

Barefoot in a World of Shoes

*“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”*
(Psalm 139:14 ESV)

I was the child who struggled to fit into the “norms” of society. My mother called me stubborn and contrary because I was not who she wanted me to be. I was not being rebellious at the time (that came later); I was just different. She pictured a well-dressed, prim and proper little girl; I was barefoot and climbing trees.

Fast forward to 2004, when I wandered into a small, very traditional church. I was a committed Christian looking for a church home, but I was different from everyone there. I came from a different denomination. I taught karate and homeschooled. I rode a motorcycle and was dressed like a biker. An elderly lady greeted me at the door, and I steeled myself for the word of judgment I knew so well. What I got was a smile as she said, “I saw you ride up; that looked like fun. Sit down and let’s visit.” I was so shocked I sat, and we had a wonderful conversation. In many ways her kind welcome changed the course of my life. I am still at that church.

I have now been a believer for almost 40 years, and I really don’t care that I don’t fit into the norms of society. What I do care about is being transformed into the image of Christ. Christ’s transformation does not make me look like everyone else. He is not the god of eastern philosophy who absorbs everyone into itself and removes all distinctions. Christians are not mass-

produced, cut out with a cookie cutter, or forced into a mold. Christians are transformed by God into individual works of art, no two alike. Read the stories of the many different personalities of believers chronicled in the Bible.

I now work in the library of a Baptist university of about 5000 students who tend to come from upper class Christian families. I can’t help but notice that students tend to all look and act alike. As I walk across my picture-perfect Christian university campus, with its picture-perfect students, there is one who stands out. He is barefoot, carrying a book bag and sandals. I sense in this young man a kindred spirit—a kid walking barefoot in a world of shoes. I see him often and we always exchange a smile. Last week I stopped to pet a rescue dog he was briefly watching over, and we had a great conversation. My goal is to be the older lady who welcomes young misfits into her world with a smile and a sense of adventure and the words, “Sit down and let’s visit.” I’ll be the one who is barefoot with purple hair.



—**Rebecca A. Givens**

Rebecca is a Cataloging Technical Assistant at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. She has been a member of ACL for 3 years.