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Eight Years Old and Spreading the Word

THERE'S AN ENERGY AT WORK IN EZRA JEAN-BAPTISTE. HE HAS A DISTINCT CONVICTION, A PROFOUND SENSE OF GODLINESS. THAT MUCH IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO ANY OF THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE WATCHED THE 8-YEAR-OLD PREACH. HE MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.

Ezra gave his first sermon when he was 6 at an Adventurers function for Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he and his family are members. Since then, he has given multiple sermons across the United States, including at the 100-year-anniversary Master Guide convention in Colorado.

Ezra's brand of Christianity isn't especially prevalent within our faith. He says what he needs to say—what he's been called to say—and nothing more. He isn't extraneous; each word he speaks has a poignant weight to it. When I spoke with him, I found the same fundamental bluntness, the same strong, no-nonsense and practical conviction that underlies each of his sermons.

"God gave me the talent to preach," said the third grader at Ruth Murdoch Elementary School when asked about his call to ministry. "God saw through me and saw that, in the future, I would share the word with many people and let them know about God's love for every one of us." To Ezra, it's that simple: God gave him a talent, so he uses it. No questions asked because he has no questions about God's supreme intellect. All he wants to do, all he *can* do, is follow God's calling for his life, share His love with everyone, and remind us of the innocence and unquestioning drive of a child.

Jesus encouraged us to emulate children the likes of Ezra, but who does Ezra seek to emulate? "My mom," he told me. Why? "Because she works for God."

Ezra Jean-Baptiste has already been across the United States spreading the message of God's love. He isn't fearless about that calling—he openly acknowledged that he gets nervous preaching in front of large crowds. But, as he told me, "God helps me go through it." Because, as Ezra knows, anyone who fully commits to God's calling for their lives will not—cannot—be stopped. "Whenever you feel like Satan is bringing you down," he said, "just remember that God is always with you, and He will fight through it with you every single second of your life."

While Ezra enjoys preaching, he also takes time to enjoy reading, telling riddles and jokes, and building with Legos. His parents want to make sure he can still be a kid, but at the same time they are making room for the extra-ordinary way God is working in their son's life.

"We are in amazement of how God is using Ezra," his father said. "It is a verification that God can use anyone, at any age, in any circumstance. We hope and pray that Ezra's ministry shows that to many others." ■

Nate Miller is an Andrews University student who is triple majoring in English, French and music.

Sandra Mendez

