

Sometimes the Path is The Destination

The story of how one student found God at Union College

Story by Adam Dobbins
Design by Brian Weed

As a junior in college, I was lost and lacked motivation. My major was not an area that I envisioned would get me the kind of career that I wanted. I knew I needed to take a break and reassess my goals. Despite advice from my loved ones, I dropped out of college and went back to my home in Des Moines to get my head together.

When I came home, there seemed to be a constant cloud hanging over my head. I was the only one out of my close group of high school friends to venture out to attend college. I thought my friends and family would be so happy to have me back, but I was wrong. It wasn't until I saw the disappointment in their eyes that

I realized how I not only let myself down but them as well.

As my empty semester dragged on, my

I honestly didn't know if it was some kind of cult or what.

drive to be back in school was gradually rekindled. I moved in with my high school buddies and got an office job downtown, but as the weeks passed I started to become frustrated with my job and depressed about my life. What did I get myself into? Only my friends made it bearable to get through this hard time.

The worst part of this whole mess was that the only girl I had ever truly loved was in Lincoln, Nebraska. Melissa was finishing up her last year in college. Then I knew my life needed a kick-start right away. Rotting in my hometown was just not an option.

On a trip to see Melissa in Lincoln, I happened to drive by Union College and was very intrigued. I had never even heard of this school, but was impressed by the outer beauty of the campus. After much thought, I decided to schedule a visit to see what this place was all about. I thought about all the possibilities of how being in the same town with Melissa would benefit our relationship immensely and salivated at a legitimate shot to get out of Des Moines for good. Melissa and I had been together for a while and things were going great. Although I was skepti-



cal, it was worth it to check it out and see.

Upon arrival, I was very surprised about how kind and energetic the staff at this school was. I felt like Union was where I'd meant to be all along. The students were great and the faculty was so easy to talk to. "Hey, I haven't had the opportunity to meet you yet," was something I heard on a daily basis, which made me feel the Union family truly cared that I was there. I was hesitant to make a decision because I knew I couldn't afford to go to the wrong college again. Also, I knew I had the desire in my heart to get close to God and I wasn't sure how to go about doing it. At this point I was planning on proposing to Melissa, and moving to Lincoln really completed the package. After three or four months of contemplation, I decided to transfer to Union College. Melissa also decided to make me the luckiest man alive and accepted my offer for marriage.

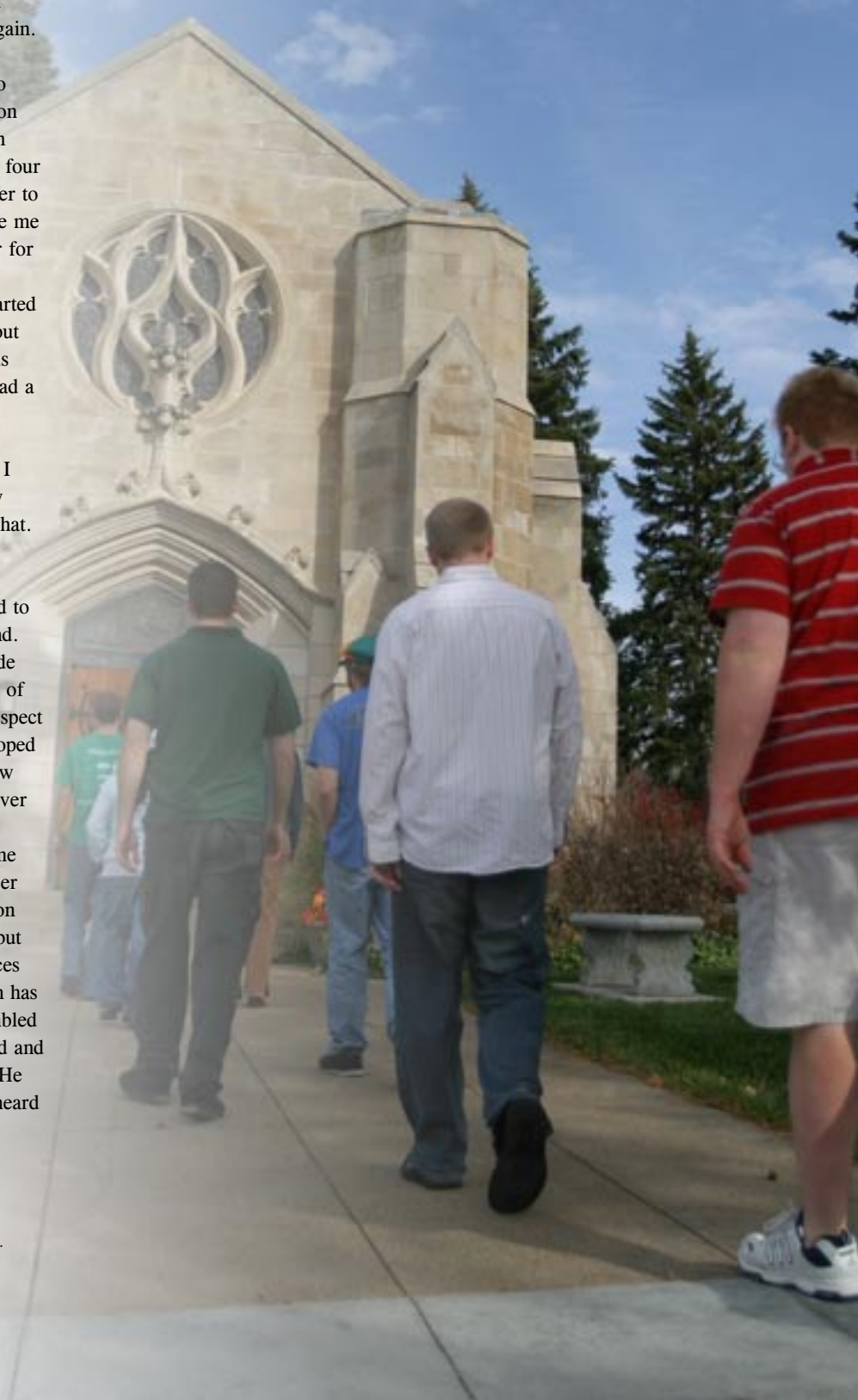
Literally the day I stepped on campus I started to make friends, not only with the students but with the faculty as well. Although my friends back home were great, Union College just had a better quality of people than I was used to.

After a few days on campus I learned that Union was a Seventh-day Adventist college. I had no idea what that even meant. I honestly didn't know if it was some kind of cult or what. When I visited, nobody said anything to me about this. At that point I was so impressed with the people I had met that I fully decided to go into the whole situation with an open mind. Within a matter of months I had already made friends that I knew I would keep for the rest of my life. I not only quickly gained a lot of respect for the professors at Union, but I also developed friendships with some of them. I enjoyed how they challenged me in a positive way. I'd never met faculty that acted this way.

Union College has really aligned life for me and the positive atmosphere brought me closer to God. I am thankful for every day I have on campus. I am not a Seventh-day Adventist, but I regularly attend vespers and Sabbath services and truly treasure the relationship that Union has helped me establish with God. To have stumbled upon this place has been a gift from the Lord and I truly feel in my heart that Union is where He has wanted me all along. I just now finally heard Him.

Adam is a junior public relations major from Iowa.

Brian is a junior communication major from California.





When Church Loses Its Fizz

Story by Cale Prindle
Design by Brian Weed

I've grown during a time when church was boring. I've grown during a time when tradition was not good enough. I've grown during a time when not enjoying percussion and loving hymns was looked down upon by my peers. I've grown during a time when people fought to worship how they wanted. Churches split services to appease the tastes of those who were tired of the King James Version of church. That didn't seem good enough. To escape "persecution," the rebels left the mother ship to create a better space.

"You can't sing that way in church!"

"The New Living translation is better than the King James!"

"Leave Ellen White out of this!"

"Do you even keep the Sabbath anymore?"

Among a cycle of offensive and defensive attitudes, I realized that something was wrong. It was not the slow tradition of my parents' religion, nor was it the outrageous nuances of the new era. It was the war. No doubt, fighting about such trivial and opinion-based matters is no good for a church community or for those looking at the Seventh-day Adventist faith for a spiritual home.

It seems to me that we care too much about ourselves and not enough about those who are looking for the love of Jesus. I would say to one side, "Just because the world progresses doesn't mean we have to compete." The lively tunes and large-roomed warehouse churches may not be what people are looking for. It's likely that outsiders are looking to escape to a holy land, not to a real-world duplicate with different lyrics.

To the other side I would say, "We can't win souls if we don't meet people where they are." Adventist traditions may be too far from reality. Nobody can drop old habits and pick up old customs at the blink of an eye.

The church exists to share God to the world. To do this, we need to grab the world by the brain. This is the intellectual tradition that many people find boring. At the same time, we need to grab the world by the heart. This is the emotional attitude of the new era that many people also find boring. The truth of the matter is that both are needed.

Compare the church to a refreshing root beer. I grab a glass and pour my beverage. Lo and behold, there is so

much fizz that I can't get to the sweet nectar. I often feel like this when I sing the 713th round of praise music. I need something of substance. I want to get to the awesomeness of God's Word. By the same token, I hate reaching for a two-liter jug only to find it totally flat. I have experienced this many times when the pastor drones on into the fourth hour of his sermon and has yet to make a point.

John Brunner alleges, "There are two kinds of fool. One says, 'This is old and therefore good.' And another says, 'This is new and therefore better.'"

Without the sweet base of Jesus' love and without the excitement that we should have for His love, nobody on either side will want to drink the healing waters.

So kick back and crack open a cold one with God. ✚

Cale is a senior language arts education major from Colorado.

Katrina is a sophomore communication major from Michigan.

Brian is a junior communication major from California.



Reach up and grab God's power and give it to someone who needs a charge.

Because Pews Aren't Lazyboys

by Katrina Emery

“We're from the church down the street.”

She smiled broadly as she handed Mrs. Smith a pack of batteries.

“It's storm season, so we thought you might be able to use these sometime. Have a great day!”

With another smile she headed for the next house, leaving the bewildered woman standing in her doorway holding the pack.

“Th-thank you!” Mrs. Smith called out. Her thoughts swirled. Didn't they come last month? Wasn't it a coupon for a free haircut that time? What was it with these people? They were hardly Jehovah's Witnesses; Mrs. Smith had never once felt pushed to attend their church. But though the words weren't spoken, she felt the invitation was open. Perhaps she should investigate this church a bit more.

After all, it is right down the street...

Inviting Power

To its neighbors a church can be many things. It can be like a stained glass window: beautiful to look at, but too fragile and specialized to be of any practical use.

It can be a schoolbook lesson: useful, but too boring to be paid any attention to. Or it could be batteries to people who are powerless: life to those who are spiritually dead, community to someone who is alone.

But how can we help people stick those batteries in and receive power from God? How can we get them to come to church? The comfort of our pews won't attract them — other spaces are more comfortable. The truth of our message might not

The comfort of our pews won't attract them.

even attract them — other truths may be more alluring. People will visit the church because that church, that community of people, has fulfilled a need in their life.

Community is the core issue: eighty percent of the people who visit church come because they have been invited. Someone took the time to meet needs and

communicate an invitation: “Come to my church!”

Congregation attracts people when it fulfills their needs. A church I know does everything in its power to do that. They go door-to-door in their neighborhood each month, chatting with people, praying with them, giving them gifts. “We've tried to shatter people's stereotypes of the church,” the pastor explained. “We just want to be nice!” And so they started a campaign to adopt a block. Though she has never attended their church herself, one neighbor told nine of her friends to try it out. “People have come to love it,” the pastor laughed, referring both to the church people that go out and the homes that receive their attention.

Every congregation has gifts — gifts that go beyond the traditional church service. Can someone cut hair? Can someone give massages? Maybe someone can help film a video, or babysit for a night, or bake a meal. This doesn't mean they have to be ready to give a Bible study on Revelation; just be ready to help someone for one hour. Fulfill a need.

Give someone a battery. It could bring them that much closer to God's power.

