

Rebekah Crowe: Learn from history. Listen to our stories.

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Rebekah Crowe is an associate professor of history and the program coordinator for the Master of History degree at [Wayland Baptist University](#), where she has served for seven years. She is also the faculty sponsor for the Texas Alpha Eta chapter of the Alpha Chi National College Honor Society. Crowe is a member of First Baptist Church in Plainview. From deep in the heart of one Texan, she shares her 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 did you grow up?

I grew up in northeastern Colorado, in a small farming and ranching community called Wiggins. At the time of my high school graduation, the population was about 800.

My dad is a semi-retired Southern Baptist pastor, and my mom taught elementary school until her retirement.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

As a PK (pastor's kid), the Bible, God, Jesus, etc. were common topics of conversation, and daily faith was demonstrated by both of my parents.

When I was about 7 years old, there was a string of Sunday mornings in which my dad's sermons seemed to be aimed straight at me, which I now

know was the power of conviction. Over the next few weeks, my dad and I had several conversations about how and what I was feeling.

One evening, my dad took me into the bathroom, the only quiet place in a small parsonage populated by a large, boisterous family and knelt with me beside the commode. I asked Jesus to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior.

This decision was announced in church the next Sunday, and I was baptized shortly after. I immediately went into a discipleship program for children and have continued to work on my relationship with Christ since then.

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

After graduating from Wiggins High School in 1998, I came to Wayland and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history in 2002. I graduated with a Master of Arts degree in U.S. history from Baylor in 2004 and a Ph.D. in U.S. history from TCU in 2013.

About education

Why do you feel called into education?

I am passionate about all the information rattling around in my head and want to share it with anyone and everyone I meet. God has given me an outlet to do that so I'm not just grabbing strangers on the street to talk history.

I feel called especially to college education because most of my students are at such a formative age. They are beginning this journey called adulthood. Some of them are well-prepared for this step. Others think they are, but aren't. Others very clearly understand they need mentorship.

How does being a Christian influence your work in education?

I really don't care if they remember any specific information from my classes. I want them to feel like they really are seen by another human who wants to see them succeed academically, personally and professionally.

So many people slip through the cracks these days, thinking no one even realizes they are alive. Through the relationships I have the honor to develop with my students, I hope they can believe in the possibility of a God who knows them personally and that they are never alone, despite what their physical circumstances might tell them.

Additionally, I think history teaches us all humans need Jesus. Without him, we tend to treat each other really badly. I have the opportunity to explore humanity and the decisions individuals and groups make, attempting to point out there are very few "good guys" or "bad guys," just people like us.

What is your favorite aspect of education? Why?

I love it when I can tie a certain aspect of history to a particular person's life and/or experience.

Everyone has a story and it delights my soul when students realize they are the product of the things we are discussing, and their ancestors survived to give them the opportunities they now have.

What one aspect of education gives you the greatest joy?

Seeing my students "grow up." On the Plainview campus, I primarily teach the freshman U.S. history survey. Often, I don't really get a chance to interact with my students until I see them at graduation. I always am so proud to stand with my students and witness the completion of their

degrees, as well as getting to meet their spouses, parents, children, etc.

What is your favorite class to teach? Why?

All of them. In all seriousness, I had a student once tell me he couldn't tell which time period or topic was my favorite because I am so high energy about all of them. That is one of the highest compliments I've ever received.

What one aspect of education would you like to change?

I would change this new attitude of "hurry up, and get done." Shorten the terms; pack in concurrent courses in high school; graduate early by double-counting classes or taking more hours.

I think a college education is about so much more than what you learn in the classroom. Students would be served better by taking time really to absorb all of the things they are learning and understanding how to be part of society.

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

I am concerned a college education no longer seems like a worthy investment for many people. We as educators must meet that challenge by explaining the importance of higher education.

Liberal arts are an especially hard sell right now. Another challenge is finding the balance between incorporating technological advances while still acknowledging traditional methods. Finally, we must meet the challenge of dealing with the rising mental health crisis among college students. I am floored every semester by the levels of anxiety and depression present in my classrooms.

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

Oh, the paperwork! There is so much data that must be collected and analyzed in an academic setting. I now know it serves a valuable purpose, but I was not prepared for how much time and thought went into filling in forms.

What is the impact of education on your family?

Education is very important to both of my parents, who were both first-generation college students. I feel like I have taken the next step in that legacy by earning a terminal degree.

My son loves living near a college campus and just assumes he, too, will earn a few degrees in his lifetime.

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

I would have more confidence in myself and my abilities.

About Baptists

Why are you Baptist?

I am a firm believer in the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of the believer. No entity stands between me and my relationship with Christ.

We should live and serve out of a sense of gratitude for Christ’s salvation through grace alone, not to earn any sort of special spot.

The function of the local church is to provide a space for corporate worship, service and missionary work. I believe the Cooperative Program,

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and other similar mission organizations are some of the most efficient ways to spread the gospel around the world.

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

The role of women within the church is a key issue right now. Baptist also need to continue discussing issues related to sexual abuse. I also think honest and constructive conversations regarding Southern Baptist history are important to continue, including but not limited to slavery, anti-Catholic sentiment and minority populations and immigration.

About Rebekah

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

I have been blessed to have several mentors in my life.

My dad, Dean Shepard, introduced me to history and a love of reading. His thoughtful care for people and equal treatment of those around him continue to inspire me.

One of the most influential is Estelle Owens. She was my professor and boss while I studied at Wayland. I followed her lead in going to graduate school at Baylor and was delighted to come back and work for her as faculty. She showed me what it is to be a caring but strict professor and how to be a woman in academia.

Another academic mentor is Rebecca Sharpless who I had the honor of sitting under at Baylor and TCU. She demonstrates how to fight for what you know is right and cheer others on when they are failing to believe in themselves. She trained me in oral history, teaching me everyone has a

story worth telling, and there is nothing more respectful of their humanity than listening—really listening—to what they have to say.

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

The fiction authors I read over and over are Louisa May Alcott—*Little Women*—and L. M. Montgomery—*Anne of Green Gables*. They have female protagonists, and they take place in the past. I very rarely read fiction that takes place in the present day.

My non-fiction collection is much more eclectic, but I gravitate towards biography and oral history interviews.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Due to the excellent example set by my parents, Deuteronomy 6:20 always has been very meaningful to me. Now that I am a parent, I see it in a new light. That great responsibility has been placed on me.

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

All of the unnamed women spread throughout the Bible fascinate me. We only get a brief glimpse into their lives and situations, and I am left wanting to know so much more.

The one I think about most is the woman with the issue of blood. My husband has hemophilia, and his mother did as well. Through this connection to the bleeding disorders community, I have come to have so much respect for the pain and suffering women endure with this particular chronic illness. While I cannot be sure this is what affected the woman in the biblical story, I do know she was so brave and had so much faith, overcoming social and cultural mores, her own isolation and a debilitating

disease to get to Jesus. She inspires me to let nothing stand in my way to be in his presence.

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

I have over 200 historic paper dolls in notebooks. They all are cut out and arranged in plastic sleeves.