



Called to Teach, Reach, and Serve

by Jan Wilton, Homeschool Representative

Since childhood, I knew God was calling me to teach and minister to children. As a child, I spent many hours playing school with my willing and sometimes unwilling siblings. Every week, I enjoyed helping my mother prepare for teaching Sunday school. In fact, in third grade, I prepared and shared for “Show and Tell” the story of Samuel hearing and answering God’s call. It was the highlight of my third grade year. My passion for teaching was ignited!

The Call to Teach

When I was 12 years old, my mother went back to college to prepare to be a teacher. This living example of pursuing a dream, a call, and a passion for teaching children grew into a personal call from God to me to teach children in school and the church. In my eighth-grade junior high school guidance class, students were required to write an essay about their personal goals for the future. In this essay, I declared my plan to attend college to prepare for my call to be a teacher for schools and churches.

As a high school student, I planned and strived to be prepared for college. During my senior year, I was sidetracked by a young man and decided to put off college to get married. My parents would not agree to the marriage idea then, but they encouraged me to continue the plan to attend Olivet Nazarene University. My mother wisely advised, “If you have a college degree in teaching, you can always find a place to work. Teachers are always in demand.” Being a dutiful daughter, I continued to pursue plans for college. In the fall of 1967, I entered Olivet Nazarene University and completed a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education in 1971.

My mother's advice was true. This degree has given me numerous opportunities to teach in public school, Christian schools, and preschools, including children age 2 through grade 9. I have had these opportunities: teaching in an inner-city Title I program, directing two preschools, organizing my own tutoring business, serving several school districts as a substitute teacher, and homeschooling my children. Today, I am an academic reading tutor for grades 3-6 at Lancaster Elementary Life Schools, and I am privileged to encourage and resource my daughter and others who are homeschool educators.

The Call to Reach Others with the Gospel

God called me to be a teacher and pastor. In 2008, I was ordained as an elder in the Church of the Nazarene, serving as children's pastor and senior pastor as well as teaching at church camps. In 2011, I received a Master of Arts in missional leadership from Northwest Nazarene University. This has continued to enhance my ability to reach God's children of all ages. My desire to encourage others to grow in the Word of God by becoming lifelong learners is being fulfilled.

A year ago, I began to seek God's next ministry assignment. It came in the form of being a substitute teacher at a charter school in my neighborhood. I accepted an offer for a four-day-per-week staff position as academic reading tutor for grades 3-6. I also serve the Lord volunteering as clergy for Kairos Prison Ministry at a Texas prison women's unit.

Some time ago, I shared with my school principal that the deep desire of my heart is to be a pastor/children's pastor. She replied, "You have a ministry here. You are our children's pastor!" How many children's pastors have 600 children to whom they minister? What a blessing to follow a call of God, prepared and ready to serve where He assigns.

Most recently, God gave me what my heart had been longing for: a children's pastor position in an inner-city church, reaching out to children of all cultures to help them know, love, and serve God. The wise words of my mom were true and have blessed me for a lifetime of serving God.

Jan Wilton lives in Lancaster, Texas. She has taught in Christian school, public school, and homeschool settings. She is currently serving as an instructional reading tutor for grades 4-6 in a charter school. She encourages her daughter, who is a homeschool mom. You may contact Jan at revjan2008@gmail.com.