

STORIES of ANDREWS

Since I was 6 years old, my goal in life was to become a professional soccer player. It was my passion and my talent; if I was not playing on the field, I was playing FIFA, watching soccer, or talking about it. So when God told me to leave it behind, I was devastated and confused.

One summer when I was 17, I was reading this story of the rich young ruler, and the spirit of God spoke to me. He impressed me with this thought: “The ruler did everything right. He went to church and knew the commandments, but he loved money more than God. That is soccer for you. Soccer is your idol. You need to quit.” The more I tried to shake the thought away, the more I understood that it was God speaking to me. My clear direction in life began shifting, leaving me lost.

Although I had been attending church all my life, there were unanswered questions in my faith and Christianity. I always believed in God, but mustering up courage and faith to place my life in God’s hands was not easy. However, as I submitted everything to God and his plans, He began to transform me. All aspects of my life—my time, talents, resources, relationships, entertainment, music, sports, clothes, etc.—started to

change. The things that I used to love lost meaning, and I started to love the things that mattered most: God and ministry. More and more, I dedicated my time and talents to God, preaching, evangelizing and doing mission work.

A group of us started a ministry organization called IMPACT when I was 19. Since launching in 2009, it has spread to nine countries with hundreds of young missionaries sharing the Gospel and reflecting God’s love in their communities. God transformed a 17-year-old who knew nothing but soccer into a ministry leader.

We often fear that we are unequipped to serve. With God, it is not so much about ability but rather availability; He qualifies all those he calls to do his work. Leaving my life’s plans behind was difficult, and I didn’t completely understand at the time, but I never regretted my decision! I now look at the plans He had for

me with gratitude and awe and am reminded of His love daily.

Completing religion classes online helps me impact my community through several ministries. While studying through Andrews University, I am also qualifying as an electrician. These skills are opening doors as I make friends with people in need of electrical work. Through friendships, trust develops in talking about eternal matters. Being able to finish my BA in religion online makes it possible for me to continue with ministry and electrician work here in Bergen, Norway.

God always has something bigger to offer us than what we seek for ourselves. My dream once was to play soccer and win games, but God knew my purpose was incompatible with His. He called me to something much greater, more meaningful and exciting: to win souls for His Kingdom.

 Joakim Hjortland



High school was ending, and I had to make a decision to go to college somewhere. It was hard to decide because I was so comfortable where I was. I had a solid group of friends, I was in a relationship, I was doing really well. I was refusing change. A month or two before graduation, all the doors to come to Andrews opened up, so I decided to just go with it and see where life took me.

I remember getting into the car at the South Bend airport and driving to Andrews University. It was one of the longest car rides of my life. I wasn’t sure what I was doing—I didn’t understand my purpose. I remember being so incredibly scared and asking God why I had to be here.

Orientation week was one of the hardest weeks of my life. I moved to a different country, I didn’t know anyone, I was unsure of my major, and I was going to be in an education system I knew nothing about. I remember craving a typical Hispanic dish: rice and beans. The Thursday of orientation week, I remember waking up

and praying that God would give me a sign to show me there was a reason I had to stay here because I was so ready to pack my bags and go home.

I walked into the department orientation breakfast and found the education table (I was an education major at first) and met a few different people who told me about this little place called the Gazebo. They told me all about the “cheap” prices and the really good quesadillas. I asked my mom if we could go and try it out. And as I walked into the Gazebo, I saw the TV screen advertising rice and beans for \$2.27. This was the sign I needed. This was God talking to me and showing me how he would provide for me.

Three years later, I can definitely see my purpose. I can tell how much I’ve grown. I can tell how much the environment around me has influenced my personality and who I am on a day-to-day basis. I am forever grateful for everything that has happened at Andrews and all the opportunities I’ve been provided.

 Ale Pineda