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Former NBC producer Debbie Michel now teaching at Andrews University

News of Saddam Hussein's capture broke on a Saturday. While it made international headlines, the impact the timeline of events had on Debbie Michel, a producer for *Dateline NBC* and a new Seventh-day Adventist Christian, was like none other. It was her weekend on duty. "In two and a half years of a breaking news rotation, I never once had a Sabbath conflict, not even when Hussein was captured," she says. "God set it up."

Michel, a new associate professor of communication who teaches journalism at Andrews University, came from New York City, working in a top-tier news market for one of the most successful news programs in the history of journalism. While it might seem to be a puzzling career move to relocate to a small town and work for a Christian college, "God said to me: 'This is where I want you to be,'" says Michel.

Michel earned her B.S. in journalism at Brooklyn College at the City University of New York. She then continued her studies in journalism at the master's level with an emphasis in broadcast communication at Columbia University.

In 1995, Michel began what would become an 11-year tenure at NBC. She worked for *NBC News*, *Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*, *Dateline NBC* and NBC Productions, where she produced documentaries and news segments for a client list that ranged from *Discovery Channel* to *National Geographic* to *Good Housekeeping* magazine.

It was in late 2003 when Michel realized there was a void in her life, a void that not even a successful career could fill. As she prayed and studied, she found herself drawn to spiritual programming. "I would come into the

office, turn on the TV and then hit the mute button. As a journalist, you need to keep abreast of the day's events but I found that I would much rather listen to programs on 3ABN or Amazing Facts TV on the Internet."

In November that same year, she was baptized alongside her soon-to-be husband, Jean-Ires.

As part of her newfound faith, Michel made a personal commitment to keep the Sabbath. Over the next two and a half years—the last years she spent with NBC—Michel says, "I never once had a Sabbath conflict even though I was fully prepared to tell my manager I couldn't work on the Sabbath."

When their daughter, Christiana, entered the world in November 2004, Michel used her maternity leave not only to bond with her newborn, but also to more fully connect with God. "I spent a lot of time thinking, reading and praying. God started speaking to me." She eventually re-entered the workforce, but just a short six months later, Michel realized, "It's time to leave."

"God gave me time to figure out what to do and make a graceful exit from NBC," she says. "That decision meant taking a leap of faith to leave behind a seemingly-secure job in the media capital of the world—New York City—without any prospective job in hand and to follow in the footsteps of Christ." With a new baby and the cost of living in New York City, it was a leap of faith for Michel to leave her secure career and wait for God to lead. "My heart was with Christiana, ministry and mission. I stayed home and just prayed for the next step."

In 2007, God started to open doors. Michel had the opportunity to take a teaching position in a warmer climate, just two hours away from her parents. But that wasn't the right door



Debbie Michel received an Emmy nomination for her role as co-producer of *Dateline's* "Saddam Hussein's Capture"; a National Headliner Award for *Dateline's* coverage of the Washington D.C. sniper story; and the NBC "Ovation Award" for "Above and Beyond Effort" on the sniper story.

for Michel. "To this day, I don't know how this happened," says Michel of her visit to Andrews University. "I came here and saw the media ministry; that got me excited. I was excited about the prospect of teaching students journalism in a Christian environment. God said to me, 'This is where I want you to be.'"

Now Michel is taking the knowledge of media and communications that she acquired working in the field and is applying it to the classroom for students at Andrews University.

"My path has led to Andrews University where I have the awesome privilege and responsibility of teaching budding journalists and other communications specialists. I pray that my experience will motivate students to want to write and report stories that will in some way, shape or form draw people from out of this world of sinful darkness and into God's marvelous light."

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