

David Rice: Walking together toward Christlikeness

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David Rice has been pastor of Crossroads Baptist Church in Marshall the past 18 years. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on church and ministry. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated minister to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured, [click here](#).

Background

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

Part-time student minister: First Baptist Church in Avinger, Port Caddo Baptist Church in Marshall, Northlake Baptist Church in Dallas

Full-time minister to students and education: First Southern Baptist Church in Colorado Springs, Colo.

- Where did you grow up?

Tyler

- How did you come to faith in Christ?

As a 9-year-old, I approached my parents about being saved, and they, along with my pastor, led me to trust Christ as my Savior.

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

East Texas Baptist University, bachelor's degree

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, master of divinity degree

Ministry/church

- Why do you feel called into ministry?

Well, there are certainly some days that I don't "feel" called, but I know that I am called because of a still, small voice that began speaking to me in the summer of 1989 and continues to confirm that original call day after day. I know I am called because, while at times I feel qualified to do something else, I know I only will be satisfied leading the church, loving its people and preaching God's word.

- What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?

The people. At every stage: Those who are wandering in their faith. Those who are pursuing a deeper understanding of God. Those who are on the outside of the faith. Walking with them through life. Seeing them grow in their faith. Going with them as we carry out the mission of the church.

- What one aspect of congregational life gives you the greatest joy?

When the light of the gospel opens the eyes of fathers so they begin to lead their families in worship. When a young mother realizes her worth in Christ is far more valuable than pursuing the Kardashian lifestyle. Watching students realize serving others is the greatest joy in life. My greatest joy in congregational living is walking together toward Christlikeness.

- What one aspect of congregational life would you like to change?

Nothing. I mean, I wish people wouldn't hide behind self-righteous facades and religious pretension, and I do wish folks who have made mistakes in life wouldn't listen to the slander and accusations of the enemy disqualifying them from God's love and purpose.

But that's what we have church for, isn't it?

- How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?

As I began to serve Crossroads as pastor, I defined success in ministry by judging how happy the people in the church were. I like to tell younger pastors that I confused peoples' applause for God's approval.

When we arrived, we began taking mission trips with the students and then later those became church-wide. For the most part, those trips served to satisfy our desire to help others and ultimately to feel better about ourselves. Later, we began to move outside the United States to Ethiopia and more recently Peru. Through those short-term trips, I began to recognize the role of the established church to partner with churches to help them accomplish their mission in their community or to work toward planting churches where there is no church presence.

My perspective has changed from pleasing people to intentionally creating an atmosphere for carrying out the purpose of the church to be influential locally and partnering regionally and globally to strengthen the presence of the church.

- What qualities do you look for in a congregation?

A good friend of mine said what is most important about a congregation is not its seating capacity, but its sending capacity.

About Baptists

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

It is apparent that how we fund missions is changing. Many congregations are already adjusting their traditional methods of mission giving. In the immediate days ahead of us, there are some vitally important decisions to

be made—from the national denomination to the local congregation—regarding how we send and support missions.

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

Historically, our Baptist identity has been centered around a cooperative effort to reach the nations with the gospel. I would love to return to a concentrated effort to let the nations know that Jesus saves.

I desire an end to labeling and the divisiveness of theological disagreements. Whether we agree on the finer point of who can be saved, we must emphasize how we are saved is the main point of Scripture.

Could we please return to a prayerful, steadfast commitment to letting our neighbors and the nations know that Christ has come to save sinners?

About David

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

God has always surrounded me before and behind with men and women of grace and encouragement.

I would not be the man I am without my home church family at *Trinity Baptist* in Tyler.

I would not have the kind of work ethic I have were it not for my dad, *Jim Rice*.

I would not be the pastor I am without the pastoral examples of *Hollie Atkinson, Jay Badry, David Dykes, Dennis Gibbons, Wallace Watkins* and my director of missions and friend, *Randy Babin*.

I would not be the leader I am without the friendship of *Dub Oliver*.

All of these names are representative of the many others who have been strategically placed in my life, not just to observe what I was doing, but to see past the visible and help me be aware of what God was doing in my life.

I am most thankful for the examples of clear biblical teaching I received early in my call from *Ken Lasater* and *Bob Utley* as they taught me a love for the Old Testament. These two men provided me with a foundation for teaching God's word I still use today.

I particularly was impacted by a short meeting with *Ron Dunn* as I was sensing a call to preaching ministry. God used that hour to seal my confidence in the call I was receiving into the pastorate.

It seems unfair to list these names and not the many others. God has been so generous to me in this area.

- What is the impact of ministry on your family?

I have been happily married for 25 years to Celina. We have two amazing children—Anna, 20, and Luke, 19. My children have only known Crossroads and our community as home. I am so grateful we were allowed to raise our kids here. Our church family has been incredible to my family. They have allowed my wife and children to be who they are without the labels of “preacher’s wife” or “preacher’s kids.”

- What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

I love the story of Baruch in Jeremiah 45. Baruch is Jeremiah's scribe and has just finished a fresh copy of the prophecy of Jeremiah after the king shredded and then burnt the previous one. They are sitting in a cave, running for their lives, re-writing the very prophecy that got them into this jam. And God speaks to Baruch. I love it. I love in that moment, which very well could have been the lowest point in Baruch's life, God had a word for him. It is thrilling to me to consider that in the midst of recording a

national address, God has a word for one lone individual. It encourages me to encourage others that no matter where you are, what your role is, or what is happening around you, God has a word for you.

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