

## **Life After School**

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Additional copies available from:

*AdventSource*

5120 Prescott Avenue

Lincoln, NE 68506

[www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org)

402.486.8800

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ISBN: 978-1-62909-378-9



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# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered what's next, what's beyond college, and how you're going to face it? You probably know that you're not alone in your questions and that, on some level, God is with you through it all. But how does that play out especially when things don't go as you've dreamed or even strategically mapped out?

In the following pages, you'll find a variety of perspectives on how to handle what's next. You'll hear from a few students, still in the rhythm you've grown familiar with, sharing their thoughts on what to do differently or embrace right now. And you'll hear from several people who've lived beyond the college scene for some time. As they reflect on their highs and lows, their clarifying moments and the questions that still linger, you'll grow in your understanding of how things may look for you—soon. The words ahead are both practical and inspirational. Soak them up.

After each entry, you'll find a bit of space to jot down initial reactions to what you've read. You'll also find more space at the end of the book. If you receive this book at the CONNECT Conference, go ahead and use that space to take notes during the presentations and workshops. Those notes will be a great resource for you some time from now when you pick this up and review your thoughts from March 2017.

Whenever you get this book in your hands, treat yourself to some invaluable time with God to talk through what you've read, what you've learned, the questions that are still ruminating, and the answers God's providing along the way.

One more thing, I pray you'll learn to become more gracious with yourself as you walk through the unknowns. There's a reason the race isn't given to the swift (Ecclesiastes 9:11)—there are so many bumps along the way. Take one step at a time. Stick with God through to the end. You'll realize that life after school is actually quite doable and, in many ways, full of joy and peace and hope.

**Michaela Lawrence Jeffery**  
*Adventist Christian Fellowship, Director*  
*Georgia-Cumberland Conference*

# THE UNMARKED TRAIL

By Gabrielle Groft

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a hope and future.” —Jeremiah 29:11*

Every college senior is eager to bust out of classes and step their way into the “real world.” Or so they think until it comes time to graduate and they still have no idea where they are going.

That’s where their faith and trust in God begin to be tested. When searching for a job, you have three options: Do nothing and expect it to fall in your lap; make your life plans and routes the best way you know how and trust your brain to apply all your new knowledge; or do the last option along with putting your faith and trust in God, knowing that wherever He leads you, He will use you and has GREAT plans for your life. I’ll share a clip of my story to make my point a bit more personal.

Attending a public college as a Christian can be hard. Your faith gets tested and tried in a way that doesn’t usually happen when you are surrounded by a community that has similar religious beliefs to yours. This experience, however, allows you to be stronger in your faith. At least that’s what happened to me. From the minute I stepped on campus freshman year to the day I walked across the stage, I was planning to be an elementary school teacher. That fact never changed. What changed was my view on where I would get to serve as an educator to young minds. In my mind, I never thought it possible that I would teach at an Adventist school, much less the one I grew up in, teaching grades I said I’d never teach. Not that I thought I couldn’t, but I just didn’t have any desire to. Needless to say, God had other plans.

My junior year, I began to shift from thinking “I’m not working here, here, or here,” to “I will go wherever God wants me to go.” This became my motto so-to-say. When senior year came, I took any opportunity to place my résumé into an administrator’s/educator’s hands. I went to job fairs and talked to all the schools that would let me. Out of all that, I only lined up three

interviews. Two with Adventist schools (positions I learned about by word of mouth) and one public school (lined up at one of the job fairs). I received offers from the two Adventist schools. The problem was, they were only part-time positions. I never made it to the full-time public school interview. I was baffled. Torn, I didn't know what to choose. I had prayed about it many times but never felt like God was giving me an answer.

That is, until one day on a backpacking trip, the weekend before I promised answers to the two schools. I spent the entire day battling with God on what I was supposed to do. By persistently praying and by the grace of God, by the end of the hike, I knew where I was to be. I couldn't wait to tell my friends and family about the situation.

The part-time job turned into a full-time position the following year at the Adventist school I grew up in, teaching grades I said I'd never teach. God has blessed my life in so many ways, I can't keep count. He can fill your life with blessings, too, if you only let him. He knows you far better than you could ever know yourself.

My advice to you is to never doubt the plans God has for you. When you feel like you are stepping out into unknown territory, know God is with you on the trail guiding you every step of the way. The 'job hunt' is not meant to be done alone, and it's not going to be easy, but if you trust in God and His plan for you, there is no need to worry about what is to come. Put in your best effort and leave the rest to God.

## REFLECTIONS

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