

## Dan King: Being Prepared Through Every Step of the Way



Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

[1 Peter 4:10](#)

Left: Retired Pastor Dan King and his wife Janet  
(Photo courtesy of D. King)

Retired pastor Dan King looks back over his 18-plus years in ministry and sees that God was preparing him every step of the way. Through good times and bad, King recognizes that every phase of his journey has the Lord's fingerprint on it.

God's plan for King's future ministry roles took form in high school through the Future Farmers of America training in public speaking and judging competitions. He remembers that these foundational experiences nurtured the necessary skills to become a pastor. "Judging competitions require you to make decisions, and pastors have to be able to make good decisions."

God continued to build on these initial foundations during King's college career. He was a 21-year-old senior at Virginia Tech studying agriculture when he was chosen to be in leadership with a campus ministry that organized fellowship opportunities for diverse Christian groups. This prepared him well for ministry, he says, because it helped him understand how to bring people with differing ideas together.

After college, King taught high school agriculture and eventually purchased a farm. After closing on the property, his wife, Janet, shared with him the entry in her journal for that date exactly three years earlier. While they were dating, she had prayed that God would let him become the farmer he dreamed about being. It is challenging to get started as a first-generation farm owner, but God is the one who opens the gates. The farm is now preserved for the next generation as he and Janet have three sons, all married to Christian women and walking in the faith. Two of their sons live on the farm, while their third son is in Iowa. They have five grandchildren and another on the way.

The next steps in the preparation process led King to become Shenandoah Valley Youth for Christ's executive director and teach Sunday School classes for 60 middle school students. Although only a volunteer Sunday School teacher, he says he was "... having a blast doing that ministry." King was also speaking as a layperson on fifth Sundays at Mt. Zion-Linville.

In recounting his call to ministry in the Shenandoah District, he says Mt. Zion-Linville invited him several times to consider becoming their pastor. He always shook it off because he was not, at that time, a member of the Church of the Brethren. One day, he was having lunch with Cindy Perry, who happened to be in Harrisonburg for a meeting. She told him she was curious about what he would do with this opportunity to pastor.

He replied that he was having a good time teaching the middle school class. She pointed out that 200 people at the church could teach middle school classes, but he could go to Mt. Zion-Linville and “love on” those people. That comment caused him to reconsider, and in February 2005, he worked with Mt. Zion-Linville to establish a team for a shared ministry. He was ordained in 2008.

The next step in his ministry journey would catch King by surprise. He felt led to step down as pastor at Mt. Zion-Linville after five and a half years. The unexpected blessing was having more time with his father. They had lunch or dinner weekly. Sadly, King’s father died just eight months later. He reports he would have had regrets had he missed those moments with his father. “The Lord could see ahead and knew that I would need that time because I was close to my father,” he said.

Enduring the loss of a family member is not the only challenge King has faced. His lengthy battle with cancer is another step on the journey that prepared him to be a better pastor. The resolve to keep the farm in his family thwarted all the doctors’ best advice. After 15 years of being encouraged to sell the farm and do something easier on his body, his doctors gave up asking.

King has been the pastor at Mt. Pleasant Church of the Brethren for nine years. King recounts how the COVID-19 pandemic took a lot out of him and the congregation there. His style of ministry enables him to become energized when he is with people. It was difficult to keep going during the crisis because of limited personal interactions. He admits that the challenges during that time created new ministry opportunities that would not have otherwise been imagined.

Life is taking yet another unusual turn as King embraces retirement. After two years of contemplating and praying for guidance, God was silent. As he meditated on the scriptural promise that God grants the heart’s desires, he closely examined what his heart desires. He discovered that spending time supporting his children and grandchildren by taking on some of the family’s farm responsibilities is what he desires. His labor enables his son, who manages the farm, to get home to his family earlier in the day, which means a lot to King.

Reflecting on his journey in ministry, King says some of his fondest memories were the international mission trips to Haiti, India and Nepal. These experiences “Transformed my life and helped me have empathy for all the people living on two dollars or less a day,” he said. As for what he looks forward to most in retirement, King says the mental break. “It’s really a lot of mental work to prepare 48 to 50 sermons a year, weddings, funerals, and other services.”

What advice would King give to someone thinking about going into the ministry? “Make sure it is a call from God. Don’t seek a position.” He quotes [1 Peter 4:10](#) and encourages future leaders to engage in ministry at some level before being called as a pastor. He cites his friend, Cindy Perry, “Those who want grants for ministry who are not already doing ministry with what they have are not the people I support financially.” King

concur and advises, “Don’t go into it for you, but if you have a heart for others, pursue it.”

King also praises the advantages of bivocational ministry because he had confidence that he could humbly speak the truth with scripture to back it up. This frees pastors to share from their hearts and not be concerned about losing income. King always emphasizes that the congregation “Does not have to take my word for it, “and he challenges listeners to “argue with the Author. “

The most helpful ministry advice King received was when his dad told him that the best commentary on scripture is scripture. The second-best advice came from one of his professors at EMC, who said that when preparing to teach a Sunday School class or preach, “We read the text, we read the text, we read the text, and sooner or later God will speak.” God has, indeed, spoken in King’s life in poignant ways through every step of the journey.

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