

# Larry McGraw: A dry sense of humor and a deep love for students

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Larry McGraw is associate dean and professor of Bible in the [Logsdon School of Theology](#) at [Hardin-Simmons University](#) in Abilene, Texas, having served HSU for 38 years. He is a member of First Baptist Church in Abilene.

From deep in the heart of one Texan—known for his dry sense of humor, McGraw shares his background and thoughts on Christian higher education. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated leader to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

## Background

### Where else have you served, and what were your positions there?

I was an adjunct professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Tarrant County Junior College. I also worked for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth.

### Where did you grow up?

Although you could find many to say I have not (grown up), I was born in Wichita Falls and lived there until about the age of 12. Junior high and high school years, I matriculated in Oklahoma City (my foreign mission work).

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

My grandmother in Wichita Falls modeled the love of Christ to me. When I moved to Oklahoma City, my family and the believers at Village Baptist Church were instrumental in preparing me for my conversion during my early teens.

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

- High school graduation at John Marshall in Oklahoma City (1970)
- Bachelor's degree in religion from Oklahoma Baptist University (1974)
- Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1978)
- Ph.D. in New Testament (minors in Old Testament and Biblical backgrounds) from Southwestern Seminary (1983)

## **About education**

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

From the earliest days of my vocational ministerial development, I perceived my call to be helping people grow in their understanding and knowledge of the Bible.

### **How does being a Christian influence your work in education?**

It is as natural as breathing. My relationship with the Lord has its fullest joy in the classroom—at Hardin-Simmons University or at church.

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

Students, students, students! Watching individuals grow in a relationship

with God and his word never ceases to touch me.

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

Did I mention the students? Some of them even turn out able to be editors of state Baptist newspapers.

## **What is your favorite class to teach? Why?**

That question is akin to asking which of your children you prefer.

The beginning survey classes in Old and New Testament are fulfilling because all levels and backgrounds of students are in the same room and learning on different levels.

Upper-level Bible courses and church history courses for students majoring and preparing for ministry also are fulfilling as more depth can be developed.

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

The unyielding weight of assessment of courses, programs and faculties.

## **How has your place in education or your perspective on education changed?**

As a professor, my perspective over almost four decades has moved from delivering a certain body of content to be more aware of what the students truly need to impact their lives, families and vocations.

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

Sadly, I think there will be more emphasis and energy given to delivering

the educational product through online courses and degrees.

### **Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing education.**

Money, online educational experiences and a lack of desire on the part of some students.

### **What do you wish more people knew about education?**

That students have not truly learned anything until they can incorporate it into their lives and are able to teach it to others.

## **About Baptists**

### **Why are you Baptist?**

Texas Baptist all the way. Is there anything else?

### **What are the key issues facing Baptists—denominationally and/or congregationally?**

Denominationally, avoid being connected with any specific political philosophies.

Congregationally, the ability to interact redemptively—not judgmentally—with its local community.

### **What would you change about the Baptist denomination—state, nation or local?**

Re-emphasize the importance of the separation of church and state. God's kingdom supersedes all human empires.

# About Larry

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

- My humor came from my dad, Ray McGraw.
- My teaching style was influenced by a seminary professor, Dr. William Hendricks.
- My university administrative approaches were influenced by my first dean, Dr. H.K. Neely Jr.

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

That students always will remember the professor longer than they will remember what was taught.

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

My wife taught music in elementary schools for her career. Each of my two sons completed Masters degrees as they developed their vocations.

## **How important is your wife to you?**

Sandy, my lovely bride of almost 46 years, is all that ... and more.

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

Most of my non-biblical reading is in the areas of non-fiction material—histories and even sports-related material.

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

Now, we are back to favorite courses and kids questions. One from the Old

Testament is Isaiah 12:2, because it speaks about not being afraid since the Lord is our strength. One from the New Testament is Matthew 5:16, since it shows a life lived well will cause others to glorify God.

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

Philemon, since he was known by Paul and others as being a “refresher” (vv. 7, 20) to those around him.

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

I am not good at planning things.

**If you could get one “do over” in education, what would it be, and why?**

I would have liked to have gotten more serious about my education earlier than in my junior year of college.