

Call to Ministry
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Please allow me to start from the time before I became a Christian and some influences that have affected my decisions through the years as it concerns my call to the ministry.

Do you believe that it is possible for God to answer the prayers of His children, even when those individuals have already gone on to Heaven to be with Him? I do. For many years, my mother prayed to have a son that would serve the Lord in Christian ministry. In whatever way He chose to use that son in the ministry was fine with her. My mother had four other children, all of them girls. But she desperately wanted to have a son. When I was born, she was elated! Although the marriage between my mom and dad didn't last too much longer after I was born (with my dad filing for divorce), my mom finally got what she always wanted: a son.

When I was growing up, we attended a small church that had an even smaller youth group. We went bowling every week, but there was not enough money for a full-time youth minister. My mother wanted me to get in to a good youth group, so after spending years searching for a good church, we finally found one that had a growing youth group and a fulltime youth pastor. We were both thrilled!

The youth pastor took an active interest in me and I had the opportunity to serve as secretary for the Preacher Boys, a group preparing for the ministry that met once per month; it was during this time that I thought I was saved. However, when I was seventeen, I recognized that I needed to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord after hearing a message from an evangelist about the Great White Throne Judgment. On February 18, 1980, Jesus Christ became my Savior and Lord as I accepted Him into my heart. Naturally, my mom was thrilled. It seemed that her prayers were being answered just as she had prayed.

Through the years, I've had a tendency to be a forward type of thinker; the type of one who seems to be ahead of his time. About six months after becoming a Christian, I sensed that God wanted me to serve him in some type of full-time ministry capacity. Because I had a youth pastor who knew my circumstances and was actively involved in my life, I sensed that God wanted me to serve as a youth pastor. Once again, my mom couldn't have been happier. Sensing that call, I headed off to college to prepare for the ministry by majoring in Bible. The opportunity to major in Youth Ministries greatly appealed to me during my sophomore year, but when I found out that it had a physical education minor, that was not appealing to me. I have never been strong in athletics, although I am interested to a certain degree in some sports, especially golf. I graduated with a B.A. degree in Bible in 1985 and had the opportunity to go to graduate school for advanced training.

When I moved to South Carolina in 1986, I had my first exposure to working with youth in a Christian school. This was an open door to future youth ministry and I found that I really enjoyed working with young people in a school setting. But the opportunity to

work with them in a church setting just never seemed to materialize. During my first teaching tenure, I discovered that my spiritual gift was teaching and after having been out of teaching for a year, the call to get back into education was very strong. Why? It got me around young people! I had the opportunity to move out of state, get out on my own and experience life and teaching in a different state. When that didn't work out, I moved back to South Carolina with my wife, having been married earlier in the school year. I went back into the education classroom in 2001, teaching middle school and high school subjects. Having never forgotten my calling to be a youth pastor, I knew that this was the age group with whom I wanted to spend the rest of my life in ministry. But education was all I knew and I didn't know how to make a break.

Through the years, I have been involved in various occupations. I can truthfully say that some have not been personally fulfilling or satisfying; the reason for this stems from the fact that the Lord is not able to fully use my spiritual gifts of teaching and administration in my present job setting. Some have simply been out of economic necessity in order to provide for my family. The area where I have felt the greatest satisfaction is in teaching young people. Although I am not involved in the ministry right now due to work demands as a professional driver that take me out of town during the week, I believe that this current occupation is purely temporary until that time when God clearly opens the doors of full-time ministry for me.

To that end, I believe that there are seasons in a person's life where that person examines what has been accomplished in light of eternity and believe that a change of some sort is needed; I have sensed this change of direction for several years now as a result of the Real Evangelism conference I attended in 2005 at the First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Georgia. After much prayer and talking with my wife about what I sensed and felt during this conference, I knew that could no longer be satisfied in a classroom setting. For over 27 years now, church ministry is all I have ever wanted to do and that desire grows stronger by the day. I have a clear calling to lead youth and their families to a greater awareness of God and a desire to know Him intimately. Based on my previous experiences in working with youth in a classroom setting, I believe that this dream and God-given calling can be more fully realized in a church setting rather than in a classroom. I believe that it is possible to teach the timeless truths of God's Word in such a way that is fresh, relevant, cutting-edge and appealing without compromising Bible truth in any way.

During the time of my last teaching contract, I went back to graduate school at Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio to get a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree that would enable me to learn how to be an even more effective teacher and communicator in the classroom. Based on what I learned there, I believe that this training has prepared and equipped me for what God wants me to do with my life: to obtain a full-time, long-term position as a Minister of Education, with a special emphasis in youth ministry, in a conservative Southern Baptist church of God's choosing, preferably in the Southeast region, where I can use my love for the Bible, music, history, and evangelism to prepare Christians of all ages, especially youth in grades 6-12, to influence their world for the glory of Jesus Christ and to further His kingdom on earth. I desire to use my spiritual

gifts of teaching and administration to set up an well-organized, effective church evangelistic outreach so that members may competently and successfully share their faith to unsaved family members, co-workers and friends within their circle of influence, in order that these individuals might receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In addition, I also desire to design and establish a vibrant discipleship program that will enable Christians in all walks of their spiritual journey to have a growing, mature faith, ready and prepared for service within the local church and in the Lord's kingdom. My deep-seated desire is to minister to Christian youth and adults, and to use those influencing skills for effective use in any church that desires to reach out to its surrounding community. Unfortunately, youth are often the most misunderstood and overlooked element of our society; in order for them to flourish, adults should also be discipled in the Christian life. To that end, I believe that youth ministry can and must be done within the framework of the family specifically and in church educational ministry as a whole. Although I have not yet finished the degree, I only need to complete a research thesis and my M.Ed. will be finished!

I also believe that the Lord can work through research and books to further clarify His purposes. One such book that has definitely affected me, outside of the Bible itself, has been Jerry Stubblefield's The Effective Minister of Education. A review reads this way:

“Growing churches and maturing individual Christians are almost always nurtured by a strong Christian education ministry. This book is designed to take a comprehensive look at the person who leads the work of Christian education in a church, and that person's roles and expectations.”

While I was reading this book, it became very obvious to me that this was (and is) where the Lord wants me to serve. Because our youth are under a multiplicity of Satanic attacks and families need one who understands educational philosophy and current trends and can serve as a resource for them, I believe very firmly and passionately that God has called me to work with the educational ministry of the local church. I believe that the Lord has simply redirected my focus more closely to the background I have in education, but to be used within the ministry of the local church. Within that group are parents and youth, grades 6-12 in particular, and I long to minister full-time and long-term in the development of the spiritual lives of these circles. I am not to be considered as a candidate who desires to use the ministry of education as a steppingstone to advance to another position in the church, such as a senior pastor. I have a high work ethic so I am not reluctant to work hard in the completion of a certain goal.

In short, the church ministry that calls me will have an effective, highly qualified teacher with a long-seated desire and call to ministry, no bad habits in the ministry to be overcome, and the unquestioning support of a dedicated and loving spouse. The senior pastor will be able to train me in the way needed that will assist the church toward the furtherance of their overall core values and mission in fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.