

# Jeff Kennon: Campus ministry engages great diversity

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Jeff Kennon has been the director of the [Baptist Student Ministry at Texas Tech University](#) in Lubbock since 2007. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on collegiate 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?**

Before coming to Tech, I was the director of the Baptist Student Ministry at Sam Houston State University. Previous to that, I was on church staff at First Baptist Church in Henderson, Texas, and Second Baptist Church in Corpus Christi as youth minister.

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

Cleburne, Texas

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

I started following Christ when I was around 12 years old or so. I was at a children's camp at Latham Springs Baptist Encampment. I grew up in church and knew about Jesus, but at that camp, I began to get serious—as serious as a 12-year-old can be—about what it means not just to know about Jesus, but to follow him.

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

I have a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas Tech and a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

## **About campus ministry**

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

Sometimes, I tell people I stumbled into campus ministry. When I was serving at First Baptist Church in Henderson, I began asking around about the possibility of serving on a college campus. I was involved in the Baptist Student Union while at Tech; so, I knew the dynamics of Baptist student ministry and also knew it had changed.

Eventually, my asking questions led me to an opportunity to apply for the BSM director position at Sam Houston State University. The rest is history.

I now have been involved in campus ministry for 17 years and can say my desire to serve on a campus has stretched me further in regards to ministry and leadership than I ever imagined. At this moment, I can't see myself being anywhere other than on a college campus.

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

My favorite aspect of campus ministry is the diversity of it. When I say "diversity," I'm not talking about just the various aspects of the ministry. I'm talking about the diversity of students.

We always say in Lubbock that the world has come to Texas Tech. There are not many places where you can meet a student from Dallas who is eager to grow in their relationship with God and on the same day meet a

student from South Asia who has never owned a Bible. It's a great place to do ministry.

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

One of the greatest things in working with students is in seeing them grasp what it means to follow Jesus in his mission for the world. I never tire of hearing students say: "I started praying for this friend of mine, and the other day, we began talking about Jesus. He wants to know more. I've never done anything like this before. It's awesome!"

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

One thing concerning campus ministry is that it is exponential. In other words, when you impact a student and they graduate, they continue to make a difference in the community and church in which they live. I guess you could say we are raising up missionaries who will serve the world in which they live. This is true especially for our international students.

## **What priorities or goals guide your ministry?**

The one thing that has guided me personally and has overflowed into my ministry is an understanding of a "theology of the cross." I've come to understand being a Christ-follower involves the cross, which means we meet people at their deepest hurts and needs as we offer sacrificial love.

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

One thing I continue to think about is the international student who, when he became a believer, began sharing the gospel with others. He currently is reading the Bible with other internationals who are not yet Christ-

followers.

## **Based upon what you have observed from campus ministry, what do you think about the future of the church?**

I'm excited! I know that may sound a bit strange since we always hear so much about how we are not reaching millennials, but when I consider the students I work with and observe their heart for the mission of God in the world, I know God is working. Will doing church look differently? Most likely. But the message of the gospel will continue to spread.

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

I think when I first started ministry, I was so concerned with the programs and numbers, I missed out on "being" with people. It's not that programs don't matter, but it is disciples who make disciples. I realize that "hanging out" with others is vital ministry.

## **What key issues face college or university campuses today?**

I think one thing that is going to continue to have an impact on college campuses and ministries involves mental health. Both anxiety and depression, according to various researchers, continue to be on the rise in young people. Colleges and universities are going to have to continue to get better at dealing with these issues.

## **About Jeff**

**Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they**

## **influence you?**

One of the greatest influencers on my life was my grandfather. He loved people, and as a result, he impacted everyone he came into contact with. He was “Jesus with skin on” for me.

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

Philippians 2:5-11. The depth of this passage in regards to who our God is, and therefore what it means to be like him, is immeasurable. I find myself comforted, challenged and in awe every time I read these verses.