

Buddy Camper: Helping Christians with their financial plans

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Buddy Camper, after a career in newspaper and magazine ownership, helps Christians improve their finances and churches and ministries raise funds. He is a member of Hideaway Community Church in Hideaway, as well as the Baptist Standard board of directors.

From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on being a Christian in the marketplace. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated leader to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

At age 19, I became editor of the *Grand Saline Sun*, our hometown newspaper. When we graduated from college, my wife and I founded *The Allen American*. Allen had about 1,600 residents then, but the town grew rapidly. Later, we formed Texas Publishing Company and owned newspapers and magazines across the state.

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

I've been involved in a wide variety of business ventures throughout the years. In the late 1980s, I wanted to do something totally different and checked out the coffee industry. After exporting coffee from Mexico and Central America, we ended up with a farm in Honduras. That was a lot of

fun ... until Hurricane Mitch washed away the coffee trees.

In what business are you in currently?

My son has always been interested in finance. When he became a certified financial planner and opened his own company, I began learning from him.

My particular passion has been helping Christians become financially secure, so they can give more, serve more and avoid money worries.

With the help of another donor, we established a nonprofit ministry to provide financial education without cost to Christians. We brought in Christian professionals in all areas of finance, so we could teach church members everything from Medicare to investment management and estate planning.

Since then, we've helped hundreds of Christians improve their finances. We've also raised millions for churches by building endowments, and we've supported missions around the world.

How long have you been in that business?

I started in the financial field in 1998. Our nonprofit ministry began in 2005.

Where did you grow up?

After attending elementary school in the Pleasant Grove area of Dallas, we moved to East Texas when I was in eighth grade. I've always preferred small towns.

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

A blazing hot summer as a roughneck in the oil fields convinced me to go to college. Writing seemed to be the closest thing I had to a talent; so, I

majored in journalism.

I received an Associate of Arts degree from Tyler Junior College and a Bachelor of Journalism degree from The University of Texas in Austin.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

A young girl named Patricia Willmon—now my wife of 56 years—attended Bible Baptist Church in Grand Saline. I followed her there, soon became a believer and have been a follower of Jesus ever since.

About the marketplace

Why do you feel called into the marketplace?

I feel a calling to help Christians with their finances and teach that it's God's money; we are his stewards. We know both love of money and lack of money can ruin lives. It's an honor to be able to serve fellow Baptists in this unique way.

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

Everything we do in the marketplace is designed to help church members. We want them to be financially free, so they can take care of their families as we join together to spread the word of God. It's the reason I do what I do.

What is your favorite aspect of the marketplace? Why?

My favorite aspect is getting to work closely with truly good people. I've come to know and love many wonderful Christians through this ministry. I've been privileged to work with the Baptist General Convention of Texas on its pastoral grant program. The people I serve become part of my

extended family. I wouldn't trade "jobs" with anyone.

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

My greatest joy has been working one-on-one with pastors. Money tends to be unimportant to most pastors. I help them make informed decisions, so they can live well, retire well, provide for their families and have financial peace of mind. Many of my closest friends are Baptist ministers. They are a sincere, genuine, Jesus-loving group.

I also am joyful, because I see giving increase when our team works with a church. We emphasize the blessings of giving. Our "Outlive Your Life" program teaches how leaving something to God's kingdom in your estate can help save souls long after the donor has passed on.

In one case, we showed a wealthy Christian ways to maximize his investments. Our advice and his extra funds helped him donate \$1 million toward a new church sanctuary. I smile every time I pass that building.

What one aspect of the marketplace would you like to change?

The financial industry targets people with high net worth. Often, it's the average family who needs help the most. Plus, financial advisers don't get paid unless they sell. Many times, I've seen the interest of companies and salespeople placed above their "customer." That's sad.

We won't let that happen if people contact us. Our "second opinion" has helped many families make better choices.

How has your place in the market or your perspective

on the marketplace changed?

For more than 18 months, we couldn't teach in churches because of COVID-19. During this time, I started concentrating on helping pastors design their personal retirement plan.

Each minister's situation is unique; so, I'll spend several hours getting to know the family, analyzing their finances, determining their goals and showing them ways to avoid the potential pitfalls they face now and in retirement. Next, we work together on a comprehensive plan that we will update as the years go by.

By the time we finish, they know their ideal time to retire and what to expect during their retirement years. Our goal is for them to maintain their current lifestyle and never run out of money. We show them how to have financial stability, so they can concentrate on doing the Lord's work.

In the future, I'd like to help as many church leaders as possible. I'm fortunate to be able to go anywhere in the state and work for free to help a fellow Baptist retire.

If you could get one “do over” in the marketplace, what would it be and why?

If I had a “do over,” I'd start doing what I'm doing a lot earlier in life.

About Buddy

Why are you Baptist?

My family belonged to another denomination, but I visited a Baptist church when I was in high school. Over the years, I've studied many religions and visited all types of churches. The Baptists matched up best with my beliefs.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

“Be still and know that I am God” is a favorite passage. We get caught up in the world and all its busyness. But we find God in silence and stillness. Quiet time is the best time.

My other favorite passage is 1 John 4:16: “God is love.”

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

Paul is my favorite. He treated everyone the same—both Jew and Gentile, both lowly and powerful. He wanted everyone to know Christ. No hardship could stop him from his mission.

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

I’ve always had mentors, because it’s important to learn from the best.

Current mentors include pastors who have become close friends. I get to associate regularly with mentors such as Charlie Wilson of Central Baptist Church in Crandall; Ronny Marriott of First Baptist Church in Burleson; Jerry Carlisle, former pastor and president of the Texas Baptists Missions Foundation; and retired pastors Danny Howe and Jerry Campbell.

These guys are true servants of the Lord. who love the people who depend on them for spiritual guidance. I try to “be like them” when it comes to helping folks financially.

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

Most people don’t know I’m an instrument-rated pilot or that I’ve played over 400 golf courses around the world.