

# **Grant Byrd: Thirty-eight years in youth ministry and counting**

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Grant Byrd has been a youth minister since 1981 and has served [First Baptist Church in McKinney](#) since 1991. 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?**

While in college and seminary, I served churches in Burleson, Throckmorton and Mount Pleasant, Texas, and Greenwood, La. I served for five years at Second Baptist Church in Baytown. I was the youth pastor in all of these and also led music in a few of them.

### **Where did you grow up?**

Port Neches, Texas, and First Baptist Church there.

### **How did you come to faith in Christ?**

I grew up going to church with my parents, who loved and lived their lives for God, but at the age of 8, I understood I was lost with no hope for heaven and gave my life over to Jesus Christ.

### **Where were you educated, and what degrees did you**

## **receive?**

I attended Texas A&M University for a year and a half, then transferred to East Texas Baptist University, where I graduated in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science degree with a double major in business and religion.

I earned my Master of Arts degree in Religious Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1986.

I completed my Doctorate degree in Educational Ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with an emphasis on leadership in 2003.

## **Ministry life**

### **Why do you feel called into ministry?**

I was called to ministry when I was 15 years old but didn't really answer that call until I was at Texas A&M and realized God wasn't joking and wanted me to be in ministry. I transferred to ETBU and have had peace since then in that calling to be an equipper. I love talking to students about their calling to ministry now.

### **What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?**

My favorite aspect has to be seeing a student leading a friend to a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the best when they understand God calls them to be his disciples who disciple others.

### **What one aspect of ministry gives you the greatest joy?**

I love going on mission trips because it is like a "microwave of learning" for students—and adults—when they have to rely on God to lead and direct

them.

### **What one aspect of ministry would you like to change?**

One aspect of ministry I would like to change is students being addicted to their phones and social media, which draws them away from real relationships and conversations.

### **How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?**

I thought I knew what I was doing back when I started in youth ministry. Now I know I don't know what I'm doing.

### **How do you expect ministry to change in the next 10 to 20 years?**

I think students desire relationships so much they will be drawn to the church and community, but the concerns youth pastors must face now, with the issues secular culture throws at us, will cause a return to the basics of a relationship with Jesus.

### **If you could launch any new ministry—individually, through your congregation or through another organization—what would it be? Why?**

Either a ministry with students called to ministry or a ministry that gets students on the mission field. I think there is a great need for high school students to get training in “ministry calling” before college or seminary. I also would like to give every student an opportunity to serve on mission in a poverty-stricken community.

### **Name the three most significant challenges and/or**

## **influences facing your ministry.**

Social media influence on teens, LGBTQ issues, “busyness” of teens.

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

Youth ministry is vital to teens as they develop their foundation for the life of a disciple of Jesus.

## **About Grant**

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

My mentors were my parents, Zack and Cookie Byrd, who loved God and modeled what it looks like to follow Jesus.

Wilton “Tony” Anthony, Buddy Fortenberry, Doug Fields, Stan Blossom and Jack Haye have mentored me along the way and deeply influenced my life.

### **What did you learn on the job you wish you learned in seminary?**

Just the day-to-day duties and requirements of a minister were things seminary didn’t really teach me. I learned so much in seminary, but to start out in a pastor role was something I was barely equipped to do until I got more experience.

### **What is the impact of ministry on your family?**

Ministry has been tough on my family, but they have been gracious to me and have been a super blessing to me as I led both my kids as their youth pastor.

My wife has been amazing as a minister's wife. She has helped so many as she counseled them and loved them to live for Jesus.

My son, Keegan Byrd, is serving as the minister of music at First Baptist Church in Van Alstyne.

My daughter, Darby Byrd, is studying ministry at Ouachita Baptist University.

One of my biggest concerns as a dad was that my kids might dislike the church because we were there so much, but God was good to allow them to fall in love with Jesus and the church at an early age.

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

Mark Batterson has a lot of books I love, but *In a Pit With a Lion on a Snowy Day* is my favorite.

Doug Fields has many books that are helpful, but *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry* is my favorite.

Andy Stanley, Jim Burns, Duffy Robbins and John Grisham are also are favorite authors of mine.

### **What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?**

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which he prepared in advance for us to do." God has a great plan for us. He made us and then laid out a great life plan for us to choose to follow.

### **Who is your favorite Bible character, other than Jesus?**

## **Why?**

A little-known guy named Shamgar in Judges 3:31 did what he could with what he had where he was. What a great message for us today!

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

I really do believe this is the Dallas Cowboys' year to win it all.

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

I wish I would have written down more of my first learning experiences in student ministry so I could pass them along to younger ministers.

## **What are you excited about as you enter your 39th year in ministry?**

I love working with teens and equipping them to lead their friends to Jesus and then disciple them; so, I look forward to discipling a small group this year.

I also am excited about being an adjunct professor of student ministry at Dallas Baptist University. This is a new adventure for me to teach in a university setting, and I am really excited about it.