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Called

GOD'S GRACE MADE ME RICH IN WORK, MARRIAGE,
SALVATION, SERVICE, AND A SURPRISING CALL TO MINISTRY.

About the Author

Growing up on the farm taught me great lessons in work and work ethics. It also taught me that there is no task too great to overcome. While these seem like simple ideas, they have served me very well across a span of fifty years of different types of work. In my earliest days waiting to go to college after high school graduation, I worked in a welding shop in Louisville, Kentucky, as an apprentice welder. The money was not bad for that day—\$3.75 an hour—and as a nineteen-year-old, I thought I was making my fortune. Then one night in the small town of Crestwood, I re-met a young blonde lady named Penny; we “went out” when we were

fourteen and fifteen when our parents could take us around, but this meeting, I knew, was different. As it turns out, it was love. We have been married now for over forty-six years. Oh, just so you know that I remember: the date was July 23, 1977.

Her dad was a master mechanic for a large construction company, and they needed a welder for a sight crew. I was hired on at \$9.27 an hour and left the concept of college in the dust. Over the next several years, I began to grow in the construction business, starting as a laborer/welder in 1977 then moving to equipment operator/mechanic. Over time, I was called to serve as a utility operator, which meant I might be doing any part of any craft. This was a very educational time for me in the industry, and while I did not understand it all, this was growing me into leadership positions.

By the early 1980s, I was a foreman running crews, building a reputation, and looking forward to being superintendent of a project. In the middle of this career, I was thirty-one with two young daughters, our work was dependent upon the weather, and my lack of managing our affairs left me with poor credit, interest rates through the roof, and high rent. My father-in-law agreed to help me by cosigning a construction loan for a one-acre tract and house package. I, along with my family, had the entire house finished in five months. When I sat down with Randall, my father-in-law, to settle my obligation to him, his response was a surprise. He said, "If you will take my granddaughters to church, we are even." In my mind, I did not need God, nor did I want the church; it was an easy way, however, to pay my debt.

So, we started attending LaGrange Baptist Church, also known as DeHaven Memorial Baptist Church, and I received much more than I ever imagined. In June 1989, my wife, my oldest daughter, and I were baptized at the same time. Penny was coming from the Methodist church. This set me on an incredible journey. I began to develop a new appetite for the things of God, and the appetite for the things of the world began to diminish. My walk with Christ was sure but often confusing. I loved construction but was plagued with a desire to do more. I even went forward one Sunday morning at the altar call and confessed my desire for vocational ministry, which came as a great shock to my wife and family, considering I had never discussed it with them. You will read more about this later.

Over the next two years, we struggled through the concept of vocational ministry, not understanding what it even looked like. I had not been to college, I had already started a career and a family, and it seemed impossible to go back to school—who would ever hire me? So, I kept working on my construction career (which was doing great, by the way) while serving as a Sunday school teacher, serving on committees, serving as a deacon and as chairman of the deacons, and teaching Bible studies at nursing homes.

This is where the Lord threw us a curve ball. In 1999, Steve Sparrow was a newly elected sheriff and I was looking for a ministry; he was looking to start a chaplain program, and the Lord was at work putting us together. The church ordained me into the gospel ministry, and I was sworn in as a chaplain/reserve deputy and began building a new chaplain-

cy program for the sheriff's office while serving as a project manager over many projects for a large construction company. And I was growing, by God's grace, in my love for God and had an increasing hunger for His Word. With the chaplaincy just getting started, the church invited me to serve part-time as Minister to Senior Adults, and I said yes. Working full-time as project manager, serving as chaplain/reserve deputy for the sheriff's office, and working part-time as Minister to Senior Adults, I quickly began to understand that the Lord had been preparing me for years before this. While I am not sure I understood at the time, the Lord had just enrolled me into the Baptist Seminary School of Hard Knocks. I was in the process of becoming a churchman.

My heart has been encouraged to recall the variety of backgrounds of the disciples: four fishermen, one political sell-out, one political zealot, one over-confident doubter, one betrayer, and, judging from the parables of Jesus, probably several farmers. God prepares us for His call in many ways.

This is My God Story

Looking back, this seems to have been the hinge point in God's plan, because while He was working on me and my family, He was also working on our senior pastor, Dr. Tony Rose. He was at my house one evening and asked me to pray about serving side-by-side together in ministry. He said that our gifts together would be like a well-matched team of horses pulling a wagon. Not too long after this meeting was when the church called me to serve as part-time Minister to Senior Adults, in December 2000. After serving in this capacity for

eight years, the church asked me to transition from part-time to full-time as the Pastor to Christian Care Ministries and Pastoral Care in November 2008. After some unexpected staff changes, I was asked to serve in a new position for the church in October 2009. It combined my role as Pastor to Christian Ministries and Pastoral Care with education and administration and created a new position of Executive Pastor. The minutes read: "On behalf of the Personnel Committee, Mike Wood presented a two-part recommendation. The first was to recommend a new position of Executive Pastor. The second was to recommend Rick Davidson to the position of Executive Pastor. Both recommendations were approved."

All these events were a giant curve ball that neither my wife nor I had expected. For nearly eight years, I had been working full-time in heavy highway construction, serving as chaplain/reserve deputy for the sheriff's office and working part-time at our church. But during that time, my wife and I both recognized that the Lord had removed the love for construction and replaced it with a love to serve Him. So, in 2008, the church officially offered me a full-time position.

After much prayer with my wife and family, we all knew that if we were ever going to be truly happy, it would be in serving the church. So here we were, with me serving as chaplain/reserve deputy and executive pastor/elder at Lagrange Baptist Church. Pastor Tony mentored me for over twenty years as we served together. My experience in the construction industry has been a valuable asset as I continue to serve the Lord and the community.

Over these years, I have been trained as an executive pastor and have served as an associate pastor and church administrator and also as a chaplain/reserve deputy sheriff. I have received training in many areas and have learned to be a crisis counselor and a preacher/teacher of the Word. I am CIT (Critical Incident Team) certified, and I am trained in crisis response through ICISF (International Critical Incident Stress Foundation), PTSD recognition and treatment, QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) Gate Keeper suicide prevention, grief counseling, marriage counseling, and suicide intervention. I can also repair your car, fix your leaking pipes, repair your electrical circuits, build you a new driveway, or build a tunnel under your creek or a bridge over it. I am being trained, even now, by the Lord to love Him, love my brothers and sisters in Christ, and love my neighbor more and more.

This is my God story. It probably wasn't on the top of your reading list, but I believe these details are important for you to know as I share many events that have occurred over the twenty-plus years I have served the church through great times and really difficult times.

My range of gifts is very wide due to growing up on the farm, serving in heavy highway construction, building houses, and doing home repair on the side for extra income. By God's providence, these experiences served as a useful complement to the patient teaching of my pastor. He was a mentor in real time, teaching me what being a biblical churchman should be. What follows is a host of learning experiences that I hope will be helpful to you as you strive to be a godly churchman or a godly person in Christ.

My Growth from New Believer to Churchman

My education as a churchman certainly has taken a different track than most. Like in my career in construction, I learned through the hands-on approach. As an example, I was on a bridge project in northern Kentucky and a man named Max was my state inspector. I took the plans I had been provided and was doing my own survey work that I had learned from watching others. Max was so impressed that he encouraged me to study up and take the Professional Engineer exam. At that time, if you could pass the test, you would be grandfathered in as a PE. So, he began to give me study materials, and even his boss became involved. They made a pet project out of me.

After several months of study and mock tests, I was sent to take the exam. I was very excited to become an engineer, and when I arrived, they informed me that the grandfathering process had just been halted, that to take the exam would now require a bachelor's degree. Well, with a family in tow and a job that consumed my time, I would have to be satisfied with the knowledge I gained rather than the credentials I could acquire.

This is also my story as a churchman. I was invited to come on staff by the church and was surrounded, step-by-step, by theologians like Tom Nettles, Greg Wills, Tony Rose, and Eric Johnson, who were members of our church. I began to learn by listening, reading, and studying. Just imagine the number of staff meetings—after twenty-two years, it would be over 900—with nearly everyone bringing a deeper learn-