

Paul Sadler: Being a channel of God's grace to all people

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Paul Sadler has been the director of church and denominational relations at [Wayland Baptist University](#) since 2016. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on leadership among Texas Baptists. 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 in ministry, and what were your positions there?

- Pastor of Bosqueville Baptist, Waco, 1972 to 1977
- Pastor of Meadowbrook Baptist, Waco, 1977 to 1990
- Faculty in religion at Wayland for 17 years, dean of the School of Religion at Wayland for 9 years

Where did you grow up?

I lived Until 10 yrs old in Deer Park, a suburb of Houston, until I was 10 years old and then moved to Groesbeck, where I call home.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I came to faith in Christ primarily through the influence and teaching of my mother but also through faithful Sunday school teachers.

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

- Baylor University, bachelor of arts in religion, 1972
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, master of divinity, 1977
- Baylor University, doctor of philosophy, 1991

Ministry life

Why do you feel called into ministry?

Looking back, I see God at work in so many experiences shaping my life. When I was 17 years old, I began to hear God speaking through his Spirit about his purpose for my life. Through prayer, Scripture and the counsel of godly people, that call was clarified.

What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?

- As a pastor, the dynamic of preaching to a congregation I knew and loved.
- As a professor, watching growth and discovery in my students.

What one aspect of ministry gives you the greatest joy?

Building mutual relationships of love and trust.

About Baptists

What are the key issues facing

Baptists—denominationally and/or congregationally?

Baptists face a crisis of identity. We have already gone too far down the road of identifying ourselves by agendas—theological, political, cultural and hot-button social issues. These agendas have led us away from being channels of God's grace to any and all people.

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

We need to recover an identity that is based on historic Baptist principles and emphases, and do so as we embrace a global Baptist Christianity illustrated in an organization like the Baptist World Alliance.

About Paul

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

My mother was the godliest woman and the finest of all Christians I have ever known. My father died when I was 6 years old, and she was a tower of faith and fortitude.

At Baylor, Ray Summers encouraged me to consider the ministry of college teaching. Glenn Hilburn modeled how a faculty member could be a true churchman, a scholar serving congregations. Dan McGee taught me to appreciate the complexity of moral, ethical issues and to think critically about them. They are all now with the Lord, but their legacy lives on in many lives.

When I was a student minister, Paul Comer at Alice Avenue Baptist (now Park Lake Drive Baptist) in Waco showed me how to be a gracious, caring pastor. Dick Maples at First Baptist Bryan took an interest in me as a young pastor and helped me learn pastoral leadership.

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

Building relationships of trust that enable you to be an effective gospel minister and church leader is more important than the more technical aspects of ministry.

What is the impact of ministry on your family?

Throughout my pastoral ministry my family made it possible for me to do what I did. My wife was really a co-pastor whose insight and instincts for ministry often exceeded my own training and skill. My children adjusted without almost any complaint to the different schedules and interruptions that are inherent in a pastor's week. We tried hard to let our children not be defined by being the PKs.

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

Two older books from my student days still influence me on how we live as Christians in a hostile world: John Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* and Stanley Haurwas' *Resident Aliens*. A more recent book that spoke to me about being a genuine Christian disciple is N. T. Wright's *After You Believe*.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

1 John 4:7-21—The most important message of the Bible is simply this: "God loves us, and that love is demonstrated in Jesus." Love is central and necessary in the Christian life.

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

Mary, mother of Jesus. Whatever God wills for me, let it happen just as he wants. My life is in his hands come what may.