

CHANGING PATHS



Unable to sleep, Lance Bowman woke up earlier than usual, and got ready for the day. He arrived at work well before anyone else, nervously awaiting the start of a day when most people aren't working. Gone was the nine-to-five schedule at the bank, as well as the normal business week in the life of a loan officer. Now he's a full-time preacher.

At 44 years old, Bowman, a Lubbock, Texas, native and 1992 graduate of Texas Tech University's College of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources, was changing careers for the first time since he was in college working as a bank teller for American State Bank.

In today's working world, Bowman's situation may be more common than some may think. According to a 2012 survey from Yahoo Finance and Parade magazine, close to 60 percent of American workers say they would choose a different career.

A poll conducted by Monster.com, the online employment website, shows the mentality of American workers amid a challenging economic climate. Fifty-five percent said they are considering switching their career in response to economic troubles, while 30 percent would consider a move if they could find a better career. However, just 15 percent said their career was not impacted by the economy.

Unlike those surveyed, Bowman said his decision to change careers after working in the same industry for 19 years wasn't based on the economy or pay. He was simply realizing a dream that lay dormant since before college.

After starting out in the Rawls College of Business Administration at Texas Tech, majoring in business administration, Bowman heard good things

about CASNR's department of agricultural and applied economics from friends studying agri-business.

"I didn't enjoy classes of 300 to 400 students," Bowman said. "Thirty to 40 students was what I liked."

After making the switch to agri-business, Bowman said his grades improved, and he learned to enjoy his time in the classroom more.

Jared Lay, assistant director for the Career Center and CASNR liaison, said Texas Tech is an institution that not only prepares its graduates to find a job after they leave the school, but also sticks with them down the road.

"Our services are available to any graduate, even if they've been out of school for 20 years," Lay said. "We offer consultation to anyone who's looking to switch careers; whether they need help with their resume, portfolio, or the interview process, we want to make sure our alumni can succeed."

After graduation in May 1992, Bowman started working with American Bank of Commerce in Lubbock, Texas, and began training as a loan officer.



For 19 years, Bowman worked as a loan officer and loan department manager for various banks in Lubbock, spending the last four years with the South Plains Association of Governments.

Bowman recalls one of many occasions he helped out a young cotton farmer. As a commercial lending officer, he was a specialist when it came to helping others fulfill their dreams.

"I had occasion to help a couple of young farmers break into the cotton business by providing some operating financing for them," Bowman said. "That was a good experience, because I got to see some young men who were very passionate about getting into an industry that isn't very popular among young people.

"To have an opportunity to help a young guy get off the ground and fulfill a dream was a great experience for me."

Watching these young men fulfill lifelong dreams inspired Bowman to continue pursuing a dream of his own.

In his early teens, Bowman remembers a trip he took with his family to see his Uncle Dee Bowman, a long-time preacher. On this trip, he recalls a conversation he had with his uncle.

"Uncle Dee and I were just passing the time alone when he said to me, 'I want you to think about being a preacher someday. I'm not going to say that's what you need to do, but I just want you to think about,'" Lance said.

"That stuck with me.

"The idea of preaching was something that never really rested in my mind. It was always there, and it was something I dreamed about."

As a dedicated member of his church, Lance put himself to work teaching Bible class, leading song services, and even preaching an occasional sermon. At his banking job, Lance said he put an emphasis on making his profession about people.

"What drew me into the banking business in the first place was the people," Lance said. "As a loan officer, you have countless opportunities to interact with people, and give them real help as well."

After moving into a management position with the South Plains Council of Governments, Lance

recalls feeling disconnected from the reason he went into banking.

"As a manager of an entire department, I didn't get the same interaction with people that I had as loan officer," Lance said.

Making the decision to end his career in banking proved to be both exciting and challenging. With the support of his family, friends, and the church, Lance informed his boss he would be leaving the banking industry to pursue a lifelong dream.

"Lending and banking was all I knew," Lance said. "I was thinking about getting out of my comfort zone, and I didn't really know what to expect in the preaching business."

Bowman said he remembers his first day in his new office, with a brand new job.

"It was one of the most exciting days, and it felt so right for me," Lance said. "I never looked back."

Without the support and encouragement of his wife Shelly, Lance said he most likely never would have realized his dream. Shelly, an English teacher at Frenship Middle School, said she has never been more proud of her husband.

"Watching his humble attitude and his passion for what he does has been so amazing," Shelly said. "He hasn't wavered in his responsibility to me and the boys, and if anything, our family is now stronger than ever."

With a year of experience under his belt, Lance said he has never regretted his decision to leave the financial industry and pursue his life calling. Since his first day behind the pulpit, he has known this was the right choice.

"I remember everyone being very attentive to what I had to say, on that first Sunday," Lance recalls. "Everyone here has just been so supportive of me and my family, and I couldn't ask for a better job." **T**



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