the church. As a pastor's kid, I was privy to some of the church politics that no young person should be exposed to. I knew I loved Jesus; but, as I reached high school, I began to foster an animosity against the Adventist Church in my heart.

I resented my peers who were baptized after a week of prayer. I thought there was no way they were making a genuine commitment to Christ. I took the mantra of not doing it just because everyone else was doing it a step further, and decided that if anyone else was getting baptized I didn't want to. It became about how people saw me.

I remained active in the church, studied the Bible, became involved in praise and worship, and led out many times at my high school and then in college. I began to lead in a more active role and was viewed as a spiritual leader at Andrews University. I was involved in the One Place church plant on campus, as well as chapel and Fusion (a multi-cultural worship experience) at Andrews.

I continued to struggle with Adventism. I believed the church's theology was the most truthful of any religion I had studied, but it was the little things that bothered me. I hated some of the arguments we regularly have in the church. I hated that I had to change my appearance, or what I said to fit the Adventist mold when I led worship. But I did it. Every week I took off my nail polish and jewelry, and led others in worship. It was exhausting — like living two lives. I was resentful, inauthentic, and it was killing me.

During this time Japhet De Oliveira, the chaplain at Andrews University, began to ask annoying questions. He asked why I hadn't been baptized, and if I loved Jesus. I retorted, and argued with him. Naturally, we began meeting regularly to do this. Every Tuesday



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morning, I knew he would try to convince me to be baptized.

One weekend, I was able to interview my favorite musician, Michael Gungor, of the band, Gungor. He told me to answer to God and my work first. He told me not to try to please everyone, but to be real, and that God's people would accept me.

Be myself? Let everyone see I do not have everything figured out, and that sometimes I struggle with God? I know it may sound scary, but I found it liberating.

When I met with Japhet the following Tuesday, I suddenly felt at ease about committing to the Adventist Church because now I wasn't hiding anything. It felt like something we would get through together, not something I had to change about myself. If there were things I thought were petty and wrong about the Adventist Church, I could be a change agent from within.

I decided to be baptized. I wanted to forge the way for others who struggle with the same things I did. I wanted to encourage people to take action in their church if they want to see change, not just leave it. There is something so sweet about adding the element of commitment to a relationship, and my relationship with the Adventist Church and Jesus is no different.

I will be baptized November 17. I am excited to continue this journey with my brothers and sisters, and with Jesus.

Emily Ferguson is a junior at Andrews University studying communication and event management. She is the praise and worship leader for University Chapel, and often leads at her church, One Place, as well.