

Jimmy Pogue: Accept children as they come, no judgment

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Jimmy Pogue has taught English at Cooper High School in Abilene more than 30 years. He is a member of Pioneer Drive Baptist Church in Abilene and a graduate of [Hardin-Simmons University](#). From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on being a Christian in public education. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated educator to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where else have you served, and what were your positions there?

Cooper High is the only high school I have served. I am an adjunct instructor of English for Hardin-Simmons University.

Where did you grow up?

Abilene, Texas.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I grew up in the church. In June 1973, I made a profession of faith in Christ. I was raised by godly parents and was influenced by godly Sunday school teachers, Royal Ambassador teachers and choir teachers. When I felt “the tug,” sitting in our “assigned seat,” I knew that I knew the Holy Spirit was calling me.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees in English, Hardin-Simmons University, 1986, 1991

About education

Why do you feel called into education?

I always felt I was called to work with young people. I believe young people need a listening ear, someone who champions them and someone who can encourage them to serve others.

How does being a Christian influence your work in education?

It is the fabric of who I am. I think as a Christian we are called to serve others, and there isn't a better place to serve others than in a public school.

What is your favorite aspect of education? Why?

Building relationships. I believe, at the core of education, you must build community with your students. My students know my class is a "judgment-free zone," and it gives them the courage to ask and answer questions, and to discover things about themselves they may not otherwise have realized.

What one aspect of education gives you the greatest joy?

Seeing my students achieve something they didn't believe they could achieve.

What is your favorite class to teach? Why?

I have been the student council sponsor at Cooper for 27 years. It is a service learning class. The curriculum is based on what we can learn through service and how we can build a stronger global community.

We have a 19-year partnership with Chinle Elementary School, a school in the heart of the Navajo Nation, where we travel each year to work with children to cross racial, economic, societal and educational boundaries. This year, my student council has initiated a food pantry on our campus to help with local hunger.

How do you expect education to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

I think this year has shown us the importance of remote learning for the future of education. I would expect more emphasis will be placed on how we challenge remote learners. I also see how we are more career-driven—medical high school, technology high school—and I think we will see more schools like that in our future.

Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing education.

The first challenge is the reliance on school to be all things for all people. School isn't just the place you go for "reading, writing and arithmetic" anymore. It is a place where community is taught, where children are fed, where students find counseling, where teachers find themselves oftentimes in a parental role.

The second challenge is to keep up with the ever-changing face of technology. It is said school is preparing students for "jobs that haven't been invented yet." However, finding the technology and funding is a major challenge.

The third challenge is simply acceptance. We always must accept a child as he or she comes to us, no judgment needed, and love on him or her as our own.

What do you wish more people knew about education?

It's a daily challenge. Every day, I meet students face-to-face and remote at the same time—more than 160 of them—and each one presents a unique set of circumstances to me.

About Baptists

Why are you Baptist?

I believe in the triune God. I believe in Jesus Christ who was born of a virgin, died as a sacrifice for sin, was raised from the dead, and is coming back one day. I believe in the authority of God's word, the Bible, and I believe in the priesthood of the believer.

I also strongly believe in the autonomy of the local church, and I support the Cooperative Program for missions.

What are the key issues facing Baptists—denominationally and/or congregationally?

We must be "on mission." The Great Commission teaches us to "go and make disciples." We always must be on the ready to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe that is the key issue denominationally and congregationally.

About Jimmy

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

My dad, James Pogue, who taught me the value of hard work and how to be a good friend.

My high school assistant principal and the man who was principal at Cooper and hired me, Lynn Mendenhall. He taught me the value of showing kindness to everyone I meet.

And a dear friend, John Gossard, who now lives in heaven, who showed how to see and celebrate God in everything.

What is the impact of education on your family?

Education is huge in our family. My wife Laura is an English professor at Hardin-Simmons, my son Jamie plans to teach and coach, and my daughter Katie is planning on going into the ministry.

Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors, and explain why.

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens is my favorite book to teach in English, because it tells the story of sacrifice and redemption of a man who is shown love by only one person.

I also love Bob Goff's *Love Does* and *Everybody Always*, and John Eldredge's *Beautiful Outlaw*.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Psalm 3:3. "For Thou, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the lifter of my head."

This verse speaks to me all the time, reminding me God always is with me, that he is my salvation, and the One to whom I constantly look.

Who is your favorite person in the Bible, other than Jesus? Why?

It's actually a group—the four men who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus. These guys inspire me so much. They *knew* their friend needed Jesus, and when they couldn't get him to Christ, they *cut a hole in someone's roof* to get him there.

It is inspiring to me, because I ask myself, "What am I doing to bring people to Christ?"

I need to be a better roof-cutter.

Name something about you that would surprise people who know you.

I love to watch birds in nature and consider myself a bit of a "hummingbird whisperer."

What is the greatest blessing in your life?

The biggest blessing in my life would be my wife of 34 years, Laura, and our two children: Jamie, a senior at Hardin-Simmons, and Katie, a freshman at Houston Baptist University. Seeing both of them walk down the aisle, giving their lives to Christ, was an indescribable blessing for Laura and me.