

The Tozour Times

News from 2019

A Wedding for our Firstborn



From the time that she was born into our family, we have prayed that the Lord would lead Briana to the man of His choice. In high school, Briana became acquainted with Andrew Spence when I preached at his church in Florida. He invited her to their junior-senior banquet later that year. Little did we know then that Briana would later go to college with, take interest in, date, and then marry Andrew!

Briana, a graphic designer, has long dreamed of a picturesque and creative wedding. She decided she wanted a small wedding in a greenhouse. Our friends, the Griffins, own Round Tree Farm in southern New Jersey. (The Griffins have been life-long friends who are like family to us. Betty Griffin and my mother are best friends. Their

mothers were friends. We kids and our children are friends. We span five generations of friendship!) So, this was one of the reasons she decided to have the wedding in the greenhouse at Round Tree Farm.

In early September, I had scheduled meetings in New Jersey and Delaware to keep our family close to the farm. This allowed us to spend two weeks cleaning and preparing the greenhouse for the wedding. After many hours of hard work, it became a beautiful wedding venue—just as Briana had hoped.

On September 21, I had the blessing of walking Briana down the aisle as her dad. Then, as preacher, I officiated the ceremony. Dave, Nicole, Angela, and I were thrilled to see our children join as husband and wife. About seventy family members and mutual friends from all over the country took part in the special day. What a beautiful, sunny day it was. Our hearts were filled with joy on this happy occasion!

The young couple now lives in Pensacola, where Andrew is the youth pastor at Lighthouse Baptist Church in Gulf Breeze, Florida. Briana has been busy working in town while growing her freelance design business. We are grateful for their hearts for the Lord and desire to be used in ministry.

Being Honored and Giving Glory to God

It has been a privilege to preach in camps, churches, and colleges and to have been in twenty-one states in 2019. It was a special blessing in February to preach two days at my college alma mater, Pensacola Christian College. I had the opportunity to speak to the general student body in chapel and to the seminary students the next day.

May brought a unique blessing to us. I was conferred with an honorary “doctor of divinity” by Ambassador Baptist College (Lattimore, North Carolina). The chancellor, Dr. Ron Comfort, is the person the Lord used most to direct me into full-time evangelism. When President Alton Beal asked if I would receive an honorary from Ambassador Baptist College, I said that I was hesitant; after all, one works hard to earn a doctorate. He replied, “Academic doctorates are earned for educational accomplishments. We offer honorary doctorates to recognize faithfulness and character. We want our students to emulate people who faithfully exhibit those traits. Your twenty-five years in evangelism have been marked by sound preaching and godly living, and we would like to recognize that if you would allow us.” I was humbled



to receive this honorary degree at the graduation on May 3rd, and I was very thankful to have my wife, my girls, my mom, my sister Lauren, and her husband Steve there for this special occasion.

Hawaiian Highlights



The travel highlight of the year was our bi-annual trip to Hawaii. We spent six weeks ministering in Paradise: six different churches (on Oahu, the big Island, and Kauai), a family camp, a men’s conference, and a teen camp (all of these for Ohana Baptist, our long-time friends in Honolulu). There were people saved, marriages strengthened, Christians built up, and laborers called out. The Lord be praised for all the good wrought in those weeks!

On a personal note, our family enjoyed a few days at Disney’s Aulani Resort (thanks to some generous friends). We also got to snorkel with dolphins in the ocean several times! It was a wonderful family time for the five of us—just before Briana headed off into marriage and a new path in life.

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

Evangelists (and other preachers) sometimes hear criticism for preaching for “decisions.” Preaching is designed to draw men to conclusions and responses. Scriptures clearly supports the notion of making choices based on truths heard: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve...” (Joshua 24:15); “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him. (I Kings 18:21); “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

This year in ministry I was reminded of the crucial importance of *decisions*. I had just preached on the importance of prevailing prayer, encouraging people to keep praying year after year for souls even if they think their prayers are not making headway. A deacon’s wife came to me and said, “I’m a living example of the blessing of not giving up on someone in prayer. We had prayed for over **50 years** for my mom to be saved. She was very religious and could not see her need for salvation. But, Bro. Rich, at age **101** she called upon the Lord Jesus to save her! And, what was even more remarkable, my dad later got saved...at age **105!!**” I’m glad she decided not to quit on prayer.

While visiting a church-plant kickoff in Leawood, Kansas, I met a woman who said she first met me in California when I was a representative for Pensacola Christian College. She told me that she was committed to a secular college in her home state at the time, but she decided to go to PCC after learning of it through my presentation. Her husband, who is now a pastor, said, “That’s where we met! I’m sure glad she made that decision.”

Our home church sent a group to Bible Baptist Shepherd Church in Standing Rock, New Mexico, this fall. They came back with a story that really encouraged me. They told me of a fellow who was saved as a teenager when I preached at this Navajo church. He is now an adult and is planting a Baptist church in the neighboring town of Crown Point. Wow!

My Christian school coach used to tell us, “Every decision you make affects the next decision you make.” How important to make right choices. If you have never decided to call on the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, I earnestly entreat you to do so. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (John 1:12) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13)

Trailer News

Many of you have asked about the status of our trailer. It is still holding together, albeit it has gotten considerably less stable. Angela has been looking diligently on the internet for a replacement, but we have not yet found the right full-time unit that would best meet our needs. We pray daily for the next trailers. Thankfully, we have been provided with approximately half of the money we will likely need to purchase our next home. The Lord truly has been good to us, and we look forward to His working in the year ahead!

