

# LIFE @school®

An online journal for Christian educators published by the International and Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools

## RENEWING THE OLD PATHS

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..."  
*Jeremiah 6:16*



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# Editor's Perspective

by Dr. Wesley Scott, Ed.D., Ph.D.  
 Managing Editor of Life@School®

For one week last winter, a good friend permitted my family to use his cabin in the mountains of western North Carolina. The cabin sits atop a hill, overlooking a beautiful mountain lake. One morning I awoke early and decided to venture down to the lake to commune with God. The air was brisk as I started my way down the VERY steep hill to the lake. About half-way down, and after several slips and falls, I discovered a path. Amazingly, when I got on the right path down to the lake, I not only found my footing, but also I made it to the lake in speedy fashion. Likely he and his family had gone down to the lake many times and had cut a safe, secure, well worn path as they went.

Forty years ago, several men and ladies began a journey toward establishing Christian education as a viable, quality alternative to public education. Their feet were shod with sound, fundamental principles found in the Word of God as they cut paths that started in Florida and now lead around the nation. Today, we enjoy the privilege of walking in those same paths as we teach children about God and His world in our classrooms everyday.

**Dr. Al Janney**, the founder and first president of FACCS, was one of the men who cut paths in which we walk today. **Dr. Dan Burrell**, second president of FACCS continued in those paths as he maintained and improved the organization during his tenure. **Dr. Dino Pedrone**, current president of FACCS, now renews these old paths and together with Janney and Burrell, encourages us as we begin to cut new paths around the world for the cause of Christian education. Read their thoughts in their extended, three-part article *Old Paths...New Destinations*.

We are also proud to have joining us in this issue **Dr. Samuel Smith**, professor at Liberty University's School of Education. Together with one of his doctoral candidates, **Jared Bigham**, they begin a three-part, research-based series on the calling of God to teach. Parts two and three will appear in future issues of Life@School®.

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# Old Paths New Destinations!

This three-part article is a tribute to the three men who have led the Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (FACCS). It shows the foundation, progression, and mission of FACCS as we celebrate our 40 anniversary of serving Christian schools in the past and our determination to continue doing so for years to come.

Dr. Wesley Scott, Editor



**DR. AL JANNEY,  
FOUNDER AND FIRST PRESIDENT  
OF FACCS, 1968-1996**

During the presidency of Al Janney, Christian schools were starting and growing at a rapid pace. Concerned that the state of Florida would attempt to control these schools and limit their religious liberties, Janney, and others who worked with him, saw a window of opportunity to impact America for Christ.

The accomplishments of FACCS under his leadership were stunning. Janney was not only the founder of FACCS, but also a motivator who inspired pastors across the nation to start Christian schools. Speaking to Christian school teachers in various venues, Janney encouraged them to patiently and lovingly strive to reach their children for Christ.

The Lord prepared Janney for leadership through the "school of hard knocks." His father died when he was a young child. Seeing he was in need of direction in his life and finding it difficult to meet her family's needs, his mother put Al in a children's home. When she remarried, she took him out of the children's home. While in attendance at Beaver Street Baptist Church in Jacksonville, fourteen-year old Al trusted Christ as his personal Savior.

After serving two years in the army, Janney attended Bible Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas and then went on to *Baptist Bible College* in Springfield, Missouri. After working with John Rawlings in Cincinnati, Ohio, Janney moved to Miami, Florida in 1954 to start *New Testament Baptist Church*.

In 1961, it became apparent to Janney that

he needed to start a Christian school. The turning point in his thinking came when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Bible reading in the public schools was unconstitutional.

Janney's two sons, John Carlton and David Alan, were in public elementary school at the time, and he wanted to send his boys to a school where the Bible was taught and honored.

*Dade Christian School* opened in the fall of 1961 with eighty-five students. Enrollment doubled every year after that for a number of years until it reached a high point of 2,450 students. The same remarkable growth was experienced by other schools in the metropolitan areas of Florida. As Christian schools were starting all over the country, many pastors and school administrators began looking to the schools of Florida for advice.

Private school educators in Florida, however, were not pleased with the rapid growth of Christian schools. Some private school associations began working together to pass legislation in Tallahassee that would require the state to license all private schools. Representation for Christian schools was urgently needed.

As Janney began to meet with legislators in Tallahassee, Lou Brantley, a representative from Jacksonville, said to him, "Preacher, these guys [the state legislators] are not going to listen to you unless you are organized." This statement, made at a committee meeting at the state capital, prompted an immediate response from Janney and others who were with him at the time. Janney said, "We need an organization. Do I hear a motion that we organize the Florida Association of Christian Schools?" A motion was

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U.S. Supreme Court  
ruled that Bible reading in  
public schools was unconstitutional.

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continued on page 4...

made and seconded, and by a unanimous vote the *Florida Association of Christian Schools* (FACS) was established in 1968. Janney was elected president, with Dayton Hobbs as vice president. Art Kreft was chosen to be the FACS executive secretary. The name of the organization was later changed to the *Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools* (FACCS).

As the opponents to the Christian school movement mounted their attack by proposing dangerous bills in the Florida legislature, FACS responded with an argument that set a precedent for religious liberties. It was proposed that just as doctors were regulated by the American Medical Association and lawyers were regulated by the American Bar Association (and not the individual states), the legislature should not try to regulate Christian schools, since this would be an entanglement of church and state. Rather, the Christian schools would regulate themselves. FACS was incorporated for this purpose.

Daily monitoring of the bills proposed by the legislature was necessary. FACS had established friendships with some key secretaries who notified FACS leadership when meetings were called. At short notice, two or three of the leaders of FACS would fly their small airplanes to Tallahassee. Through their vigilance in appearing at important hearings, the enemies of Christian schools were defeated "at every turn of the road." Soon after this, Howard Burke was established year-round in Tallahassee to monitor bills and coordinate the effort to defeat dangerous legislation.

In attempting to preserve religious freedom, Al Janney saw the importance of first negotiating with government officials. If negotiation failed, a remedy was sought through legislation. Janney believed that litigation was the least desirable method of preserving freedom because as he stated, "The goal of the American court system is not for the obtaining of justice but the settling of disputes."

In the mid-1960s, Janney asked Principal Art Kreft, of Dade Christian School, to form a committee of Christian educators to evaluate the newly founded Christian schools in Florida. It was from this effort that FACCS accreditation was born. FACCS accreditation is now recognized throughout the educational world.

Dr. Janney called for the first FACCS Convention in 1977 at the Sheraton Twin Towers in Orlando. More than two thousand pastors, administrators and teachers gathered for these informative and inspirational meetings each year, which continued at this location until 1991. They now convene at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando.

Through his recognized position in the Christian school movement, Al Janney helped states to organize Christian school associations throughout America. Together, these state organizations started the *America Association of Christian Schools* (AACCS) in 1972. Janney remained president of this organization until 1992.



**DR. DAN BURRELL,  
SECOND PRESIDENT OF FACCS,  
1996-2000**

Dan Burrell attended his first FACCS Convention at the old Twin Towers Convention Center in 1983 as a green, 22-year old teacher who was more interested in sitting next to the blonde-

haired history teacher, whom he would eventually marry, than he was in the opening session. Little did he realize at that time that he would eventually be in charge of the annual convention and later become the President of FACCS.

In 1995, there were varying challenges facing FACCS as the organization matured. Technology, that would impact education forever, was booming. The constituency was changing. The generation of pioneers who had given birth to the Christian school movement in Florida was moving on and a new generation, who did not understand the past and had higher expectations for the future, were coming into leadership. During these times, Dr. Al Janney

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FACCS students participate  
in national competitions.

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announced that it was time to begin the process for passing the baton of leadership to the next generation.

Dr. Janney and the Executive Board of FACCS appointed three new board members - Pastor Tony Hammon of *Island Community Church and Christian School* in Islamorada, Pastor Al Cockrell of Tampa and Burrell - who was still at his original school in West Palm Beach and was not the Senior Pastor of its sponsoring church. Shortly after the appointment to the board, these three were charged with the responsibility of designing a transition plan for Dr. Janney's retirement and the assumption of a new leader for FACCS. For the better part of two full days, the three pastors and friends holed themselves up in the Omni Hotel near the airport in West Palm Beach and prayed, planned and prepared. After much soul-searching and long



conversations, we had a recommendation for the board. Unexpectedly, Burrell was going to be asked to become the Executive Vice-President of FACCS and to assume the presidency within two years.

Dr. Janney had already been Burrell's mentor as a pastor over the past five years. Now it would be Burrell's responsibility to assist Janney in his leadership while preparing for the day when he would assume the mantle

of responsibility. During those months, Janney and Burrell attended meetings together and followed-up with Janney's remaining vision for FACCS. Burrell continued the work of coordinating the convention which he had been doing since the early 1990's as a volunteer. As he learned from Dr. Janney, he began formulating a strategy for bringing substantive change to the mission and scope of FACCS in order to remain relevant in a movement that was aging and rapidly changing. As other associations began making plans to start competing organizations for Christian schools in Florida, it became a matter of urgency to offer a fresh vision of FACCS leadership for the state.

In 1996 and 1997, Dr. Janney was honored at the annual Convention and Burrell assumed the mantle of leadership as he was installed as the second President of FACCS. It was then that he began implementing some major changes in FACCS. The decision was reached to re-affiliate with AACCS in order to provide national affiliation and so that FACCS students could again participate in the national competitions. Burrell was able to install three new members to the Board of Directors - Dr. Clifford Churchill - the first non-pastor member of the board who served in the administration of the *Hobe Sound Bible College*, Pastor Tom Messer of *Trinity Christian Schools and Trinity Baptist Church and College* in Jacksonville, and Dr. Dino Pedrone, who was at *Miami's New Testament Baptist Church, Dade Christian School and The Master's Academy* (the founding ministry of FACCS). These three men brought fresh vision and passion to the governing board of FACCS.

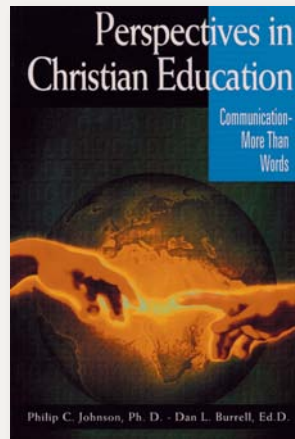
Burrell announced a multi-pronged initiative to revitalize and expand FACCS and begin its implementation. FACCS had primarily been limited to providing legislative representation in Tallahassee and accreditation services within the state. They also held a state-level student competition so that high school students could attend

national competition with AACCS and conducted a large annual educator's convention. Now FACCS would expand into new areas.

One of Burrell's first acts was to hire a Director of Academic Services to coordinate these new programs. Dr. Phil C. Johnson moved from the Atlanta area to Florida and set up the Office of Academic Services. He took over the responsibilities of teacher certification and the annual convention and then began planning the new initiatives Burrell had announced. His excellence in administration and implementation led to a period of rapid expansion of FACCS services that included:

- FACCS Publications which quickly produced three books. *Perspectives in Christian Education* had two volumes that dealt with Parent/Student Relationships and Communication. A third book was a writing enrichment book entitled *Impressions*.
- Expanded Student Competitions - regional competitions were launched which allowing middle school and elementary students to begin preparing for the more challenging secondary competitions that awaited them in a few years.
- A required a Philosophy of Christian Education course for all FACCS certified teachers. This new requirement was a bit controversial at first, but insured that teachers had a foundation in a correct philosophy as they taught at FACCS schools.
- CEU Courses - Burrell and Johnson traveled across the state offering week-end seminars for teachers which counted as Continuing Education Units and which trained educators in additional areas important to Christian education.
- A FACCS Website. Websites were the growing trend in industry at this time and it became very important that we offered one for improved communication. FACCS.org was established and quickly become a major part of the networking strategy with member schools.
- Weekly Communications. Burrell and Johnson both sent out weekly communications via fax (many FACCS schools still did not have email at this time) to member schools giving them fresh information and practical suggestions.
- Cooperation with the booming home school movement was also started. As they recognized that many Christian families were choosing to educate their children at home for various reasons, they looked for ways to partner with them knowing that most of them would choose a Christian school option in the future if they ever decided to move back to traditional schooling.

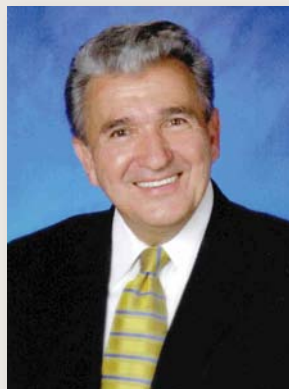
During this time, Dr. Howard Burke - the Executive Director of FACCS - continued



with his important work representing the interests of Christian education in Tallahassee. He also began working with a group of national and international accrediting associations to form the *National Council for Private School Accreditation* (NCPSA). As a key leader and founding member, Dr. Burke represented FACCS in obtaining regionally, nationally and internationally-recognized accreditation for FACCS accredited schools and helped negotiate dual-accreditation which gave FACCS accredited schools reciprocity with regional associations like the *Southern Association of Colleges and Schools* (SACS). FACCS was truly at the leading edge of these affiliations and it was a tremendous blessing to the graduates of accredited schools.

Much to Burrell's surprise, in late 1999, the Lord redirected his pastoral ministry away from the church where he had served for 17 years. This was the church and school that had been his wife's home for her entire life. But following the call of the Lord, he resigned his church in January of 2000 and relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina where he assumed leadership of a large church and school. While the board asked him to continue with his leadership via long distance through a transition, it was obvious that FACCS was going to need a new president.

After much thought and prayer, Burrell sensed that the Lord would have him approach Dr. Dino Pedrone. Pedrone had been involved in Christian education in two large ministries and the ministry of *New Testament Baptist Church* and *Dade Christian Schools* was where FACCS had begun. It seemed fitting that FACCS should return "home" for this next period of her history and so the transition began. The board unanimously approved Dr. Pedrone as the incoming president of FACCS and he was installed as the third president of FACCS at the annual convention in October of 2000.



**Dr. Dino Pedrone,  
President of FACCS,  
2000 to Present**

When the distinguished Board of Directors of FACCS asked Dr. Pedrone to be the President of the association, he admits, "I was deeply moved. I sensed an incredible amount of awesome privilege to have such a group even consider me, much less ask me. Many on the Board are my heroes and men of unique distinction with active and very successful ministries. I was humbled to be asked and am honored to be in this position."

Pedrone was new to Florida at the time and probably unknown to some, yet he knew it was God who had placed him in this position. His predecessors, Dr. Al Janney and Dr. Dan Burrell, are two national spokesmen who are gifts to Christian Education. He, along with others, feels he is deeply in debt to their leadership and both have been magnificent to help him in his position.

Pedrone had several immediate goals when he became president. They included:

- An educational journal which is now being published.
- A call to re-engage Pastors with FACCS; over 100 came to last year's Pastor's track of the annual convention.
- A positive cash flow and a budget that showed an annual surplus.
- A need to add key men to the Board of Directors.
- To remind the constituency that FACCS is all about a Biblical worldview.
- Several other items that are now established.

The remainder of this article is a direct challenge from Dr. Pedrone to all who are engaged in the teaching/learning process in Christian education, but especially to the men and ladies of FACCS and IACCS.

**W**hen I assumed the presidency of FACCS, I had no idea how our world would look in just a few short years. As we head toward the future, we are now facing exciting and new challenges. The first of these is:

### **TECHNOLOGY... Let's Grow**

I often travel and most of my travel is via airplane. There are times I forget to take work or a good book to read and will stop by the airport book stand to find something to read on the airplane. On one occasion, I picked up the book, *The World is Flat* by Friedman. This book opened up my mind to the technology of the next



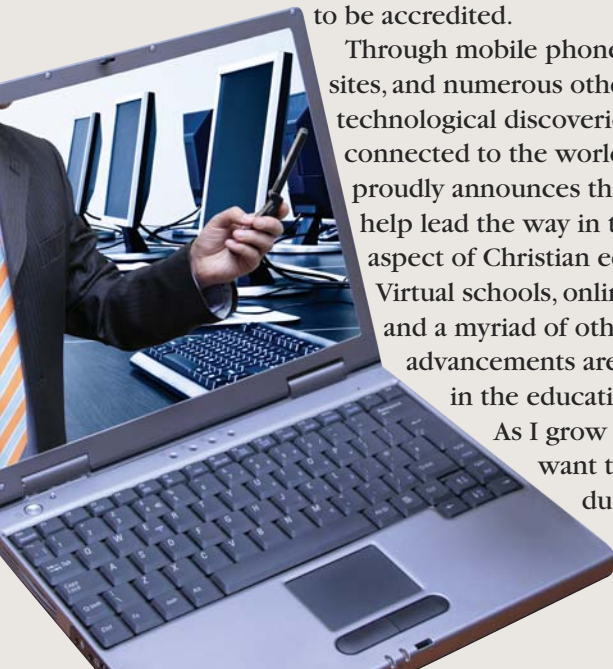
Christian families were choosing to educate their children at home for various reasons.



century. Growing schools are often heavily dependent upon technology. Frankly, five years ago I did not know what a “blog” was and now I have one. Four years ago I attended a Pastor’s conference in Orlando and the speaker said “Open up your Bible” and I dutifully and obediently picked up my black-covered Bible next to me and turned to the passage with my eyes focused on the print. I then glanced back to the speaker to find he had a computer on the podium which contained his Bible, notes, commentary, and everything that would help him exegete the passage on which he was speaking. I thought to myself, “Do we believe in this kind of thing?” Dependency upon technology is taking over the world. Muslims, Buddhists, Republicans, Democrats, and unknown personalities are heavily involved in this “upgraded” world.



Our FACCS Board of Directors recently voted to take FACCS to a national and international presence with the establishment of the *International Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (IACCS)*. TECHNOLOGY WILL LEAD THE WAY. We have schools enrolled in Missouri, Alabama, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, the Bahamas, and Sierra Leone, Africa. Through a gracious grant, we now have a full-time representative, Dr. Dan Mangus, for our national organization. We will continue to add to our team as we grow. Dr. Wesley Scott is doing a great work as our Director of Program Services for both organizations. Our conventions and conferences of the future will have many from other states and nations who will join us. Through the remarkable work of Dr. Howard Burke, we are now connected with NCPSA and the *Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA)*, and numerous other organizations that will accommodate educational ministries who, like the ones I oversee, wish to be accredited.

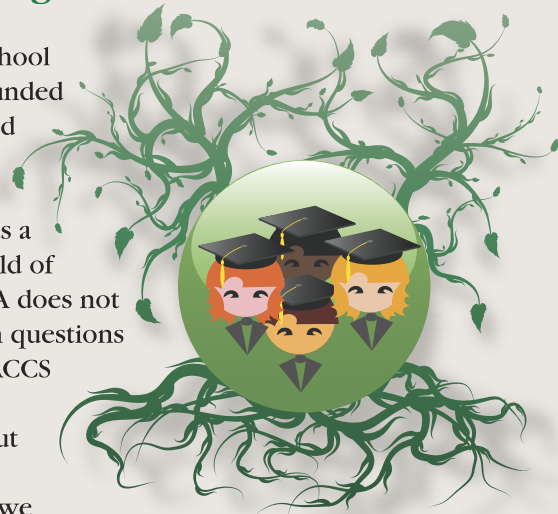


Through mobile phones, emails, web sites, and numerous other technological discoveries, we are connected to the world. FACCS proudly announces that we want to help lead the way in this unique aspect of Christian education. Virtual schools, online classes, and a myriad of other digital advancements are taking place in the educational world.

As I grow older, I do not want to be left in the dust. We are off and running.

## TOPICS...Are Our Schools Really Growing?

The Christian School movement was founded upon legislative and educational issues. Our schools are not often viewed as a priority in the world of education. The NEA does not concern itself with questions like, “What does FACCS think about this legislation?” Without the work of Dr. Howard Burke we would be lost in a maze of legal and other entangling issues that could very well destroy our schools. Our schools need this continued strong protection. Once we have national schools under the umbrella of IACCS, we will receive the strongest possible of national legislative information through a relationship with the *Council for Private American Education (CAPE)*.



One major topic among our Christian Schools is growth and, it is my opinion, that in order for that to happen, pastors need to be committed to the Christian school. Some pastors do not like to have a Christian school connected to their church for a variety of reasons. Pastors get hurt when a family leaves the church over an issue with their child in the Christian school. Other pastors consider the Christian school as a financial drain on their ministry. Additional buildings can cause soaring expenses and can drain the church financially. Some pastors are intimidated by educators who seem to have a difference of philosophy or outlook and therefore sometimes a division in the ministry occurs. There are also Christian schools that are not associated with local churches and pastors often differ philosophically and theologically, consequently leaving the Christian school movement altogether.

There are no easy answers to these issues. Forums need to be developed to address them. Additionally, the division between pastors and educators needs to be mended. The future is too important. If our children are to enter into the next generation of leaders, questions must be addressed such as:

*Why do some graduates from Christian schools quit church and even reject the ways of God? Why do alumni not return to give funds or want to help their alma mater?*

The topic that must be addressed is the kind of a students we are producing. That brings me to the great need of the future of FACCS and IACCS. The issue is really...

## TRUTH... What Are Our Roots?

There is a root issue upon which we all must agree. It is imperative that we maintain a strong Biblical worldview. Christian educators must understand and not be incorrect on this issue. I spoke at a meeting recently in New Jersey on behalf of *Davis College* and a question was asked in a forum, "Does Davis College have a Christian worldview?" My answer I believe surprised them. I said, "No, we do not subscribe to a Christian world view. The word *Christian* is much too broad for my taste. The term *Christian* can mean any number of thoughts and theologies. Our view is a Biblical one." Our worldview addresses our roots. As Christian educators, our roots must be in the authority of Scripture. We do not worship the Book as a book, but we worship the Living Word, who is Jesus Christ, John 1:1. The revelation of what we are to know about God is in

His book. This truth includes the following:

- The Bible is inerrant in its original manuscripts and preserved for us today.
- The atonement and redemptive work of Jesus Christ is complete and final. We are born again into God's family by understanding sin and the consequences of sin and trusting Jesus alone.

The rules we have established in our schools are necessary, but I fear we may be teaching children they are "good" when they keep the rules when, in fact, all children need to be born again. I feel some students do not come back to church or return after graduation because, in some way, they have not connected their Christian education to the redemptive

work of Christ on the cross for individual sin. Life is meant for service. The Christian life is for service to Jesus Christ. Obeying rules indeed reflects the fruit of our lives, but not the root of our lives. The Holy Spirit must be recognized as the indwelling presence that He is.

The future of FACCS and IACCS is a special one. **Technology** can help

us grow, but the **Topic** needs to be, "Are we growing and what are we growing?" The

**Truth** is that we must be rooted and grounded in a Biblical worldview.

These three T's of Christian education are crucial as FACCS and IACCS follow the old paths cut by our founder, Dr. Al Janney, maintained by

Dr. Dan Burrell, and being

renewed today by our present leadership team. May God richly bless us as we head into the future for

the cause of Christian education in Florida, around our blessed nation, and across the globe.

To God be the glory!

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Life is meant for service.

The Christian life is for service to Jesus Christ.

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As I  
grow  
older  
I don't  
want  
to be  
left  
in the  
dust.



# Called to Teach: Interpreting the Phenomenon of Calling as a Motivating Factor

This is the first of three articles on the topic of the calling to teach. The following two articles will appear in subsequent issues of Life@School®.

## ABSTRACT

This hermeneutic phenomenological study examines the phenomenon of the calling to teach. Nine participants were interviewed, and the dialogue was analyzed for themes uncovered from participants' interpreted experiences. The following themes were revealed: the calling experience as a process, esteem for the teaching profession as a calling, the use of spirituality for affirmation, and the direct impact of spirituality on career choice.

*Jared T. Bigham,  
Ed.D. Candidate  
and  
Dr. Samuel J. Smith,  
Liberty University,  
Professor of Education*

Many pre-service teachers claim to be motivated by the experience of a "calling." What is this phenomenon and how is it experienced by those entering the teaching profession? The term "calling" is often used by Christians in reference to jobs or tasks taken on in service to God and is often referenced by those who submit to an intrinsic notion of service to others or to the greater good (Elias, 2003). Those who experience a calling to their areas of service acknowledge a pull from an external source, igniting an internal motivation and giving meaning to a career (Duffy, 2006).

With such negative elements as low pay and prestige being attributed to the field of education, there must be motivating factors that lie beyond normal criteria for choosing a career. This study investigates the role spirituality plays in choosing a career in education, with a focus on calling as a motivating factor. It leaves the question open-ended to include any motivating force compelling a person to do something contrary to mainstream decision-making constructs and extrinsic rewards. The extrinsic reward factors are the ones that so many people seem to have a problem looking past when deciding on teaching as a career. It has been stated by Sparks (1988) that people who value extrinsic rewards as motivating factors make poor teachers. Therefore, the intrinsic and altruistic motivation must be explored to understand better what draws teachers into the field.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This research can assist in better understanding the disposition of teachers in order to bolster public

perception, invigorate teacher recruitment, and better equip teacher training programs. If the phenomenon of calling exists and if it also leads to altruistic professionalism, the field itself can only be elevated by the service-oriented and selfless actions of the "called." Furthermore, as teacher shortages escalate, it becomes increasingly important for recruiters to understand what motivates a person to teach (Watt & Richardson, 2007). Teacher training programs could benefit from this study as colleges of education are held accountable for measuring the dispositions of their candidates. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) holds as one of its objectives to codify "the internal existence of those who desire to become teachers" (McKnight, 2004, p. 212). By NCATE standards, teacher training programs will now be expected to understand the virtues of potential teachers and evaluate these virtues. If some teachers do experience a calling, it would fall under this "virtue ethic" (p. 212).

## METHODOLOGY

A calling is not easily observed or described with typical quantitative survey methods. The experience is internal and subjective to the life situation of the person making the decision. Because the subject of this study is an internal phenomenon, hermeneutic phenomenology served as the mode of research. This qualitative approach sought to interpret the complex dynamic of spiritual motivation and the uniqueness of the phenomenon inherent to each person's experience.

*continued on page 10...*

As a research approach, hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of inquiry that provides the ability to study phenomena systematically that are normally difficult to observe or measure (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Hermeneutics “is the theory and practice of interpretation” (van Manen, 1990, p. 179). Phenomenology “is the science of phenomena” (van Manen, p. 183). Hermeneutic phenomenology combines these terms with the idea of interpreting a description of an experience. It seeks to understand and describe someone else’s experience and capture the essence of that experience. A researcher who uses hermeneutic phenomenological methods enters an area of interest with a sense of “wonder” that is “Being-in-the-world, as concern is fascinated by the world” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 88).

### **Participants**

The participants who were interviewed in this research were chosen purposefully for the study. In order to access persons who might have had a spiritual motivation in choosing a career, the participants were students at a private Christian university. Interview procedures were based on van Manen’s (1990) definition of the function of interviewing within hermeneutic phenomenological research:

1. It may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon;
2. The interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience. (p. 66)

Questions were asked of the participants to begin a dialogue, with the participants being given reign to answer questions and describe their decisions in terms that were relativistic to their own experience. The interview guide below was implemented to direct each interview. At the researcher’s discretion, probing questions were asked to explore further areas of interest relating to the study. Nine participants were interviewed, all female but one.

### **Interview Guide**

1. Tell me about yourself.
  - a. Family
  - b. Age
  - c. Religious affiliation
2. What is your definition of spirituality?
  - a. Prompts might be:
    - i. Formal religion
    - ii. Personal belief system
    - iii. Guiding force
3. Are you familiar with the term “calling”? If so, what is your definition? If not, the definition by Colozzi and Colozzi (2000), is a career that is not motivated

by monetary gain or is for the betterment of society or the good work of a higher power is considered a calling. In essence, it is an occupation that requires some type of sacrifice on the part of the individual.

4. Do you think teaching is a calling? For everyone?
5. Were you called to teach? Can you identify a specific moment?
6. Would teaching be an attractive career if you were not called or there were no spiritual dimension to your decision to teach?
7. Did you always want to be a teacher?
8. Describe your experience when you decided to become a teacher.
  - a. What were the intrinsic factors that influenced you, such as spirituality?
  - b. What were the extrinsic factors that motivated you, such as the schedule of a teacher?
  - c. Which of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors do you think were linked to spirituality?
9. Why do you think some people view teaching as a calling?
10. Would you feel compelled to teach even if you wanted to do something else? Why?
11. Do you think you have always had the disposition and basic skill set to be a teacher?
12. Are others in your family teachers? Did they influence you? Was there any spiritual link there?
13. What are the drawbacks you see to entering the teaching profession?
14. Do you think teaching will be a life-long career for you?
15. Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify?

### **Data Collection**

The interviews were audio recorded and later professionally transcribed. In this way, the interview was repeatedly reflected on and analyzed. Handwritten notes were taken during the interview, but they were not copious or comprehensive in order to keep the flow of the interviewing progressing uninterrupted. These handwritten notes were used to help clarify responses and to direct the questioning

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the collected data within this hermeneutic phenomenological study was based on the approach outlined by Cohen, Kahn, and Steeves (2000, pp. 76-77, 81.) This approach is based on five steps concerning the readings of the data and the writing of the narrative.

1. Analysis actually begins while the interviews are being conducted. The interviewer is actively listening and thinking about the responses and descriptions of the participant. Possible themes are being constructed at this time as well.
2. Careful analysis is made of the data as the researcher

*continued on page 11...*

reads and rereads the data. This phase is called “immersing oneself in the data.” The objective is to develop initial interpretations of the data that will eventually develop themes later in the analysis process. The researcher identifies the prominent characteristics in each interview to this end.

3. This phase includes data reduction. At this point, the researcher decides what is relevant and what is not. The researcher takes the transcripts and organizes within each interview like topics that were discussed by the participant. Digressions or off topic comments can be removed at this time as well as verbal ticks such as “you know.” This allows the text to move in a focused flow without changing the essence of it.
4. Thematic analysis will begin once the researcher has an overall understanding of the text. The researcher will write tentative themes beside phrases or sections of text. These labeled pieces of data from each interview are then grouped together.
5. The final step draws from van Manen’s (1990) concept of writing and rewriting as a critical element of interpretive phenomenology. At this point, the researcher takes the themes as parts and brings them together as a coherent impression of the whole. This is a reflective process.

At the heart of the data analysis process, the Heideggerian (1962) philosophy of “passivity” was followed. This means the researcher was not too aggressive in finding phenomena. The researcher created a “clearing space” in which the phenomenon could render itself known. By Heidegger’s precepts, the phenomenon was already there and had been hidden. It was the job of the researcher to allow it to be revealed. This entailed multiple listenings of the tapes and multiple readings of the text.

## RESULTS

After all interviews were transcribed, what Cohen et al. (2000) calls “data transformation” took place. Data transformation is the process of reducing the material to relevant information that applies to the research.

### *Thematic Analysis*

There are four themes that radiate throughout the responses of the participants: the calling experience as a process, esteem for the teaching profession as a calling, the use of spirituality for affirmation, and the direct impact of spirituality on career choice. These themes do not stand alone, but are bound together throughout the dialogue. (All participant names below are pseudonyms.)

*The calling experience as a process.* The experience of calling in relation to teaching was more a process of tangible and intangible phenomena than a single event. Each felt called, but they—with the exception of Dale, the only male participant—experienced a series of events

over a period of months and even years that they felt directed them to teaching. Dale, on the other hand, held more to a born-to-the-calling philosophy. This process was different than most other careers motivated by salary, family occupations, technical ability, or working conditions.

*Esteem for the teaching profession as a calling.* The idea that teachers are a special breed of professionals was evidenced by the continued references to service, job stressors, responsibility, sacrifices, and an emotionally demanding environment. Because of this, the participants felt the teaching field requires more of a spiritual foundation than most jobs and this idea also led to the belief by all the participants that a person should be called to teach. However, the negative factors were just a part of the concept that made teaching estimable to the participants. The fact that the participants all had experienced the spiritual process of a calling made the career seem more distinguished and to an extent more righteous than other careers. In their minds, what could be more virtuous than a God ordained career?

*The use of spirituality for affirmation.* Once the calling was accepted by the participants, the spiritual basis for their decision became the foundation on which the participants readied themselves for their career. Confidence was gained from the feeling that their chosen career was not their choice alone but that they were chosen. In times of struggle this became a supporting and encouraging factor for the participants. In times of doubt this became the compass by which they navigated through their reservations. This spiritual dynamic in the decision process was not only a catalyst but a sustaining element after the decision was made. Many of the participants also anticipated that their spirituality would sustain them when they began teaching and ran into difficulties.

*The direct impact of spirituality on career choice.* Within the interlacing network of the dialogue, spirituality was the common thread that connected everything and is at the core of the participants’ experiences. Three of the participants identified spirituality as being responsible for half of their rationale for choosing teaching as a career. The other six participants gave much more credit, if not all the credit, to spirituality’s role. This was not limited to decision-making alone. It also included the belief that there was a spiritual aspect to the imbueing or acquiring of skills and dispositions that were to be used as a teacher. Therefore, spirituality played a direct role in influencing the participants into the teaching profession, preparing them for the profession, and sustaining them once they began their jobs.

Overwhelmingly the participants believed that spirituality was the main reason they are becoming

teachers, and without it, it was unlikely that they would have chosen that career. There would be a huge void in the decision-making construct of the participants and in the foundation of emotional support if spirituality were removed from the equation. It was difficult for most, and impossible for some, to separate any of the aspects of their career from spirituality. For some of the participants, it appeared even more apparent to them as they neared the end of their training.

The uniqueness of each of the participants and the varied experience they each brought to the study helped to validate the themes that have been uncovered. This is due in large part to the similar responses that were given to many of the questions.

## DISCUSSION

The spiritual dynamic seems to add a greater sense of commitment to the teaching career. Without a spiritual catalyst or calling, would a person really be right for teaching in today's world of education that is ever increasing in its demands? It becomes increasingly difficult to understand why individuals would enter the teaching profession without some kind of intrinsic force driving and sustaining them. This is assuming that they undertake the job with a sense of commitment and apply themselves to doing their best. Educators become enveloped by the job when they are truly committed to it. It becomes a righteous and virtuous vocation because the extrinsic rewards rarely balance out the amount of self that is given over to the job.

With teacher accountability at an all time high and

respect from the public at an all time low, it makes one question why anyone would want to enter such a tumultuous and challenging field. It also raises the question whether or not people can enter the profession and succeed if they do not have some type of spiritual milieu from which they are operating. Would a teacher be a good hire if he or she were in the profession because of the schedule, benefits, ease of finding a job, time off with kids, or a desire to coach a sport? The job is too demanding emotionally and physically to validate any of these rationales and expect the teacher to make a difference in the lives of his or her students.

It is recommended that teacher training institutions examine the spiritual aspect of those who choose teaching as a career, at least in a general sense as relating to calling and vocation. There is no end in sight to the increases in teacher accountability and the high expectations of parents. Therefore, teaching must be set aside and distinguished as a career of principle and commitment. This cannot be accomplished with increases in salary, benefits, or loan forgiveness programs. It must be accomplished in the essence of the job and in what constitutes a devoted teacher.

It has been evidenced through the years that increased oversight, greater spending, and more accountability have had little or no impact on improving student achievement. The single most influential means of affecting change is the teacher, so it is more important than ever to understand the context from which prospective teachers are entering training. Spirituality must be factored in as a part of the sustainability of the new teacher.

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