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Singing Lessons

By Malissa Martin

There are several tools God uses to speak to us. For example, the Sabbath school lesson, Bible study, songs of worship, and more. Devotion is another tool God uses, and it's been Michelle Odinma's favorite since her sophomore year at Michigan State University. Her early morning devotions have led her to transition from being a teacher to a preacher. It also inspires Michelle to write songs and sing about her Christian journey.

It all began around the halfway mark of her teaching career. "I came up to about year three of teaching and asked myself, 'Is this it?'" She always knew she wouldn't teach forever because her real desire was to preach, which she'd been doing since 2007. "I knew I really had a heart for ministry, so I was going to transition into that in some type of form after teaching. I just didn't know when or how, or what exactly that was going to look like," Michelle said. She kept studying her devotions to keep an open line of communication with God for direction. Soon after, she moved to Kalamazoo to work at the Kalamazoo Seventh-day Adventist School.

While visiting her dad in Baltimore one weekend, Michelle said she was awakened in the middle of the night and impressed that she should preach. "I feel that I'm called to preach, but I don't know what I should do with that. Then the thought came in my head, 'Maybe the seminary.' So I looked it up online, but I wasn't sure," said Michelle. She also was apprehensive about being a woman preacher in this day and age. "You know, you have the whole debate about women in ministry, and I wasn't sure if that was some type of controversy I wanted to be a part of." She put the idea in the back of her mind.

However, about a year later, she kept thinking about the seminary, so she prayed about it more and God gave her a sign. "About three months prior to me submitting my application to the seminary, every time a pastor would get up to speak, my heart would get heavy —

like physically heavy — and I kept having the thought of 'You need to go preach,'" said Michelle. The same thing happened to her for the next couple of months every time a speaker stood up to preach. Eventually Michelle obeyed God's call and enrolled in Andrews University. She's currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree with a concentration in chaplaincy and expects to graduate May 2020. She credits Andrews' Public Campus Ministries for helping her find her footing in her new experience with God.

Writing music is another blessing that blooms from Michelle's devotions. "When I study the Bible in the morning and different thoughts impress me or hit me hard, a way to receive that message is to write a song." Her new album, "Stories To Tell," focuses on different Bible characters' experiences and the Christian path we must walk to meet Jesus. She describes her third album, which releases winter 2019, as real and authentic. "So it's not going to be something that you'll hear every day." Michelle also is in Andrews' musical group, Hymeno; she's writing songs for their first album.

Heeding God's call can be an undertaking but, when you let Him lead and keep a line of communication open with Him, there is no need to worry. He will bring you to the other side and place you right where you need to be, according to His Word. ■

Malissa Martin is a Detroit-based freelance writer.