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My Patient God

BY SARA OLAKOWSKI

This past year I have been teaching English at Nile Union Academy, which is on the outskirts of Cairo. I came to Egypt with the intention of helping, but maybe even more so with the intention of growing. I asked God to stretch me and to teach me the lessons I would run away from if I hadn't been 6,100 miles away from home. He has.

This year has probably been the best year of my life, but it has also been the most challenging. I have never had difficulty in school—unless you count that time my senior year of high school when I was taking calculus and cried out of frustration during a couple tests.

I came to Egypt to teach English to students who have a more difficult time learning, with no training whatsoever. Running on very little sleep and having no idea what I was doing, I stayed up until one or two in the morning working on lesson plans. Without even a book to follow, I had no knowledge of how to do ... well, pretty much anything. I was at a breaking point. Somehow, it ended up being five minutes before class started when I still had no idea what I was going to teach 38 tenth graders for 80 minutes. Any little thing would have caused me to just fall apart. I went back to my room and asked one of my roommates what I should do. She saved my life. That day, my class started essays (with absolutely no preparation on my part!), but it took all 80 minutes of class time.

One of the boys in that class, whose English is worthy of ESL to say the least, called me to his desk to check his thesis statement. It said, "I like my best teacher Miss Sara.



She is my sister because she tell me I need help. She offer to help me and she is patient with me." It was not the format I wanted, but it showed me my work wasn't completely in vain.

Maybe I had no idea what I was doing and was unqualified for my position. Maybe my weaknesses had really begun to flourish. But on the verge of a breakdown in a world I didn't understand, teaching students who were different than anyone I had ever met, God reassured me. He didn't talk to me the way I talked to myself. I didn't need the reassurance; life would have gone on. Eventually, I would have understood the best

way to teach them, and I would have gotten the hang of things. I didn't need that, but God gave it to me; and it just reassures me that He cares about the little things. It reassures me to know that God doesn't view life as a boot camp where I am consistently inadequate. I have things to learn, but I have peace living for a God who is more patient with me than I am with myself.

Sara Olakowski is a junior studying nursing at Andrews University. She is a member of the Hinsdale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hinsdale, Illinois.