

EBA . LIFE

It's Important: Impacting the Future

Mary Bess Jackson has 50 years
of serving God and still counting

Seeing God at Work!

Cindy Wesch talks about her
passion for disaster relief

Following the Track Laid Out by the Spirit

A practical look at text-driven preaching

Picture: Mary Bess Jackson and Libby Laughlin,
Preschool Minister at FBC Midlothian.

It's Important: Impacting the Future

By Richard Cody

I had the privilege of serving at FBC Midlothian as the part-time Discipleship Interim in 2015. One day at staff meeting, Libby Laughlin, preschool minister, shared that Mary Bess Jackson had been serving as a 4 year old Sunday School teacher for over 50 years. As an education pastor for many years, I knew that having a teacher serve for 30 or 40 years was quite an accomplishment, but over 50 years was crazy. Especially in the manner of teaching every Sunday and contacting your class during the week.

The morning that Mary Bess was recognized by FBC Midlothian for 50 plus years, I was in the earlier service in which most of her peers attend. As Libby called Mary Bess to be recognized you saw people all over the chapel stand and clap. If this was about recognizing Mary Bess she would never have agreed to it, but it was about highlighting the importance of serving and especially teaching preschoolers. In a very humble way Mary Bess accepted the recognition and quickly left to continue her preparation for her 4 year old class.

Recently, I sat down with Mary Bess Garvin Jackson to hear her story. Mary Bess' family are long-time Ellis County people. The year after Texas entered into the union (1847), the Garvin's moved to Ellis County from Arkansas. They were early settlers in the Midlothian area. That was a few generations before Mary Bess would be born.

Mary Bess grew up a couple of blocks from FBC



Oliver and Mary Bess Jackson

Midlothian at, 5th Street and Avenue F. As a child, they would walk to church when they lived in town. FBC Midlothian is the only church of which she has ever been a member. She said that there was a period that they had to stop going to church on Sundays. The family had moved out to the county and her dad was working on Sundays and had to use their only car. She did recall that the pastor's son would pick them up and bring them to church. She remembers him being a wild driver. When the pastor moved away they were unable to attend. Once they moved back into town she was able to go to church again.

Mary Bess started teaching 4 year olds in Sunday School in 1963. The church did not have a class for single women and she did not want to go into the married couple's class. Once Mary Bess started teaching she realized this was for her. One Sunday before Mary Bess and Oliver married, he came to her Sunday School class. One of her students was quite upset with Miss Mary Bess. The boy went home that Sunday and told his family that the man with Miss Mary Bess was her boyfriend and he did not like it one bit. I'm not sure if Mary Bess had the boy's permission, but she and Oliver married.

Teaching would turn into a life-time. She found her calling and takes it very seriously. For the next 50 plus years Mary Bess taught 4 year olds in Sunday School. She has seen her share of changes, whether it's a new classroom, different parenting styles or new curriculum, she has been able to maneuver through it all. Libby Laughlin, the preschool minister at FBC Midlothian, said Mary Bess' ability to adapt to those changes has led to her success and her ability to maintain her relevance as a teacher.

Mary Bess' popularity as a teacher comes from her own understanding of the importance of laying a strong spiritual foundation during the preschool years. She spends hours preparing to teach each Sunday. She eagerly waits for her curriculum each quarter. She reads through the curriculum and will discuss with Libby Laughlin any changes that she believes will enhance her students' experience.

She understands that her students are concrete thinkers and symbolic examples confuse them. It takes time to prepare and to pick the right words. For 50 years she has methodically planned and taught Midlothian's four year olds. If she is going to impact their future it's important to give her best to her students.

Many times you see retired couples kick back and enjoy retirement. Mary Bess and Oliver are enjoying retirement but they are not kicking back. Both are a vital part of the FBC Midlothian's preschool ministry and are also a part of Explorers, the senior adult ministry at the church. In addition to serving at their



Mary Bess and Libby Laughlin

church, both Oliver and Mary Bess are part of EBA's disaster relief teams. Oliver is a chaplain and Mary Bess enjoys the hardest relief team the most, Mud Out. She goes in and spends a day helping a family pull out carpet, cut out sheetrock and other items to help protect the house from mold and mildew damage.

Jokingly I asked her about when she might retire from teaching. She graciously said her mom is 95 years old and left the rest up to me to figure out. She did say

that when she can't get up and down off the floor then it might be time.

It was a great pleasure to hear Mary Bess' story and why it's important to teach four year olds. Stories like Mary Bess Jackson's are why we started EBA.Life. We want people in EBA churches to hear stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things because of their faith in Christ.

“Love Your Neighbor”

Sunday School and Small Group Leadership Conference

Saturday, February 11, 2017

9:00 am - 12:00 pm

First Baptist Church, Duncanville

323 W Wheatland Rd

Duncanville, TX 75116

Following the Track Laid Out by the Spirit

By Alex Sibley / Photography by Matheus Oliveira

Just as a train is bound to railroad tracks and must follow a pre-ordained path, so text-driven sermons, according to pastor Drew Erickson, are bound to the biblical text and must follow the path pre-ordained by the Holy Spirit. As Erickson explains, this means the sermon must not only communicate the intended message of the text, but must also deliver it in the same way as the text, reflecting both the structure and spirit of a given passage, which are strongly tied to that passage's genre. In this way, text-driven preaching is essentially Spirit-driven preaching.

"How I prepare and deliver sermons is dictated by how God delivered them through the different genres of Scripture," Erickson says. "Preaching that is bound and influenced by the structure, substance, and spirit of the text forces you to speak in the creative ways in which God has already spoken. It forces you to display His creativity rather than try to be cute and clever. The way God has delivered His text through the genres of Scripture is the conduit in which I must operate in order to present with clarity and faithfulness."

Senior pastor of Ovilla Road Baptist Church in Ovilla, Texas, Erickson employs this preaching method in order to appropriately communicate both God's message and voice to His people. Aiming to do more than merely explain a text, Erickson strives to show his congregation "how the text moves and responds to the structure" and then "hit it home" with a "powerful, spirit-filled application [that is, one reflecting the spirit of the text] that seeks to be life-changing." Essentially, Erickson aims to be a Spirit-driven preacher.

Erickson adopted the text-driven preaching model from Southwestern Seminary. He completed his Master of Divinity there in 2008 and enrolled in the Ph.D. program in homiletics two years later. Initially choosing Southwestern because of its high view of Scripture, Erickson says the institution equipped him to refine the art and craft of preaching.

"Many schools and seminaries can teach you how to preach a sermon," Erickson says,

"[but] not many are able or willing to teach you how to preach the text. That's what text-driven preaching is all about."

Erickson became ORBC's senior pastor in 2012, and his goal has been to "reflect the majesty and goodness of Christ through faithful preaching and pastoral care." As such, text-driven preaching has been a key aspect of his ministry.

"One of the goals of the church is to train the people to think biblically-to adequately gain a Christian worldview," Erickson explains. "You cannot do that devoid of Scripture. Learning to think in the ways God thinks is crucial for His people to walk in obedience and faithfulness. Text-driven preaching under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is the fuel to obedience."

Preaching truly text-driven sermons means preaching Spirit driven sermons-that is, placing special emphasis on the structure and spirit of a given text. Regarding the former, Erickson explains that sermons must follow "the path" already laid out in Scripture, which means paying attention to how the text delivers its message. For example, if the passage is inductive-meaning it builds toward its main point-the sermon must also be inductive. Likewise, if the passage is deductive-meaning the main point is made first, with supporting points following after-the sermon must also be deductive.

Erickson says such Scriptures as Old Testament narratives, parables, and even some epistles are inductive. "In inductive preaching," he continues, "the listener's interest is sustained because you have not yet arrived at the central theme of the text or the Big Idea. The audience is learning with you, and, if done correctly, they can feel the weight and tension of the text throughout."

An example of an inductive passage is Jesus' parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. "The main idea of the text is that God is lavish and gracious in His willingness to forgive the sins of both sons," Erickson explains. "In my delivery, I wouldn't flesh this out until the end, because it's not until the end of the story that we see the point."

Although many preachers tend to focus on the prodigal son, asserting that all sinners are prodigals who need to come to Jesus, Erickson asserts that this is not the point of the text (true though it may be). The emphasis of the text, rather, is on the father's compassion toward both of his sons. Therefore, while sinners' relationship to the prodigal son is certainly relevant, it is not the main point of the text and thus cannot be the main point of the sermon. Rather,



the main point as well as the climax of the sermon-if the sermon is developed inductively (like the text) must be the compassion of the father.

"Text-driven preaching forces me to emphasize the right things at the right times," Erickson explains. "That is, the points of the story are dependent on the structure and style of the text."

In addition to the structure, the spirit-or author-intended feel of the text is also crucial for preaching text-driven sermons. "Because I believe all Scripture is inspired," Erickson says, "I don't have the liberty to acknowledge the substance and structure of the text while ignoring its emotive feel."

Psalm 23, for example, wherein David writes of God as his shepherd, carries a particular "feel." Erickson explains, "The emotive feeling is that it's meant to encourage and bring warmth. It's meant to draw me closer to the fact that Jesus is my good shepherd, and He brings comfort in life, death, through trials, and everywhere in between." A text-driven sermon on this passage, Erickson says, would convey these same sentiments.

The spirit of the text is also important in regard to the application of the text, for the application must be made in light of the author's original intention. In this way, the application is tied to the explanation of the text to the extent that the application illuminates the text itself. That is, by thoroughly explaining a text of Scripture, a preacher reveals how applicable the text is to the lives of its hearers. Erickson summarizes, "I see one of my main jobs as not making the text relevant-God has already done that-but rather showing [the congregation] how relevant God's Word is."

As Erickson has preached with all of these factors in mind over the past four years at ORBC, he has seen



Drew and Hailey Erickson

the people in his congregation grow in both their appreciation of Scripture and their understanding of God. People regularly tell him that they see the text more clearly because of the manner in which his messages are delivered.

As a text-driven preacher, Erickson considers such sentiments from the congregation to be the greatest possible compliment, for he does not strive to be "cute and clever" in his preaching but rather to display the creativity with which God has already delivered His message in His Word. Therefore, for people to see God more clearly through a deeper understanding of the Scriptures is the best possible outcome of his preaching.

This article is one of several in the Southwestern News (SWN) focusing on text-driven preaching and features one of the pastors of Ellis County. This article is reprinted with permission. Originally published in the Summer/2016 edition of the SWN, a quarterly publication of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Pastors and Ministers Luncheon

January 24
FBC Maypearl

February 28
Eastridge Baptist Church

March 28
Remedy Church

For more information call 972-937-9320

Seeing God at Work!

By Richard Cody

Cindy Wesch, her husband Les and friends Anthony and Betty Golden were loading a horse trailer to carry gas and food to Cindy's family in Mississippi. The night before they were to leave they received donations of baby water, baby food and diapers. Cindy almost left the baby supplies since no one in her family had any babies but her pastor, Jerry Hall said, "take them with you and give to a church if no one needs them."

Hurricane Katrina had hit New Orleans and Mississippi. People had lost power and were quickly running out of staples. Our TV's were filled with people stranded at the Superdome. Rescue workers could not get there quickly enough.

For several years Cindy had been a pewsitter, but that was not her nature. When she saw what was happening she knew she had to help. Cindy, Les and their friends, gathered supplies and headed to Mississippi. After delivering supplies to her family they headed to the church to drop off the remaining supplies, which included the baby supplies.

They found the church and saw that both the church building and the parsonage had been destroyed from the hurricane. They were directed to the volunteer fire department, because that is where the pastor and his family were staying. Upon arrival, they found out there was a great need for baby water, baby food and diapers. The hospital had been closed because the generators were on the first floor and had been damaged by flooding. Babies and other patients had to be sent home.

Having recently gone through the "Purpose Driven Life" study, Cindy realized how God had orchestrated the baby supplies getting to those in need. God wasn't through.

Les and Anthony had calculated precisely how



much fuel was needed to make it to Gulfport, Mississippi, where they all had family. They had heard from their family in Gulfport, but still wanted to check on them. That was until they heard that three of the patients sent home from the hospital were on dialysis. They needed fuel to run the generators for the patients to have their dialysis treatment. Cindy did not make it to Gulfport, but the patients received their treatments.

It was a trip that forever changed how she looks at things. When the group returned home they decided they wanted to do more. They checked into Texas Baptist Men's Disaster Relief, and one of their first



Baptist Men's Disaster Relief, and one of their first questions was "can women help"? Texas Baptist Men said about 40% of their volunteers are women. Cindy and the group were soon trained by the Texas Baptist Men's Disaster Relief, and within weeks Cindy was called up for Hurricane Rita that hit southeast Texas. Cindy was helping with a cooking unit when a lady drove up frantically asking for help. A tree had fallen on her house and FEMA had given her 48 hours to evacuate. Her husband and son were both deployed to the Middle East, and she needed help packing and moving. Cindy volunteered, but was heart-broken when all they had were plastic bags in which to put dishes, glasses and other breakable items. Cindy kept hearing the breaking of dishes and glasses as they stacked them in a storage building. This experience helped fan the flame for a first-of-its-kind "Box Unit" that Barry Bensmiller developed for Ellis Baptist Association. The Box Unit provides free boxes, tape, markers and other packing items to disaster survivors. These boxes also have words of encouragement or scriptures for the recipients. Today Texas has three other box units and other states have started their own.

Cindy started out as a yellow cap, which is very hands on and ministering to people. Her gifts of administration and logistics have led her to be used as both a blue cap and white cap. She knows the importance of organizational structure, especially during a disaster but she truly enjoys wearing the yellow cap and ministering to the people.

Cindy's heart for people has led her to become involved with hospice. A dear friend of hers passed away from cancer in her 30's. She spent time with her and the family and realized the need for someone with



those gifts to minister to the family during this time.

What does a person do when they help with emotionally draining ministries? Cindy has found respite in riding her horses. She said horses don't talk back and really don't care what you say. It has become a safe place for Cindy. Les and Cindy also keep chickens and turkeys and Cindy says the animals are very entertaining.

Cindy and Les are members at Freedom Community Church, in west Ellis County., where Cindy puts her gifts of administration and logistics to good use.

What drives Cindy to go back into disaster areas? The answer goes back to what brought her into the work initially, she sees God working and wants to be a part of it.





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Texas Baptist Men Disaster Relief Training

January 20-21, 2017

Baylor Baptist Church
210 N. Preston St.
Ennis, TX 75119

(40% of TBM Volunteers are women)

Friday evening, January 20:

Yellow Cap Training - Basic Training for men, women, or teens over 16

6:00pm - 9:00pm - There is a \$20 fee for the background check.

(Check or Credit Card Only, No Cash Please)

Saturday, January 21: (No Fee)

Mud Out	8:00am - 11:00am
Child Care	8:00am - 10:00am
Box Ministry	8:00am - 10:00am
Shower / Laundry Unit	10:00am - 12:00pm
Heavy Equipment	1:00pm - 5:00pm

(The Heavy Equipment class will be held at Whitaker Metal Deck at 800 FM 879, Waxahachie, TX 75165)

Pre-registration is not required, however, we would like to know if you are coming for planning purposes. Please contact Jim Lawton: jimlawton@aol.com, 469-682-7016 or Ellis Baptist Association: communications@ellisbaptist.org, 972-937-9320. **Scholarships are available!!**

Sponsored by Ellis Christian Disaster Relief



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