

Jeff Williams: It's 'all about relationships'

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Jeff Williams has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Denton since August 1997—more than 19 years. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on 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?*

Pastor, First Baptist Church in Pleasanton, Texas

Pastor, Grace Baptist Church in China Spring, Texas

Minister to college and singles, Hillcrest Baptist Church in Dallas

- *Where did you grow up?*

I grew up in DeSoto, Texas

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

I came to know Christ as an 8-year-old boy. Paul, my neighbor and friend, invited me to a revival meeting on a Friday night at Crutchfield Heights Baptist Church in Sherman. They were having a pancake supper, and I wanted to go eat pancakes. That night, I accepted Christ as my Savior.

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

Baylor University—bachelor of arts

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary—master of divinity, doctor of ministry

Ministry/church

- *Why do you feel called into ministry?*

As a high school student, I prayed and asked God to show me what he wanted me to do in life. It was the summer before that senior year that I felt God calling me to ministry. After 27 years of being a pastor, I can't imagine doing anything else.

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

Seeing people come to know Jesus and then growing in that faith and becoming devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

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

Relationships. Life is all about relationships, and the church gives me the opportunity to develop and grow them, especially having been here for over 19 years. I was watching a high school football game recently. One of the players is a member of my church. Watching the game, I remembered I had done his parents' wedding, and now their child was a junior in high school.

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

My ministry perspective has changed in that I now realize it's not all about me and what I think is best. Ministry is to be done together with other believers in Christ. We are all in this together, and just because I have the title of pastor doesn't mean I'm the only one with good ideas and the only one who can be a part of leading the church.

About Jeff

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

My mentors are *Dickson Rial*, who was my pastor from my high school years until I became a pastor. He taught me how to love people and to preach the Bible. Dr. *Paul Stripling* was my doctor of ministry supervisor and has remained a great mentor. *Paul Powell* and *David Dykes* have been mentors from a distance. Neither probably realized the influence they had on me and my ministry.

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

How to be a leader. Seminary didn't teach me to lead a church—business meetings, committee meetings, dealing with difficult people, etc. I'm thankful for my seminary degrees, but the practical, day-to-day aspects of being a pastor were not taught when I was in seminary.

- *What has been the impact of ministry on your marriage and family?*

I'm thankful to say the ministry has had a positive impact on my wife and two children. All three of the churches I have served have allowed me to be a husband and father first and the pastor of the church second.

I learned from examples, some positive and some negative, that you have to put your family first. I have shared with all three churches that my priorities are: (1) my relationship with Jesus Christ, (2) my family and (3) being pastor of the church. I believe I have been able to keep those priorities in line 98 percent of the time.

- *Name some of your favorite books (other than the Bible) or authors, and explain why.*

Point Man by Steve Farrar. I believe it is the best book ever written for men on how to be a good husband and father.

Anything written by Max Lucado.

Chuck Swindoll. His series on characters of the Bible is great.

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

Luke 1:37—“Nothing is impossible with God.” That has been my life verse for 27 years as a pastor. When I think I can’t do something or the church can’t do something, I just remember that nothing is impossible with God.

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