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## FIRST PERSON

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# Coping with University Life

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Kim Snider

**B**eing a student at Michigan State University has not been easy. The whole process of getting into college, then coping with college life presented me with great challenges in my social, intellectual, and spiritual life. Each of these challenges has taught me precious lessons about my life and my relationship with the Lord.

My decision to attend Michigan State University (MSU) was not based on not wanting to enroll in an Adventist school. I believe an Adventist education is important, and I am thankful that my parents kept me in academy as long as possible. However, I was offered a scholarship—which paid for half of my schooling—contingent upon attending MSU. Academically, I found the program at James Madison College-MSU to be very attractive and selected to study International Relations.

My experiences here have been quite rewarding in terms of curriculum and extracurricular activities. I spent some time studying at Cambridge University (England) and at the Institute of European Studies (Belgium). I was selected by the students to be chief executive officer for the Student Programming Board. Through these opportunities I worked with a diverse group of students from all walks of life.

My greatest challenge was to find the balance I needed between my social, intellectual, and spiritual life. My relationship with the Lord is the focus of my life. I needed to place values on each aspect of my life and set aside a portion of my time for each activity. At first, I found it difficult to live the Christian life and to share it with others as I desired.

During my freshman and sophomore years, I was teased and

hurt greatly by my roommates and floor mates for not being interested in the party life of the floor. I did not participate in the nightly drinking parties or the bar runs, and I didn't have a few companions share my bed. I had no interest in those activities and was thus branded as a loner and isolated by my neighbors. For those reasons I spent most of my time in my room or at the library studying. My grades were fairly good, but I felt like a social outcast.

I sensed a great spiritual and social emptiness in my life. Because of my social falling-outs, and being away from home, I felt lonely and afraid. I needed the social and spiritual relationship with the church more than ever; however, I found it difficult to get over to the church. Many different circumstances somehow prevented me from attending church. Sleep was the primary reason. I never got to sleep before 1:00 on Friday night, thanks to the standard floor parties. It never helped and usually hurt to ask the students to quiet down. If I did attend church, I would miss my lunch meal because the cafeteria closed by the time I got back from church. After a few times of missing my lunch, I would try to leave church early.

Transportation was also a problem. I occasionally asked for rides, but felt guilty for asking all the time. Every time I attended church I seemed to be the only student; I could actually go to church and have no one say a word to me. I desperately wanted to meet some students who understood where I was coming from. I wanted to know if this was my problem or if Adventist students in general faced these problems.

When I did attend church I would come back from church all

dressed up (not in black), and the students in the hall would ask if I had to go to another funeral or who died. I wanted to bring clothes to church and then change afterward so that I would look "normal" when returning. I decided it was too much of a hassle. I have to admit, I was not able to faithfully attend church. I felt bad about it. However, I knew that my personal relationship with the Lord was most important, and I never stopped my personal worship practices.

My life really changed during my junior and senior years when I moved into the Adventist sorority. The university church in East Lansing purchased a house next to the church and set it up specifically for the housing of MSU women. I no longer had the peer pressures or the difficulties of attending church. Knowing that other students with similar goals and values would be living there was the greatest incentive for me to move into the house. I learned that I was not alone in my challenges of living a Christian life in a non-Christian environment. Of course I faced other challenges, but the problems of living in the dorm were no longer a worry. I am so thankful for having had the opportunity of living in the Adventist sorority. It was the answer to my prayers.

Intellectually, my studies were difficult, but with time and effort I was able to pull off fairly good grades. Along with my studies in international relations, I added a major in anthropology, a minor in French, and a specialization in international development.

For my additional major in anthropology, I was required to take a course in evolution, and it frightened me. This was the first

and only time I have experienced taking a course that entirely denied Creation. It was difficult to study and listen to the lectures. It was hard to believe that life appeared millions and billions of years ago.

Once I got up the courage to discuss my problem with the professor. He told me I could believe whatever I wanted as long as I put the right answers down on the tests. The course actually turned out to be a blessing. It strengthened my relationship with the Lord and helped me focus on His life. In the class and after class, I was able to share my views with many students who asked me questions.

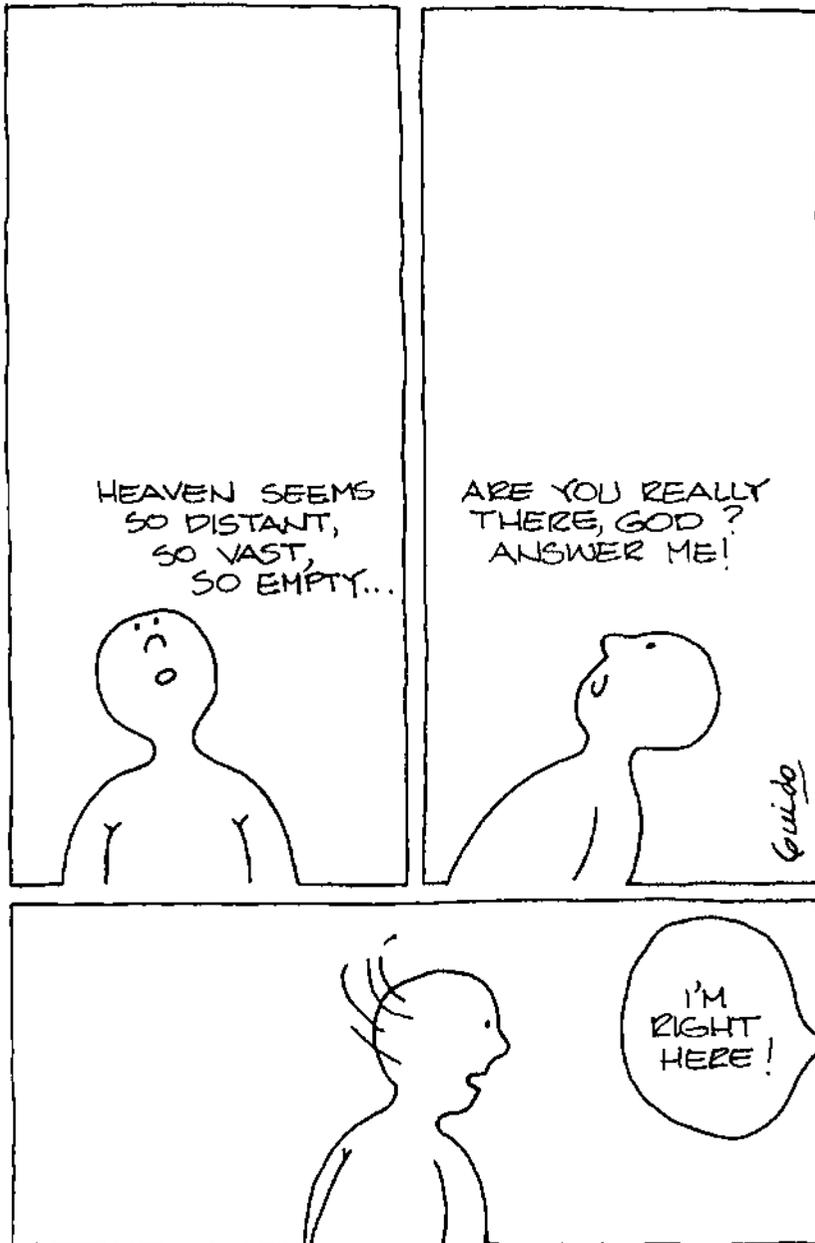
As a student attending a university that in many cases discourages Christian beliefs and values, it would have been easy for me to just quit MSU and/or the church. I felt hurt by my floormates and fellow students, and guilty for not attending church frequently. I was always worried about what the church family thought of me. In my senior year I came to believe that it does not matter what other people think. It is only what you think and how and what you do with your thoughts.

I believe that I was a missionary. I went into an unfamiliar environment, struggled with the challenges, and was able to share my faith with many. I believe it is OK for an Adventist to attend a public university or college. If you are prepared to face its challenges, the experience will strengthen your Christian life. I have been encouraged by the steps that leaders of my church have taken to support students like me. We are the future church builders.

*Kimberly Ladd graduated from Michigan State University June 9, 1990. (She did not participate in the service because it was on the Sabbath.) She got married the following day to a fellow MSU Adventist student, Ross Snider. The Sniders will continue at MSU in graduate studies.*

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They shall call his name Emmanuel,  
which means "God is with us."

Matthew 1: 23