

# **Dennis Young: 'The church should be a family'**

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**Dennis Young** has been pastor of Missouri City Baptist Church in Missouri City 25 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 yourself, [click here](#).

## **Background**

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

I also served at South Park Baptist Church in Houston as music director and associate minister 14 years.

- How did you come to faith in Christ?

I grew up in a Christian home—always in church, accepted Christ at an early age and was baptized.

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

I received my bachelor of arts degree from Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, N.Y., and my master's degree and doctorate from Houston Graduate School of Theology in Houston.

## **Ministry/church**

- Why do you feel called into ministry?

I knew from the age of 8 that I was called to serve in ministry—pastor. In

my high school yearbook, listed below my picture in response to what is my projected vocation, my response was “Theology.” At an early age, I was preaching to family members each time the family gathered for any occasion.

- What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?

I have several favorite aspects of ministry: Visitation, counseling, preaching and teaching. In all of these I am able to instruct, influence—in a positive manner—and encourage those who feel disenfranchised, discouraged and depressed.

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

The one aspect of congregational life that gives me the greatest joy is fellowship. In too many instances today, the importance of fellowship is not fully realized within congregations. Fellowship involves Christians being in the company of each other, sharing with each other and supporting each other. The church should be a family—family and fellowship go hand in hand.

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

In the early years of my pastorate, I tried to live a perfect life and expected the same from the members. However, as I grew in the ministry I realized no one is perfect. My earlier experience has aided my current ministry and, as a result, my ministry has been enriched. I am a better pastor in terms of relating/ministering to members, individuals in the community, city or state.

- How do you expect congregational life to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

Over the next 10 to 20 years I anticipate a lot of changes in congregational

life. Note the following:

Streaming will increase; church attendance will continuously decline.

Millennials will continue to stray away from the church; church attendance will continue to decline.

Members' commitment to church will decline, having a feeling that they can stay at home, view the service on TV and enjoy it just as if they went to church.

Platform critics will vastly increase

Congregations will need to spend much time addressing the subject of *mental health*. Currently, one out of four persons living in the United States is experiencing mental illness. They are in the church every week. Mental illness often leads to depression, and there have been several pastors who have committed suicide over the past few years as a result of being depressed. Currently, more and more pastors are coming forth sharing that they have been experiencing depression and are having a difficult time doing ministry—preaching, teaching, counseling, etc.

- What qualities do you look for in a congregation?

A congregation should always exude a sense of friendliness, a sense of family, a sense of caring, and be an example of “Christian” living.

- What do you wish more laypeople knew about ministry or, specifically, your ministry?

The many lonely days a pastor experiences.

The sacrifices a pastor makes for his congregation.

The many hours a pastor spends in prayer for the church, the city, the

county, the state, the United States and the world.

The many hours a pastor spends studying in preparation for Bible study, Sunday morning's message, etc.

The pastor is also human.

The members of the congregation are all ministers.

## **About Dennis**

- What is the impact of ministry on your family?

My wife is a pastor's daughter and has been a great source of support throughout my ministry. She currently serves as president of the Women's Ministry.

I have two children, and they are both involved in leadership roles within the church I pastor. My daughter is a graduate of Baylor University, and my son—Houston Community College and the University of Houston.

While I have had to—and still do—give many hours to ministry, which has resulted and continues to result in me sacrificing my family on many occasions, my family has always been, and continues to be, in full support of my ministry. Not only have they been supportive and continue to be, they have been and are tremendous encouragers.

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

My favorite Bible verse is [Psalm 27:2](#). Satan is desperately trying to destroy the church, and he has figured out that if he destroys the head, the body would die. Therefore, as a pastor, I know that he is consistently after me. This verse encourages me every day. As Satan shoots his arrows at me daily, I fear not; I worry not, because the verse tells me that when my enemy attacks he will "stumble and fall."

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

My favorite Bible character is David. He is one of the biblical characters who teaches us about dualistic living—we are Christians, but we are still human beings, born in sin and shaped in iniquity. He also encourages us to realize that when we sin, we can go to the Father and ask for forgiveness. David struggled greatly throughout his life. However, he always seemed to recognize his sin and continuously called on the Lord for help.