

Voices: A Valentine story of ministry and marriage

February 13, 2019

Toward the end of the summer after my freshman year at Howard Payne University, I received a letter from my friend Richard Ivy telling me he had accepted the pastorate of London Baptist Church, a small church between Junction and Mason.

Richard was excited because he was going to be doing what he felt God called him to do. He wanted to share this news with me because we had talked about doing God's will in our lives.

When I got back to school, he had some stories to tell. The first week he was at London, the piano player resigned. So, he filled in the gap and played. The next week the song leader told him he was going to move. Now, Richard had a problem because he didn't think he could play the piano, lead the music *and* preach.

Richard asked me if I might be willing to go one Sunday to help him out on the piano. I accepted the challenge.

At this point, there were no romantic interests on my part.

However, I found out later Richard told his roommate the year before that he was going to marry me after he spotted me in the choir at First Baptist Church in Brownwood.

Friendship grew through ministering

together

We met at breakfast on Sunday morning and left for London soon afterward.

We enjoyed our friendship on the way to and from London. Richard led the music, and I played the piano for the congregation. Then, he played while I sang a special. Afterward, he preached.

Following the morning service, we were invited to dinner with a family and spent the afternoon with them before going back for the evening service.

We both enjoyed the day, and it became a regular Sunday opportunity for service and friendship.

After several months of friendship and both of us enjoying being involved in the Lord's work, our friendship grew into a romantic relationship.

We began dating in the fall of my sophomore year at Howard Payne. We continued to serve together at Richard's church in London every Sunday. Our love together grew stronger.

And it kept growing over the year.

Ministering together grew into marriage

One Sunday evening in March, Richard was acting very serious and wanted to talk to me before we drove back to Brownwood.

We were sitting on the couch in the parsonage, and Richard surprised me by asking me to marry him.

I probably knew by then this was going to happen, and I had an idea how I wanted to answer him taken from the way my grandmother—Mother Leta—answered Daddy Gray many years before.

When Daddy Gray proposed to Mother Leta, she wrote him a note and put it in the mail. In her note, she quoted Ruth 1:16-17.

I answered using that same Scripture passage—even though I had to read it to him from my Bible, about which Richard always kidded me.

“Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither though goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”

Richard and I were married on December 28, 1965.

Our marriage lasted over 50 years with four children and a lifetime of happiness and service to churches across Texas.

Our love and service were lived out simply but strongly in God’s will for our lives.

With Richard’s sweet spirit and great sense of humor and the Lord’s help, we had a fulfilling and joyful marriage without any strife between the two of us.

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