

David Maltzberger: Planting seeds that grow into greater messages

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David Maltzberger has been a professor in the School of Christian Studies for [Wayland Baptist University in San Antonio](#) for seven years. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on Christian higher education. 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, and what were your positions there?

I began on the faculty of the Odessa Theological Seminary in the Ukraine, then was a pastor in British Columbia for seven years. In 2001, I joined the religion department of the Baptist University of the Americas, where I taught for almost 12 years and worked on initial certification and accreditation. I also have served on staff of Baptist congregations—both English and Spanish—in Peru and Texas.

Where did you grow up?

San Antonio

How did you come to faith in Christ?

Two middle school friends told me of their youth activities at First Baptist

Church Castle Hills and invited me to come along. My first week there, I joined a group that spoke out at a business meeting about something regarding the youth. For me, a Christian group that promoted participation of members was an eye-opener. Not long afterwards, I was baptized by the pastor, George H. Harris.

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

Recognizing a call to ministry fairly early, I attended East Texas Baptist College—now University—as a religion major, and later, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where I earned the Master of Divinity degree and a Ph.D. in biblical backgrounds and archaeology.

As an archaeologist, I have pursued projects in Israel, Jordan and Turkey.

What was one of the most exciting or important digs you've been a part of?

To an archaeologist, almost any dig or survey is exciting. Over the past several years, working in Cilicia of southwestern Turkey, near Tarsus, the hometown of the Apostle Paul, we've been tracking traces of Judaism and early Christianity as it came of age in the ancient Greco-Roman world.

Last year, we also finally summited a large volcano in central Anatolia to reach the remains of an ancient Hittite temple and fortress from the 7th century B.C. Walking across the dormant caldera and the seldom-visited ruins of an ancient military camp—climbing into the fallen stones of the abandoned temple once guarded by large stone lions—makes a stirring afternoon.

The world of archaeology not only adds depth to the people of the Bible; it builds our knowledge of the “who, how and why” of so many biblical events.

About education

Why do you feel called into education?

My personal mission always has been to “discover, uncover and share” the story of the biblical world. My ministry call is paralleled by my call to work as an archaeologist in the Near East.

The educational setting at Wayland allows me to train and build up other ministers who take that message of our sacred past and lay it before many more hearers than I could alone. By educating men and women for service to the church, I see my work multiplied.

How does being a Christian influence your work in education?

I am fortunate to serve a university that reaches out, not just within our own denominational lines, but also serves many unchurched students. I have opportunity to make not only the gospel message known, but to share the ethos—the beliefs and values—of our Baptist heritage.

From the fascinating story of Wayland’s Flying Queens women’s basketball team to the path-forging racial integration of the school, I am allowed tell the tales that reflect the best of Texas Baptists and the essence of Christ’s message in action.

What is your favorite aspect of education? Why?

Having taught again in Texas for almost 20 years, I am blessed to see students from so many backgrounds, cultures and languages go and serve in a variety of ways across the world.

When I see former students serve congregations in India, across Latin America and Europe, and in business and education here and abroad, I

know any struggle has been overshadowed by lives that have been changed and continue to change others.

Part of our Wayland mission is lead students “to professional success and service to God and humankind.” Seeing that in action inspires me to continue.

What is your favorite class to teach? Why?

I teach a lot of graduate-level Old Testament courses. I enjoy the “Aha” moments when ministry students discover a biblical story or its implications in ways they may never have heard before. When you know you have planted a new seed that can grow into some greater message or work in the future, there is no other feeling like that.

What one aspect of education would you like to change?

If I could, I would change grading systems. I don’t like to place a numeric value on an experience. It often takes a long time for what a student found in a classroom experience to grow into a mature knowledge. Longer still, sometimes, to produce fruit. Rather than inspire, grades often hinder further exploration by students.

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

The continuing need for greater funding, the shift from content-focus to competency-focus, and the struggle for faith-based schools to remain relevant choices for students offered so many opportunities across the globe.

What do you wish more people knew about education?

I have encountered more and more voices in the church that look down on

education, especially of their ministers, as though it is a tainted and negative influence. The need for a thoroughly educated clergy has not diminished. It is greater today than ever before.

Those who will accept less than the best-prepared minister for their congregation are losing out.

While the simplicity of the gospel message needs no vast education to share or be understood, an educated pastor can assist a church to multiply her outreach, deepen her discipleship, and advance the kingdom more effectively than an undereducated one.

About Baptists

Why are you Baptist?

Baptists bring to the family of faith a dedication to principles that build up individuals and the larger church.

Our tradition calls for the centrality and authority of the Bible, freedom of churches to choose their leaders and associate with others, an individual's soul freedom to interpret Scripture and interact with God directly, and the unequivocal separation of church and state all attracted me as a teen coming to Christ and still guide me today.

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

As American evangelicalism grows, Baptists too often feel we have to compete with other congregations by offering more entertainment-focused gatherings and events. Large is in, and small is dying. We often forget smaller can be better, and the quietude of worship can outpace the glamour of the three-ring circus.

About David

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

My Texas Baptist professors shaped my knowledge and my practice. Donald Potts introduced me to crafting a sermon that communicates the whole story of the passage. Bruce Tankersley opened up the world of church history and the New Testament to me. George Kelm at Southwestern Seminary opened for me the greater world of the Bible as we excavated together in Israel. He also modeled for me classroom teaching.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

For many decades, I've relied on 1 Peter 5:6—"Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God"—to remind me I never am too big nor too proud to take on a task out of the limelight. Learning to be humbler is a difficult journey.

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

I have always have been partial to the prophet Amos. He was a layman who accepted a call to follow God in difficult circumstances. His plea to "let justice roll down like water" still echoes across the centuries, and we would do well to hear him again in the tumultuous times we live.