

# JEREMY - ASSOCIATE PASTOR

I grew up in a strong Christian home where my parents tried to provide both me and my older brother with a good Christian example as well as a Christian education. When I was eight, I made what I thought was a profession of faith, but lost interest in Christianity altogether as I got older. I became altogether rebellious. I knew the decision that had to be made, but resisted it, knowing that it would necessitate a life and heart change. During my teen years, I can remember spending countless hours thinking about eternity before I went to bed. Every night, I would tell God, "I will get serious about You later, but please don't send me to hell." I was so afraid of hell and eternity without God, but, for some reason, I could not get to the place where I was ready to turn my life over to Him.

When I turned sixteen, I went to church camp and accepted Christ as my Savior while there. Everything in my life changed after I had made my commitment to Christ. For the first time, everything seemed so clear, and all I wanted to do was know Christ more and tell everyone about Him.

As I matured spiritually, I began to sense God leading me into vocational ministry, something I'd never considered, even though my father was an evangelist. I remember praying at the altar at church one night over the counsel that I'd received from my father, youth minister and others. While at the altar, I prayed, "God, I do not know what you have for me, but I know it involves ministry, and today, I am surrendering to Your will for my life." Even though I did not tell anyone about this decision until months later, that night, I said "yes" to God's call on my life.

I began college at Oklahoma Baptist University. It was at OBU that I truly began to develop into the person that God wanted me to be. I had some wonderful mentors during this time, and it was these people that God used to help open my eyes to the path of ministry that lay ahead of me. When I set foot on the campus of OBU, I was determined that I was going to be an evangelist, just like my father. However, God placed in my heart a burning desire for the local church and began to lead me down the path of local church ministry.

I met my wife, Emily, at the end of my freshman year at College. She has been the single most influential person in my life, seeing the good in me and pushing me to constantly pursue excellence. We have been married almost six years and have three children. She is a fantastic wife and mother. I am very proud and thankful to get to spend my time on earth with her as my partner.

After graduation, my wife and I took our first full-time vocational ministry position as youth pastor for four years. During my fourth year of vocational ministry, I truly began feeling God's leadership to work with all ministries of the local church, not just youth ministry. I am now an associate pastor. I know that God is leading me toward the pastorate, but Emily and I, along with our three children, know that we are exactly where God wants us to be right now. I love what I am doing and I am learning much, but I cannot wait to get the opportunity to shepherd and minister to people as their pastor. But, no matter what God has in store for me and my family, it is my prayer that God will always use me for His glory!

I am learning that everything rises and falls on my relationship with Christ. I have learned that no matter how many "good" things I do, or how much "success" I have in ministry, nothing matters more than developing and cultivating my personal relationship with Christ. When I do not walk with God, my personal life, my family life, my ministry life...all parts of my life are affected. However, when I am growing in Christ and daily dying to self, this also affects, in the right way, every single area of my life and ministry. I have learned that I cannot "live for Christ." Instead, I must daily "die to self" and let the living God "live" through me. I can read my Bible, pray, and do "religious" things and still live each day in my own strength. To be effective for God, I must do all things in my life in God's strength.

The best piece of advice I could give to someone who feels that they may be called to vocational ministry is the same as my pastor gave me the day I made my call to vocational ministry public. He said, "If you can do anything else...do it." Vocational ministry is hard and demanding, and if you are not called to it by God, you need to do something else. There have been many times I have wanted to give up, but it is during those times that God reminds me that if I were to do anything else with my life, I would be out of His will.

There are many things in my life I cannot explain and do not understand; but one thing I do know for certain is that God has called me to vocational ministry, and I will spend the rest of my days carrying out His ministry on this earth. Whatever you do, seek God and let Him confirm in your heart what it is you are supposed to do with your life. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him."