

Rev. Dr. Jamie Russell: Pastor and college minister at the cutting edge in Houston

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Rev. Dr. Jamie Russell has been the pastor of [Nehemiah Community Church](#) in Houston since August 2009 and the director of the [Baptist Student Ministry](#) at Texas Southern University since 2008. 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 served at Sugar Creek Baptist Church as a children's Sunday school teacher and men's Bible study teacher.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Long Beach and Carson, Calif.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I grew up in a secular single parent family. In 1990, I left Los Angeles to attend Xavier University in New Orleans, La. During the time there, I was introduced to religion. I participated in Transcendental Meditation, various forms of pan-African religion, Rastafarianism, Freemasonry and Christian

religious services.

It wasn't until after I graduated and moved to Houston and began to attend church with my wife that I was regenerated. I came to faith on July 18, 2004, in my garage while reading Psalm 32. It was at this time I was convicted of my sin and trusted Christ as my Lord and Savior. From that point on, I have been on fire for the Lord. It truly has been a blessing.

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

- Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Xavier University of Louisiana
- Master of Arts degree in Christian education and Doctor of Ministry from Jacksonville Baptist Theological Seminary

About ministry

Why do you feel called into campus ministry?

I believe the young people of today will shape the future of Christianity in this nation and abroad. I want to be able to participate in the spiritual development of the students God gives me the privilege to disciple.

What is your favorite aspect of campus ministry? Why?

Our weekly free lunches and Bible discussions. I like this because we never know what to expect or who we will meet. It's a prime opportunity to have discussions with those who are believers and call them into deeper relationship with Christ, as well as those who don't know Christ. Being bivocational, it really keeps me on the cutting edge of ministry.

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

Seeing students begin to take personal ownership of their relationship with God and move to the point of discipling others.

What would you like more people to know about campus ministry?

The great need and importance of student ministry and how we can make ministry to college students on college campuses a greater priority for the church. We don't need to have the attitude that we raise them, train them and then send them to college without a safeguard in place.

What priorities or goals guide your ministry?

The priorities that guide our ministry are evangelism, discipleship, missions, church life and leadership. Our goal is to produce students who can demonstrate these realities in their lives, as well as teach and train others.

What is the most exciting or joyful thing that has happened in your ministry?

The most joyful thing that has happened in the ministry is students getting saved and leading others into a relationship with Jesus. One young lady comes to mind. She came to Texas Southern University not knowing who Christ was, and in the process of ministry and mission trips, she was saved. From there, she became a campus minister and worked in establishing small groups, outreaches and Bible studies for the students on campus. This has been over six years ago, and she is still serving faithfully in her local church.

What is the most heartbreaking thing that has happened in your ministry?

The situation that broke my heart was when I found out a young man who attended Bible studies regularly was facing charges of shooting and killing another young man on campus. I couldn't believe the campus violence that took place and to say it was a young man from Bible studies.

When I visited him in jail, he stated he did have a gun but didn't shoot the young man. I had prayed with, spoke with, had discussions with this young man, and to think that he might be spending life in jail was more than I could handle at the time.

Based upon what you have observed from campus ministry, what do you think about the future of our country and/or world?

Based on what I have experienced, campus ministry slowly is becoming a thing of the past. I have seen and experienced a steady decline of young people who desire to get or stay connected to biblical things. Those who do come to college from Christian households or backgrounds have little to no understanding of the foundational tenants of the faith. This is discouraging, to say the least, but it does provide teachable opportunities to the leaders of tomorrow.

How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?

My perspective on ministry has changed mostly by recognizing the need to build a solid foundation of faith. I once took it for granted that most students understood or knew the basics of what it meant to be saved. Over my 10 years in ministry, I have been proven wrong. So, the goal is to serve as much milk as possible in order to create a sure foundation and slowly move to meat for those who desire to move on.

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

1. Lack of desire for godly things.
2. The decline of religious tolerance.
3. Moral relativism.

What key opportunities will campus ministry undertake in the next 10 years?

In the Houston region, we are looking to reach out to the local community colleges with the goal of establishing campus ministries. Additionally, to get more boots on the ground by way of more campus ministers who will help serve and lead students into spiritual relationships and growth.

What key issues face college or university campuses today?

The key issues facing campuses today are homosexual rights, suicide, abortion, drug usage, respect for authority and identity crisis.

About Dr. Russell

What is the impact of your ministry on your family?

It has given me a greater sense of the need for discipleship among my own children.

Name some of your favorite non-biblical books or authors and explain why.

C.S. Lewis is one of my favorite authors because I enjoy how his creativity in writing about spiritual matters helps me see my greater need for obedience and love for Christ. *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great*

Divorce are two of my most favorite.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Ephesians 2:8-9. This is my favorite passage of Scripture because it summarizes how salvation becomes a reality in the life of a believer. By grace through faith, man is saved, and we have no reason to boast in our own merit.

Other than Jesus, who is your favorite Bible character? Why?

Moses, because he knew in his own strength, he was not able to accomplish the task God called him to but still was willing to be used. I feel like that many days, but God is faithful. He gives me strength, and he also sends help to carry out the ministry he called me to.