



Dr. David Eldridge

Birth: May 26, 1979
Columbus, Mississippi

Spouse: Danielle Robertson
B.S. in Elementary Education
Mississippi College, 2000

Children: Hayden James (Age 11)
Luke Daniel (Age 9)
Jonathan Lamar (Age 5)

Hobbies: Running, Reading, and
Chicago Cubs Baseball

EDUCATION

New Orleans Baptist Theological
Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana
Ph.D. in Preaching, December 2010

Beeson Divinity School,
Birmingham, Alabama
Master of Divinity, May 2004

Mississippi College,
Clinton, Mississippi
Bachelor of Arts, Christian Studies,
May 2001



Meet Dr. David Eldridge

Tell us about **your family**.

My wife, Danielle, grew up as a pastor's daughter and lived the majority of her elementary and high school years in Pontotoc, MS. We met at Mississippi College and were married while we were both students there. Previous to having children, she taught elementary school in Clinton, MS, Fultondale, AL, and Moss Point, MS. In our church, she has served as a Women's Growth Group teacher (20s-30s class), Children's Choir Director (1st-3rd grade), Adult Choir member, and a 4 year-old preschool teacher at our church's weekday program.

I am blessed to be married to someone whose faith is foundational to her daily life. God has used her more than anyone else to positively influence me as a husband, father, and pastor. We have considered our ministry (from our days dating at Mississippi College) to be a partnership in both prayer and service. Danielle and I have three boys: Hayden (11), Luke (9), and Jonathan (5). We spend much of our time engaging in their school activities and on the soccer and baseball fields.

How did you **become a Christian?**

As an eighth grader, I had two primary influences that God used to introduce me to the message of the gospel. The first was a godly football coach. I observed a compelling difference in the way he interacted with his students and players. He invited me to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting where I heard him preach a message that compelled me to personally consider the claims of Christianity. During this same time, I started attending First Baptist Church of Clinton because my friends attended and I could play basketball prior to the youth group meeting on Wednesday evenings. The student pastor and countless volunteers played significant roles in planting the seeds of the gospel in my heart.

One evening after playing in a football game, I came home to my house and went back into my room. I had been given a Christian tract that was titled "Got Questions?" That evening I realized for the first time that only a relationship with God through His son could provide the joy and hope that I was searching for in athletics and relationships. As I read the tract given to me it folded out into the shape of the cross. That evening I prayed to God admitting my sin and trusting in His provision on the cross and through His resurrection for my salvation.

What is your favorite **verse in the Bible?**

Romans 12:1-2: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

This passage was one of the first passages that I memorized as a young Christian. I continue to find it a helpful summation of our call to holiness and God's promise to lead us to His will.



MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

- Pastor
First Baptist Church | Clinton, MS
2014 – Present
- Pastor
Calvary Baptist Church | Tupelo, MS
2008 – 2014
- Pastor
First Baptist Okolona | Okolona, MS
2006 – 2008
- Pastor
Eastlawn Baptist Church | Pascagoula, MS
2004 – 2006
- Associate Pastor
Pineywood Baptist Church | Gardendale, AL
2002 – 2003
- Student Minister
Briar Hill Baptist Church | Florence, MS
1999 – 2001
- Summer Missionary
Baptist Student Union | Wales, UK
1999
- Associate College Minister
First Baptist Church | Clinton, MS
1999
- Associate Activities Minister
First Baptist Church | Clinton, MS
1997 – 1999
- Summer Youth Minister
Port Gibson Baptist Church | Port Gibson, MS
1998

What do you like **to do away from the office?**

My time out of the office is often spent as a father to three active boys. In the past, I've served as an assistant coach for their soccer, basketball, and baseball teams. Many of our close relationships have been formed on the ball fields. Danielle and I try to prioritize our relationship as a couple by getting away regularly for a date night and anniversary trips. I start most mornings with a run with our dog, Sandy, and end most evenings with a book in hand.

What's been your favorite **vacation?**

I grew up as a (until last year) long suffering Chicago Cubs fan. I've passed that fandom to my boys. So, last summer, we traveled to Chicago to see our first Cubs game as a family. We toured the city, enjoyed the zoo, and many of the museums, but the highlight of the trip for our boys was touring Wrigley Field and getting to walk on the field.

What are the biggest **challenges facing young families today and how can the church help?**

Most young families are pulled in what seems to be a "million" different directions. I have conversations each week with parents who are overwhelmed by the demands of their children's schedules and opportunities. Most families are not assaulted through the front door by salacious sins, but rather tempted through the back door as good commitments crowd out time for what we are called to pass down to our children—a dynamic commitment to faithfully following Christ.

The ministry of the church must free and equip families to make disciples in their families and workplaces. Many churches, even with noble intentions, can add to the busyness of society and neglect the primary goal to equip and engage believers for ministry and mission.

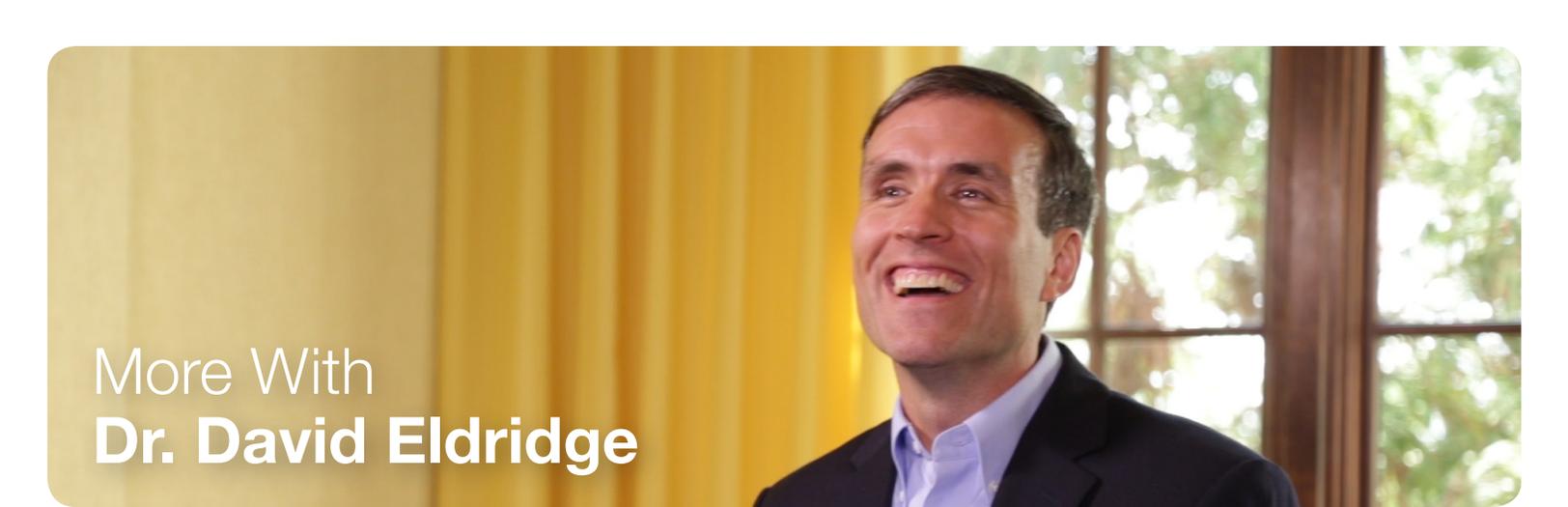
What is your **preaching style like?**

I am committed to and a student of expositional, Christ-centered preaching. Each Sunday, I seek to explain the original meaning of the biblical text and then apply and illustrate that meaning to our contemporary context. The goal of the sermon is always to show how the biblical text fits into the grand story of Christ's finished work and the Spirit's continuing ministry to believers today. Most often, I preach consecutively through books of the Bible or larger sections of Scripture within a book.

What have been some of your **sermon topics over the last two years?**

In the last two years during my Sunday morning teaching, I've led our church through a series on Galatians and a character study of Abraham (Genesis 12-25). Currently I'm in an extended series through the Gospel of Luke. In an extended book like Luke, I divide the book into shorter series based upon themes within the text that are addressed in a consecutive fashion.

For questions, please email info@dawsonchurch.org or call the Church Office at (205) 871-7324.



More With Dr. David Eldridge

What are some of the most prevalent challenges facing the church today?

One of the greatest challenges for the church today is equipping believers to balance grace and truth in an increasingly skeptical and antagonistic society. For instance, Christians must hold to the truth of God's word that marriage is a holy union between a man and a woman, while also interacting with grace and love with those who doubt and are committed to lifestyles that are opposed to this teaching.

Many core teachings of Christianity are deemed in our society as narrow minded at best and hate speech at worst. The Christian church must recognize and prepare the next generation to engage in public and private life when our commitments could increasingly cost us personally and professionally. The church has a great opportunity and challenge in the coming years to model a faithful presence and to engage our society with the gospel.

What are some of the most important ideas and practices that you think cultivate health in a local church?

1. My foundational commitments as a pastor are to pray for my congregation consistently, prepare faithful expositional messages that apply God's word to modern life, and to faithfully abide with God through His word and prayer.
2. Church members need to know that their pastor understands and values the rich history of their church before he can effectively lead change in the church. A pastor values and encourages the staff and congregation by consistently praying for them, creating avenues to know them, caring for them pastorally, and learning from them continually.
3. Vision is best determined, evaluated, and refined collaboratively through a process of corporate discernment that includes the input of the pastor, key ministerial staff, and key lay leaders. This vision must be based upon a solid foundation of the church's mission and core values coupled with a healthy appraisal of the changes, challenges, and needs in the local community and beyond.
4. Evangelism, missions, and discipleship will most likely not be a passion of the church if it is not an authentic and visible passion of the pastor and the ministerial staff. This passion should be a consistent part of the pastor's personal priorities, not just a sermon series to be preached or a program to be promoted.
5. The pursuit of ministerial excellence should be balanced with the pursuit of both the emotional and spiritual health of all staff members. To work toward this goal, regular staff evaluations and ongoing feedback are needed but must be conducted in an environment that values open and honest dialogue. This environment is largely cultivated by a pastor's attitude and interaction with the staff and church at-large. Authority with appropriate vulnerability must be balanced and modeled.

What is your approach to personal evangelism?

I attempt to live in a way that looks for natural opportunities to both live out and share my faith in the normal ebb and flow of living and working in the same community. I rarely practice "cold call" evangelism. Most often the sharing of my faith is in connection to a relationship that has been established and prayed for over time. I share my faith by weaving my testimony with scriptural concepts of our need for salvation and God's provision through the life, redemptive death, and resurrection of Christ.

What is your Missions vision for the church?

My vision for missions in the church has always been based upon the unique gifts and context of the churches that I've pastored. As a pastor, I have had the joy of participating in many mission trips where I've been able to see firsthand the great mission work of Southern Baptist mission agencies locally, nationally, and internationally. One of my roles as a pastor is to inform and challenge the church to give sacrificially through the Cooperative Program and to our various mission offerings.

What are your specific and regular practices regarding the spiritual disciplines?

The foundational spiritual disciplines of my life are the regular reading of God's word coupled with prayer. On a daily basis, I walk through the daily Bible readings that are assigned that day. I also have a system of prayer reminders that help me to pray consistently for my family, our church members and staff, the lost, our mission partners, community churches, and our governmental leaders each morning. In addition to these core disciplines, I practice Scripture memorization and periodic times of fasting. Additionally, I meet with a weekly group of men for both fellowship, study, and accountability.

What is the importance of discipleship in the local church?

Discipleship stands as the heart of our calling as believers and as a church (Matthew 28:19-20). To be a disciple is to grow in our love of God and the love of our neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). My goal is to make disciples personally and lead the local church in the process of equipping, creating, and sustaining relationships/structures that encourage Christian growth. I believe that a church is primarily called to equip believers to make disciples in their homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces and then secondarily called to create programmatic structures that offer those opportunities in and through the church.

What was the most positive aspect of your training for ministry?

The most positive aspect of my training for ministry was the great relationships that I had with teachers and my fellow classmates at Mississippi College, Beeson Divinity School, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. While I learned much academically in those settings, most of the enduring lessons were caught from the overflow of my teacher's experiences and character. Some of my closest friendships today are with long-time college and seminary friends. The most influential professors in my academic journey have been Fisher Humphreys, Robert Smith, and Argile Smith. Again, much of what I received from them was not in the "what to think" category but rather the "who do I want to become" category.

You have 2 minutes to tell someone about Jesus. What do you say?

The nature of this conversation would depend upon the person. I would need to know their age, religious background, hurts, and familiarity with the teachings of the Bible to really know where to start. With this disclaimer, I would share the gospel using a broad outline similar to the following:

The gospel is the good news that while all of humanity have sinned and fallen short of God's holy standards, He loved you enough to send His only Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a perfect life that you and I have not and cannot live and through his sacrificial death upon the cross Jesus paid the penalty for the sin that separates you from God. Jesus not only died upon a cross for your sins but was raised by His Father to once and for all defeat sin, Satan, and the grave. I would tell the person that if they would place their trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ that they would be saved from their sins and begin a relationship with God that will last forever.

Called Church Conference
Sunday, August 6 • 4:00 p.m. • Sanctuary



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