

Brian Brisco: ‘God has put me where I am for a purpose’

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Brian Brisco, a member of University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, is a partner with the Cantey Hanger law firm. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on being a follower of Christ in the marketplace. To suggest a Texas Baptist leader in the marketplace to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

What other businesses have you been in, and what were your positions there?

I was a professional student from the time of my graduation from Baylor University in 2000 until I graduated from Baylor Law School in 2010. While at the University of Chicago, I was on staff of an archaeological expedition in Ashkelon, Israel.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Fort Worth. My father was a professor of archaeology and biblical backgrounds at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and my mother was a nurse. After finishing my education, my wife and I moved back to Fort Worth.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I came to faith in Christ primarily through the witness of my mother and father. They raised me to love and follow Jesus and to love the church. According to my parents, I accepted Jesus at a very young age—too young

to go before the church and make a public profession.

The next Sunday when the pastor made his regular altar call, I turned to my family and said, "I'm joining today whether you come or not." I was baptized not too long after. The staff and volunteer leaders at University Baptist Church also were instrumental in the development of my faith.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

- Baylor University, Bachelor of Arts in religion, with a minor in history, 2000.
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Master of Arts in theology, 2003.
- The University of Chicago, Master of Arts in Near Eastern archaeology, 2005.
- The University of Chicago, Ph.D. (ABD).
- Baylor University School of Law, J.D., 2010.

About life in the marketplace

Why do you feel called into the marketplace?

To be honest, my calling has been a lifelong struggle for me. I felt called to ministry as a teenager and pursued that calling to seminary. For various reasons, my life has moved away from full-time vocational ministry and into the marketplace. I believe and trust God has put me where I am for a purpose.

I am fortunate and privileged to get the opportunity to preach at University Baptist Church one or two times each year. These opportunities allow me to use my seminary training in a traditional ministry setting.

The skills I learned in seminary and during my graduate training at Chicago

provided me skills in the legal arena I would not have learned by going straight to law school.

In what area of law do you specialize?

My primary area of law is civil litigation. I spend most of my time defending physicians, nurses and hospitals in medical malpractice cases. I also handle employment, probate and commercial litigation.

How does being a Christian influence your decisions in the marketplace?

Being a civil litigator is a high-stress job, and many of the decisions I make at work have significant effects on my clients, who have put their complete trust in my ability as a lawyer. My relationship with Christ grounds me and teaches me there are things much higher and much more important than me.

It also reminds me God is in control. This information provides me peace and clarity of mind in highly stressful times.

I also strongly believe in the power of prayer. I often say a prayer before I stand up in court and ask God for confidence and wisdom to say the right things at the right times.

What is your favorite part of your job? Why?

Getting a good result for my client. Although I typically represent institutions and companies, I enjoy getting to know the people behind the scenes and guiding them through the difficult and complex legal process.

What one aspect of the marketplace gives you the greatest joy?

I derive the greatest joy from working with my colleagues collaboratively. I

really enjoy getting to know clients, but the most fulfilling part of my job is getting in the trenches with my fellow lawyers, paralegals and assistants and working together to resolve our clients' difficult problems. Law is a team sport, and I am blessed to work with some of the best people in the profession.

About Baptists

Why are you Baptist?

The short answer is: I am a Baptist because my parents were Baptists. But as I have grown in my faith and understanding of the denomination, I have developed a deep appreciation and admiration for the group of core tenets that set us aside from other groups—the centrality of the Bible, the priesthood of all believers, believer's baptism and religious liberty.

I am a strong believer in the idea the Holy Spirit gives all sincere believers the ability to read and interpret Scripture, and a strong believer that the church should be governed by the congregation. Both of these principles find a home in the Baptist tradition.

What are the key issues facing Baptists—denominationally and/or congregationally?

I am the son of a Baptist professor who was a firsthand witness to the total transformation at Southwestern Seminary during the "conservative resurgence." That experience had lasting impacts on my family, and as such, I've not participated or even really followed statewide or national level denominational issues, other than to give to my local church in support of mission efforts.

My sense is there are concerning trends, especially on the national level, related to the role of authority in the local church and the relationship

between church and state which appears to be growing uncomfortably close of late.

What would you change about the Baptist denomination—state, nation or local?

I wish all Baptist denominations would become more inclusive and willing to look for common ground, instead of looking for issues over which to divide. Just because I may not agree with you on who can fill the pulpit on Sunday mornings or who can serve as a deacon should not preclude us from working together to support and send missionaries.

Baptists, especially Southern Baptists, too often have been defined by division rather than unity.

About Brian

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

My primary mentors are my mother and father. They influenced me to love the Bible, study, Jesus, family and the church.

My primary legal mentor was Carol Traylor. She took me under her wing as a young attorney and taught me how to handle a case from start to finish.

Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors, and explain why.

It sounds cliché coming from a lawyer, but my favorite book always has been *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and I try to read it at least once a year. I think all lawyers want to be like Atticus Finch.

The most recent book I read was *The Color of Together* by Milton Brasher-

Cunningham. Milton is a former youth minister from University Baptist Church and the son of the former chaplain at Baylor University. It's about his recent experience of grief after his father's death. I found it to be powerfully honest and peaceful and highly recommend it as well as his other books.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Micah 6:8. My seminary training was focused on the Hebrew Bible, and the Minor Prophets were my favorite books.

Micah 6 describes a lawsuit, which is personally interesting to me, presenting God as both prosecutor and judge calling out the rich, religious and powerful for their abuses of power. The prophet reminds us that our North Star is simple—act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, and you will be in a right relationship with God and man.

Although following this North Star is not as easy as it sounds, I have tried to follow these commands in my life. As I get older, I realize my life is better and more peaceful the more I follow these commands. And the more I surround myself with people who also value these commands, the better my relationships are.

Who is your favorite person in the Bible, other than Jesus? Why?

I find myself coming back to the life of Peter. I think he is one of the most “human” characters in the New Testament, similar to David in the Old Testament. He is impulsive, quick-tempered, selfish and often full of doubt. We can all relate to his mood swings.

He also has inspiring moments of great faith and great power, and ultimately becomes one of the great missionaries of the early church.

He inspires me to know, no matter what happens today, even if I completely fail to act justly, love mercy or walk humbly with God, I always can do great things for Christ tomorrow, and Christ is always with me.

Name something about you that would surprise people who know you.

I like cats. I have been a strong pro-dog, anti-cat person my entire life, but in the last year, my wife adopted two rescue cats, and I actually like them. It turns out, I might even be more of a cat person than a dog person.