

Church leaders urged to trust and obey

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WACO—Christians do not have to see where God is calling them; they simply must trust him and obey, Robert Smith, preaching professor of Beeson Divinity School, told the Baptist General Convention of Texas-sponsored African American Leadership Workshop.

Smith acknowledged God has called him out of secure positions to do things that made no sense to him, but he believes God always had a plan.

“God has called me to trust my rationality with his irrationality or supra-rationality,” he said.

Smith recalled God calling him to leave the pastorate of a growing church in Cincinnati to become a professor. Many people told him not to do it, but God has blessed his life because he chose to follow God’s desires.

When Smith’s wife was diagnosed with lupus, a fatal disease where the body attacks itself, leaders throughout Cincinnati prayed for her, and many felt a miraculous recovery surely would happen.

In 1984, she told Smith to tell the congregation she would be fine and

would be going home. He did, only to arrive at the hospital and see her going to intensive care after a series of seizures. She died there—a loss Smith still feels.

“It was irrational,” he said. “It made no sense.”

Smith said he did not know it at the time, but God already was working in the life of a woman working on the third floor of that hospital. She eventually would become his second wife.

“When life is falling apart on the seventh floor (the ICU), he’s putting it together on the third floor,” Smith said.

“My trust is not in the institution. My trust is not in people. My trust is in the invisible God who makes invisible things visible.”

Following God into what seems to be uncertainty can be difficult, Smith confessed. But his faithfulness remains constant. God continues working in his followers’ lives—a point it is especially important for pastors to remember, Smith said.

Ministers are called to take stances that may not always be popular with their congregations. They must follow God’s leadership for the betterment of God’s kingdom.

“When there is no vision, the people perish,” he said. “Not only when there is no vision do people perish. When there is no visionary leader, the people leave the parish.”

When faced with tough situations, Christians can be encouraged by seeing the faithfulness of God throughout the Bible, Smith noted.

The message is simple: God works in every aspect of a Christian’s life.

“God is my past,” Smith said. “He is my present. He is my future.”

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