



Q&A with Dr. Jacob West

For nine years, Dr. Jacob West has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Stamford, located about 40 miles north of Abilene and famous for the Texas Cowboy Reunion. He and his wife, Emily, live there with their three children, Ellie, 7; Ryan, 5; and Natalie, 3.

Background

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

My first ministry position was at First Baptist Church in Rotan. I served as student minister for five years. In May 2006, I received a call to First Baptist Church in Sweetwater to fill its student minister position.

- Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a family of three boys living in small Concho Valley towns. My family lived in Ballinger, Eden and Sonora as my father served with state and county law enforcement offices.

- How did you come to faith in Christ?

Faith for me started with my parents and grandparents teaching me about God's love from an early age. My father and mother took us to worship and Sunday school classes regularly at First Baptist Church in Eden. My twin brother and I actively participated in Mission Friends and Royal Ambassadors.

The moment of repentance and following Jesus happened in my bedroom with no one around. This was a rare moment of solitude for a 9-year-old twin. I simply prayed, "Jesus, come into my life." It was the first time I ever prayed something like this, and I believe God heard the prayer and honored my request. A couple weeks later, Bro. Mike Harkrider baptized me.

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

Hardin-Simmons University has provided everything I have educationally. I arrived at HSU in August 2000. After graduating with a bachelor's degree, I then sought the master of divinity degree from HSU's Logsdon Seminary. Logsdon's doctor of ministry program started soon after I graduated, and I entered the program in August 2010. I walked the stage in Behrens Auditorium as the program's second graduate in May 2013. My DMin project dealt with leading single-ethnic churches to transition to multi-ethnic ministry.

Ministry/church

- Why do you feel called into ministry?

I feel called to the ministry because God made it clear that's what I should do. I felt strongly impressed while in high school that serving the local church is what I should do with my life. The pull of this call was inescapable as I considered other career paths. The night I committed to God's call was a pivotal night in my life. I remember it vividly 17 years later.

- What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?

My favorite aspect of ministry is that it is God's redemptive instrument. The broad work within Christian ministry gives light to the narrow path to our Savior.

- What one aspect of congregational life gives you the greatest joy?

The church's worship service gives me the greatest joy. Here's why:

First, FBC Stamford has one service. Everyone is together in one room. Children, teenagers and senior adults all worship together. I am completely in favor of multigenerational worship or family worship. I admit this requires patience.

I could give many more reasons, but the last I will give is the worship service affords the opportunity I have to hold up God's word before his church. I consider preaching an incredible opportunity. It is hard, challenging work, but it brings great joy.

About Jacob

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

Mentors for me include *my father* and *Ken Lyle Sr.* Ken, a retired denominational leader and pastor, adopted me as my field supervisor in the doctor of ministry program. It was the first time I met with someone on a regular basis to discuss life in ministry. We met for two years, and I pray often that God would allow Ken's love for people to appear in my ministry.

My dad, *Joe David West*, provided stable, consistent leadership for our family. He worked in a high-stress job as a state trooper but kept a calm environment for our home. I saw him volunteer in our towns and lead organizations with fairness. He said some things that definitely stuck with me. For instance, a situation arose where I was able to give a sermon at church at a young age. It went well, and the sermon was brief, which everyone loved. A few weeks later, some of my preteen minor acts of rebellion did not correlate with statements I had made in the sermon about the Christian life. Daddy pulled me aside and in a kind but stern manner said something that set me up well for a life in ministry. He said something like, "If you want to be a leader at church, you need to think about your choices." As a 12-year-old, I hadn't processed something that seems so obvious. He didn't mean I would have to be perfect, but that I would have to take care of business. He wasn't a pastor, but the state trooper side of him knew that if you aren't careful, even pastors can get in trouble.

- What has being a lifelong Chicago Cubs fan taught you about ministry?

The easy answer is perseverance, but lessons learned or observations made go further. One of the most incredible experiences in my 35 years was witnessing Harry Caray lead the Wrigley Field faithful in "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" the summer before my freshman year of high school. He leaned over the railing of the broadcast booth and chanted, "A one, a two, a three ... Take me out to the ballgame." I could almost shed a tear thinking about that moment. Perhaps worship leaders and pastors can learn from his ability to get people to participate in a corporate exercise with such joy.

Also, after so long—108 years—the Cubs finally won the World Series this past November. Journalism exploded over the huge story. One journalist asked the players what made the difference in Game 7 turning to the Cubs' favor after the Indians tied the score late in the game. Many said it was a teammate's speech in the guest clubhouse voiced during a rain delay. The speech inspired them to take the lead and win the World Series. As a communicator of God's word, I should never underestimate the power of words.