

Robert Bardeen

Bio

I was born into poverty. My father came out of World War 2 with only a high school education. He sold used cars. Our Los Angeles home of two bedrooms had to be enough for a family of five. At three years old, I had polio and spent six months in a hospital without family contact. My parents had to enter me into school when I was just 4 1/2 because my mother needed to work. I was behind in social skills, emotional maturity, and educational capability. Every day, the speech teacher pulled me out for extra work. In sixth grade, when we changed school districts, my teacher asked me about my nationality because my speech pattern was so poor. I barely graduated from high school and my college entrance was solely based on an open acceptance system in California. I struggled in college and seminary. I read slow, wrote poorly, spoke with poor grammar, and lacked confidence.

It is by the grace of God.

We started to attend a Presbyterian church after my father survived a terrible oil tank accident; he wanted to meet the God who became present in the hospital. Three years later when I was twelve, we moved to Orange County, and my parents helped start a new Presbyterian church. For ten years, I grew as a young Christian, enjoying fellowship, teaching Sunday school, leading the youth group, helping with recovery from the 1965 Watts Rebellion, and receiving love from followers of Christ. In 1966, I felt the call to enter the ministry, and despite my disabilities and learning problems, I entered Princeton.

My wife, Joyce, and I met at Princeton, and got married during seminary. We have three children and fourteen grandchildren. Love is great to receive and give away.

In 1986, a church member came into my office to show me her notebook and share with me two years of research about my behavior. "You are dyslexic, and I don't think you know it," she told me. After reviewing her notes and praying for me, she advised me to see a speech therapist for more information and guidance. I did so and continued for three years. In 1990 I began work on a D.Min at Louisville Seminary and a MA at Pittsburg State University, while also serving as a full-time pastor. I did so to prove to myself that I was not stupid (a constant self-image since I was three).

I want to serve Christ, love others, and get organized to do both. My mother used to tell me that I was a late bloomer. She was correct. My problems with dyslexia complicated so much and prevented normal education and maturity. But over the years of living and being loved, my goals in ministry have come into focus: serving Christ, loving others, and getting organized to do both. I have to work hard to accomplish these goals because I don't have any natural abilities of reading, writing, and speaking. All of this has taught me to trust God, and I seek to do so each day.

Psalm 40:1-2 has been especially helpful for me over the years. *I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and hear my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure* (NRSV). I am grateful that God heard my cry, lifted me out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock.