

The Testimony of Debra (Debbie) Goulding, November 24, 2017

I am 58 years old and have known Jesus as my savior and Lord since I was around 8 years old. I was blessed by a Godly mother who made it her mission to raise her daughters up in church. I attended North Cleburne Baptist Church from the cradle until I was around 17 years old. It wasn't at this church, though, that I made that declaration for the first time to follow Christ. When I was about 8 I went to a Bible school in the summer with my friend, Rosa. Towards the end of the week, as Bible Schools do, there was a decision service. The pastor asked some point blank questions to us children. If I remember correctly it was something like-"If you die tonight do you want to go be with Jesus in heaven or go to hell?" That was a no brainer for me. I wanted to be with the Jesus I had been learning about for eight years, the Jesus my mother sang about. So, I made that decision, raised my hand, and talked with the pastor. He led those of us who had raised our hand through a prayer of acceptance-asking God to forgive our sins and take charge of our lives. After explaining to my mom what had happened at Bible School I met with our pastor. Soon I found myself being baptized before our church congregation. I think my conversion experience is why I believe so strongly in Bible School and have always made a point to devote a week to Bible School every year of my life.

I continued to learn about Christ as I attended church, especially as I entered the youth group. Our small church was blessed with some amazing youth directors and I took part in mission trips and Bible studies that shaped my life. I prayed to God that I would never stray far from Him. I also prayed fervently as a young teen for my father to become close to God and start attending church. I liked to read the Bible at night after I went to bed during those days, and I remember my father coming in and taking the Bible out of my hands and closing it, then turning off the lights as I groggily went back to sleep. It wasn't until I was grown with children of my own, and sadly after I had stopped praying for my Dad to turn toward Christ, that my prayer was answered for my father. When my mom's mother passed away and my dad saw how the church ministered to my mother for weeks, he decided to try church attendance again. He joined Field Street church in his 60s and became active in helping others there. This brought home to me that our prayers remain constantly in front of our Lord, even when we give up.

I began working in church as a GA teacher when I was 17 at College Heights Baptist Church. North Cleburne had experienced trouble and had split. My mom and I went to College Heights for a time. It was there that I first worked with children, which was to become a lifelong passion. After my husband and I married we lived in Arlington where I attended college at UTA. Doug and I attended Lake Arlington Baptist Church and First Baptist Church Arlington during the 30+ years we lived in Arlington. During these years I worked with preschools, children, and youth as teacher and Sunday School department leader. I also participated in several mission projects to Juarez, and one to Morazán in South America. I found another passion in helping the poor learn about Jesus.

My husband Doug and I have 3 children, which I have to say have been a big job to raise. They are truly good people, God has blessed. Josh is 34 and a wonderful single father to his beautiful eleven year old daughter, Neriah. He is a supervisor at Liberty Carton in Fort Worth. Kristine is 32 and is a wife to Michael Bock, and mother of Kaycee (13) and Dayne (8). She works for Judge Bridwell's court in the Johnson County Courthouse and attends on-line classes at Hill. My youngest, Whitney, is 28. She is the warrior of the family. She has her degree from UNT in criminal justice and has 6 years on the Corsicana police force. The last 2 years she has been a detective there. She and her husband, Philip Hawk, have a 10 month old daughter, Evelyn. Philip is an army vet and a paramedic in Farmer's Branch.

As a public school teacher I taught 3rd grade for about 6 years as an ESL (English As A Second Language) teacher at Thornton Elementary. I worked for 2 years as a 5th grade teacher at St. Alban's Episcopal School in Arlington. I worked for 4 more years as a 5th grade teacher at Ashworth Elementary in Arlington. I then received my masters from A&M Commerce in reading and became an Instructional Facilitator in Language Arts working at Blanton Elementary. I added a principal certificate to my resume and worked as an Assistant Principal at Morton Elementary for the last 3 years of my career in education.

My husband retired early from AT&T and we relocated to Alvarado to be closer to our roots- having family in Cleburne, Joshua, Burleson, and Alvarado. After commuting to Arlington for my job as Assistant Principal for 3 years, I decided to close the door on public education. My 21 year career had been very good to me, but I was feeling called to something more at this time in my life. The desire of my heart was to have time to become more involved in missions in our community and to have time to volunteer at my church, and study God's word. I decided to become a Real Estate Agent so that I could continue to bring in an income, set my own hours, and work close to home. This I have done since September of 2014. My husband and I have been able to become involved in teaching Bible Study at First Baptist, 5th graders for a couple of years and presently adults. I have also become the site coordinator for Christian Women's Job Corps in town.

During the past few months I have felt led to make another step of faith. I felt God leading me to let my real estate career go and work full time in Christian ministry. I found that as I became more successful in real estate, I was not able to devote myself to ministry. It was impossible for me to truly limit my hours in real estate. So, I have officially passed on the real estate torch to my colleges at Keller Williams and am just finishing up with my current clients. I know God will bless us with plenty. He is so faithful. I am giddy with my freedom to serve God.

I want to be open to God's leading at this time in my life.