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# The Winter Season

BY CHRISTOPHER BARTLEY

I am a deciduous tree, and my educational experience is in the winter season. My leaves are gone—thus, I feel naked and exposed to the elements of uncertainty. I feel more vulnerable toward my uninhabited and currently vague future than in the past. Initially, my fresh, green leaves of certainty budded as a result of the sunshine of enlightenment that God provided when He revealed the primary purpose of my life—spring had then arrived. The confirmation that I was in the right place as a communication and religion major strengthened as I sat through each class and was able to visualize and connect the essence of each course with my soon-coming future as a pastor—this was the summer season.

Then my leaves of certainty started to change color. In the clear-cut path to my future mission and career that I believe God paved loomed obstacles that blocked the transparency of my journey. I originally thought being a communication major merely functioned as a tool to enhance my potential as a future pastor, but the more classes I took the more complicated the purpose and function for my communication major became.

My communication education has allowed me to realize that there is so much more that I need to learn about myself and others, and how they are the gateway for true reflection of who I really am and what I can decide to be—God being the ultimate Other. Since I am also a religion major (I refuse to limit God to just a church or chaplaincy), one would expect me to write more on this “theological” portion of my academic program. However, it’s ironic that it is my communication major that has thus far tested and challenged the validity of my divine calling and the sincerity that I have put forth toward this consecrated goal. Then again, it is not as ironic as it seems, for

pastoral ministry is beyond preaching and exegetical study, but includes counseling, teaching, facilitating, guiding, reproving and loving a group of people, and then teaching them to do the same—this can only be done effectively as a competent communicator.

I can truly say this has positively influenced my role as religious vice president of the Andrews University Student Association (AUSA). It is the communication side of my academic program that has afforded me the creativity to connect with our students in a unique manner through our AUSA Friday evening vespers and annual Student Week of Spiritual Emphasis, and this year we historically invited other religious vice presidents from our sister schools to participate in this Spirit-filled week that prompted our students to reflect and react to the theme, “What’s in Your Hand?” God has provided me with His Spirit, creativity and interpersonal skill. He has given me a burden for the salvation of our students and passion to reach them where they are. I can feel those leaves of certainty returning. Springtime is around the corner.

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Christopher Bartley is a communication major at Andrews University and religious vice president of the Student Association.

