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Law school was a big step up from my undergrad studies at Andrews, but it was also the first time I was studying in a non-Adventist educational environment. Needless to say, I did not adjust well and I was not measuring up. I was at a true crossroads in my scholastic journey and I had no idea if I would be able to make it through two more years of what at that point felt like torture.

After graduating from Andrews University in 2009, I knew I wanted to go to law school, but first I made a commitment to God that I would get out of my comfort zone. Having been in the “Adventist bubble” my whole life, I wanted to see the world through a different lens. With that in mind, I chose to work for a year on the campus of a Catholic University—Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Indiana—as an AmeriCorps Volunteer, where I coordinated service projects for their campus community. That experience helped solidify my passion for serving and advocating for others and allowed me to enter law school with a clear understanding of my legal calling.

When the academic dean reached out to me to let me know that in order to continue studying, I would need to take two one-day summer courses, she informed me that if I did not do these things, I would not be able to continue my studies. One class would take place on Sunday; the other on Saturday.

“The courses are easy,” the dean said. You will do well in them. Pass both and you will be able to continue studying.” I got quiet and my mind started to race. There was no way I could sign up for a class that took place on Sabbath.

I explained my situation, but at that point there were no other class options. Then she said, “It sounds like you are going to have to choose between your religious convictions and your career.”

A fear that I had never experienced before began to cripple me. What was I going to tell my parents, my girlfriend, my friends? Maybe if I had spent Saturdays studying and sitting in on study groups I wouldn't be in this position. I could just take the one-day course; it's a one-time thing—I'll double up on tithe or something. No big deal, right?

I began to get bitter, and felt as if God had let me down. To that point, my relationship with him was highly dependent on the religious rituals I had been keeping since I was a child. I assumed that those actions gave me special privileges and favor with God. Now I was about to lose my dream of becoming a lawyer all because of my commitment to another one of those empty rituals: Sabbath.

I called my girlfriend (who is now my wife) and told her how scared and confused I was. She helped me calm down and challenged me to trust in God and remember that he is in control.

At home in Michigan that weekend, my parents and my girlfriend all strongly encouraged me to go to New Life Fellowship for church. Though I decided to go with them, I made it clear I was committed to not getting a blessing and not enjoying myself. This whole religion thing no longer felt relevant to me.

As the service got underway, my plan of remaining unaffected was going smoothly. In the back of my head, I was kicking myself because I should have been in that one-day class instead of in this church service. Then song service began and one of the leaders shared thoughts from a conference he had recently attended.

According to a conference presenter, when we experience fear, the chemicals that are released in the brain cripple us and affect our ability to function and process things as we normally do. When we experience hope, chemicals are released starting at the front of the brain and it pushes against the chemicals released by fear.

“Fear and hope cannot co-exist in the brain,” the song leader said. “We have to choose one or the other. When we choose hope, fear is eradicated; but if we choose fear, we will never cease being crippled.”

Another song leader, seemingly speaking directly to me, said, “What is it that you fear this morning? Choose hope.”

In that moment, I made the decision to truly trust in God for the first time in my adult life. “God,” I prayed, “I have no clue how you are going to fix this, but I trust you. It's in your hands.”

That week, when my academic advisor told me that my only hope at this point would be if a teacher decided to change my grade, my heart sank. In a post-exam conference the previous week, my professor asked me three different times if I was sure that the legal profession was for me (yes, I performed that badly in his class). In her 20 years in that role, my advisor had only heard of one person ever getting a grade changed before. She then said, “If you're a praying person, I guess now would be the time to pray.”

I had a post-exam conference scheduled that afternoon that would take place by phone. I started praying like I never have before in my life!

My Criminal Law professor was a nice guy and very approachable, but before I could get into my rehearsed plea he said, "Michael, I was reviewing your test right before you called, and I was reminded that you are much smarter than the grade I gave you here."

Following that phone call, I spent the next two weeks praying, but I also felt at peace. Whether I was going to continue with law school or if God was going to open another door, I knew that he was guiding my footsteps. He was no longer the God that owed me; he was now the God that had already given me everything.

Two weeks after that phone call with my professor, I received an email from the dean. My grade in Criminal Law had been changed to an A. I was cleared to continue studying.

Since that day not everything has been easy. There have still been days when life does not make sense. I still at times question what God is up to, but I no longer question whether or not he is God. He is sovereign, and he knows what he is doing.