

BGCT president: Following his footsteps

October 5, 2016

For many reasons, I wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps.

This strong Hispanic man was a teacher and a coach 30 years, and I was fortunate to be around him quite a bit during my high school years. I even had one class with him, and, of course, I always was an illustration somewhere in his teaching. He also was my high school golf coach, not to mention my coach in other sports from very early in my childhood.



Baptist General Convention of Texas President René Maciel poses with a photograph of his late father and mentor, Charles Maciel. He loved education and graduated in 1952 from Baylor University. He then went back to his hometown, Tucumcari, N.M., and in those years in education, he received awards for being an excellent teacher. He always was a good communicator and counselor with his students. He was a disciplinarian and very organized. He was very committed to his work and his family.

As I grew up around him, I began to see his love for people and his passion to serve others. As a boy, I also saw him make a life change. He was at home by himself one Sunday morning when he asked Christ to come into his life. That was a time when our family also changed.

The transformation in his life became contagious, not only for us as a family, but even for his students and others who were around him at school.

I began to watch him more. He would catch my attention by how he cared for people and how he would speak boldly about his new faith in God.

I not only watched; I began to listen to him more. I began to follow him more. I became more obedient and interested in his life and his walk. I also began to follow in his footsteps of a changed life, a life of commitment and listening to my heavenly Father.

My dad was a gift from God in showing me how to care for his family, how to care for others, and how to serve. But the greatest gift I received from him was learning how to follow. After 30 years of teaching and still being very young and capable of teaching for many more years, he received a call to go and preach. Once again, I watched him hang up his teaching career and take another life step, a step of following Christ to the church.

He did not know where that call would take him; he had no idea what the people would be like or what condition a church might be in. He just followed and surrendered his will to Christ. Wherever God would lead him, in God's time and in his will, my dad followed the footsteps of Jesus. I am so grateful God used my dad to teach me "wherever he leads, I'll go."

"Take up thy cross and follow Me,"

I heard my Master say;

“I gave My life to ransom thee,
Surrender your all today.”
Wherever he leads I’ll go,
Wherever he leads I’ll go,
I’ll follow my Christ who loves me so,
Wherever he leads I’ll go.

René Maciel is president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and president of Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio.