

Danny Dawdy: 'Evangelism is alive and well in Texas Baptist Camps'

April 19, 2021

Danny Dawdy, executive director of [Highland Lakes Baptist Encampment](#), has served the camp since 1998. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on camp ministry. 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

Where else have you served in ministry, and what were your positions there?

- Executive director, Camp Chaparral, Iowa Park.
- Youth and education minister, First Baptist Church, LaGrange.
- Youth pastor, First Baptist Church, Palestine.
- Youth minister, First Baptist Church, Baker, La.
- Youth minister, First Baptist Church, Eastland.
- Youth minister, First Baptist Church, Morton.
- Youth minister, Elkins Lake Baptist Church, Huntsville.
- Youth minister, Alamo Heights Baptist Church, Port Lavaca.

I also have served on the Texas Department of State Health Services Youth Camp Program Advisory Committee and have spoken before several Texas legislative committees about the camping industry.

I love to preach, teach and help churches as a trained mediator.

Where did you grow up?

Port Lavaca, Texas.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I was raised in a Christian home. I attended a Royal Ambassadors camp at a Texas Baptist encampment. One night after the service, my RA director Roy Motley led me to Christ as we knelt beside my bunk.

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

- Bachelor of Science in agricultural business and economics, Sam Houston State University.
- Studied Bible under Charles Asby at the Baptist Student Union.

About camp ministry

Why do you feel called into camp ministry?

I had great experiences attending camp as a child and teenager, where I first fell in love with Christian camping.

As a youth minister, I had the privilege to serve in Texas Baptist Super Summer more than 20 years, and that is where I learned camp programming. As my church attended youth camps in the 1970s and early '80s, I just did not see the same excitement as students showed at Super Summer. I begin to dream about another model for Baptist Christian camping.

God opened the door for me to become the executive director of Camp Chaparral, where our team and volunteers implemented the camp handling both facilities and program.

What is your favorite aspect of camp ministry? Why?

To watch our team and volunteers be successful in their area of ministry, and when they love coming to work and can't wait until people come so we might serve them.

What one aspect of camp ministry gives you the greatest joy?

We have a tradition at Highland Lakes Camp that at the end of the session, each student who became a follower of Christ that week walks through a bell tower and rings the bell, saying to the whole camp: "I belong to Jesus now! I live for the next generations to know Christ and make him known."

Among Texas Baptists' 30 camps, we have seen 9,000 people accept Christ as Savior. Evangelism is alive and well in Texas Baptist camps.

What one aspect of camp ministry would you like to change?

This past year has brought it home to me even more that camps need more financial support.

How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?

The local church is changing, and as parachurch organizations, Christian camping ministries have to change to serve the churches best. We are looking at opportunities to serve small groups, families and individuals.

How do you expect camp ministry to change in the next 10 years?

As our society moves more and more to a video-driven society, camps will have to educate people on the value of getting outside and coming away to

retreat from the everyday. We produced Camp in a Box for summer 2020 that was well-received, but I pray we do not move to that or Zoom camp.

Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing your ministry.

With an ever-changing marketing culture, it is a real challenge to know just how to get information about programming and financial needs out to those in the local church.

Enlisting volunteers both short term and long term.

Recruiting university students to help in the summer.

Costs are increasing across the board. Lumber is up 50 percent over the last three years. Food cost is up 30 percent over the last year, and with the freeze, it will go higher. Program cost is edging higher. Health insurance cost for ministry team members is up.

What do you wish more people knew about camp ministry?

Christian camping is one of the best tools Baptists have to reach the next generation. Don't believe the lie that it's just a "camp high" students respond to. Missionaries, pastors, music leaders, youth ministers, women in ministry around our world have asked Christ into their lives and have answered the call to ministry at camp.

If you could get one "do over" in ministry, what would it be, and why?

At First Baptist Church in Palestine, I failed to motivate our adult volunteers to see the importance of evangelism.

About Danny

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

- Roy Motley, Royal Ambassadors director
- Coach McCoy, coach and Sunday school teacher
- Charles Asby, Baptist Student Union director
- Carlos McCloud, Wayne McAfee and Billy Beacham, friends and mentors
- Jim Hooten, pastor
- Norman Flowers, friend and accountability partner
- Ross Chandler, pastor

What is the impact of camp ministry on your family?

My family has been blessed to have been chosen to serve in Christian camping.

My daughters have been able to hang out with some of the greatest and godly university students from across Texas. The speakers and musicians they've experienced help them build a strong faith. Camp gave us a place to serve together even more than the local church.

We have great appreciation for those volunteers who walked alongside us and taught us what it was like to give your all, expecting nothing in return.

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

- *Embark: Adventure Awaits Those Who Are Willing* by Beaux E. Hinote is a good book to help a men discover how to live like Christ.
- *Fire Fall 2.0: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals* by Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid is a great book about revival and evangelism.
- *The Catalyst Leader: 8 Essentials for Becoming a Change Maker* by Brad

Lomenick gave me insight into the concept of leadership for the present pastor.

- *A Tale of Three Kings: A Study in Brokenness* by Gene Edwards.

With our interns, I use a lot of Jerry Bridges' books *Pursuit of Holiness* and *Practice of Godliness*.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Philippians 3:10-12. My great desire is to know Christ and to see his power change lives my life touches.

Who is your favorite Bible character, other than Jesus? Why?

David, because he paid a great price to become what God wanted him to be, and David's failures always were met by forgiveness and another chance to follow his Savior.

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

I would love to be out in the middle of 500 acres with my wife, a good dog and a good horse.