

# Voices: When and how God called me to preach

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As a teenager, I knew God was calling me to be in his service, which for women in those days meant being a missionary or marrying someone in ministry.

In college, I felt God's call again. I went back to my dorm and wrote in the back of my little New Testament Bible: "This day, I have made a resolution in my heart. I cannot turn back. I will not turn back."

I still had no clear idea of where this might lead.

Later, I married and had a baby. Several years later, I was divorced. This was absolutely soul crushing in ways I can't begin to describe. I truly felt divorce was wrong and was made to believe it was an unpardonable sin. Divorce is very public. So, there was no hiding what had happened in my life.

It would be easier not to mention this season of my life. But God continues to remind me I not only am saved by his grace, but I am called to serve by his grace. He has redeemed my life in many ways.

The enemy—Satan—always will try to convince you there is something in your life that will keep you from serving God.

Our culture continues to focus on its definitions of success, achievement and earthly rewards. It can be difficult to stay on God's path and to remember God's call does not go away.

# God's call reaffirmed

I was living in the Houston area. When my daughter was 4 years old, we moved to Tyler. I met my current husband at church. We were married there and later had a baby girl. We continued to be faithful in church.

One Wednesday night, a college professor presented a paper titled "The Role of Women in the Church." I was not very interested, but I began to listen as he gave his presentation.

Suddenly, God spoke to me very clearly. I don't mean I heard his voice, but I knew in my heart he was speaking to me. It was so real to me that I looked around to see if others could tell.

God said: "I meant it before, and I still mean it today. I want you to preach."

Immediately, I knew God was reminding me of college when I had written in my little Bible, "I will not turn back." The connection to that long-ago church service was clear to me.

But that's where the clarity seemed to stop.

As a woman in a Baptist church, the path to preach was not obvious. In fact, it often was blocked.

My husband Eddie was very supportive and eager to help me follow God's call. One day, he drove a van of our church members to tour Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University. He came home with an application for me, believing this should be my next step.

I applied and was accepted in 2005. I adjusted my job to be able to work three days a week, and we traveled to Waco the other two days. It did not take long for this to be exhausting.

We made the decision to move to Waco, but the logistics for this were daunting. The biggest challenge was to sell our house.

We decided to “set out a fleece” (Judges 6). We provided a test for God to see if this truly was what he wanted us to do. If our house sold, we would know we were supposed to move. If it did not sell, we would have to find another path.

Houses were not selling well in Tyler during that time. Our house sold the same day we put the realtor’s sign in the yard. God reinforced my call to preach and confirmed our moving to Waco.

## **Following God’s call**

Truett Seminary was a glorious time in my life. I learned so much about the Bible, ministry and preaching, and we made some very dear friends.

School was an easy path; following the call to preach was not. The obstacles were intimidating. I was a woman, divorced and a Baptist, and now I was 52 years old. By my last semester of seminary, I was very discouraged.

I interviewed for several ministry positions, but they all seemed to move me farther from God’s call to preach. I worked at two different area churches as a music minister or Bible teacher, but I wasn’t allowed to preach. I could give a Bible study, but not from the pulpit.

Finally, I prayed: “God, I believe you created everything in the universe. I believe you called me to preach and made a path for me to attend Truett. I’m going to stop ‘networking’ and trying to make things happen. If this is truly what you want me to do, you will have to do it. Amen.”

I immediately was filled with “the peace that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

A few weeks later, I received a call from the chair of the pastor search committee at Meadow Oaks Baptist Church in Temple. He asked if I still was interested in applying for the position of pastor. Yes, I was, and we began that process.

I graduated from Truett in May 2008, and in September of that year, Meadow Oaks called me to be their pastor. I was their pastor for 12 years until I retired in 2021.

I still love to preach and teach God's word. My childhood memory verse is still true: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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