“How Do I Get My Parents and Pastor to Understand Not All SDAs Are Alike?”

I read Kris Samons’ answer to e-mail about Seventh Day Adventists and I just want to say thank you. I’m a devout Baptist and my long time boyfriend is an SDA. It has bothered me for a very long time. I asked my pastor and he said the Adventists he knows don’t believe people who go to church on Sunday are Christians because God commanded us to keep holy the Sabbath. It’s been hard trying to find a middle ground and making things appear as simple as it really is. The fact is we both love God and firmly believe that through Jesus we are saved. It is just very hard for people like my parents who are 45 and up to understand that SDA people and congregations vary. You did research and you concluded that people need to take every SDA on a case by case basis. This was wonderful news to read. I just hope my pastor will accept my boyfriend for the Christian that he is: a Christian that just happens to worship on Sunday. It’s like John 3:16 has less value nowadays. Before belief was all that was needed to be a real Christian. But now I feel like we have to leap through hoops and do X amount of things to really prove it. What do you think? Are my boyfriend and I “unequally yoked” like Paul writes in Corinthians? How should I go about getting my parents and pastor to understand what you researched?

You are not alone in being frustrated that people attach works (AKA “hoops”) to salvation, trying to make it harder to enter the kingdom than Jesus does. That is part of the essence of legalism. Spiritual fruit—Christlke character—isn’t enough of an evidence of true spiritual life for those holding their cherished hoops, and how sad is that?

If I were you, I would ask my boyfriend to tell my pastor and

my parents about his relationship with Jesus and about his understanding of how one becomes a Christ-follower. There is nothing in the Bible about "Follow Me and go to church on Saturday," and if he gets that, I would hope he would be able to communicate it to the "gatekeepers" in your life. Since you are a college student, my guess is that your boyfriend is too, which means he's still very much under the influence of his family and his church. It's possible he isn't as strong in his personal convictions as he will be, Lord willing, several years from now when he's out of school and living an independent adult life. I think that is an element of your situation that can be brought to the table—that he is still in the process of forming his spirituality. Is he absolutely committed to SDA theology and to staying in the SDA church? Or is it just a matter of comfort and habit for him? Can he ever see himself worshiping with you on Sunday? If he can't, then you would have to be the one to do all the adjusting and the concession-making. That would be a deal-breaker for me, totally apart from the unequally yoked issue. (No, I don't think you are unequally yoked spiritually, but you could be mismatched if the issue of where and when and how to worship becomes non-negotiable for both of you. Which could be considered a type of unequal yoke.)

Concerning how you get your pastor and parents to see what Kris wrote about: you can print off his article and give it to them, asking them to consider another perspective. But the bottom line is, no one can make anyone else see things they don't want to see. You can offer evidence of another perspective, but if someone doesn't want to see it, they won't. I'm sorry life is like that, but it just is. <wince>

I hope you find this helpful.

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