

## Alumni Spotlight: Buddy Childress (M.A. in Theological Studies '77—Hamilton)



*“When alumni of my era get together, it is a rare occasion when someone doesn’t mention how thankful they are to God for the privilege of attending Gordon-Conwell.”*

**Current title:** Founder & Minister-at-large of Needle’s Eye Ministries

**Family:** Married to Laura for 53 years. Our children are Cam, Cabell, Kendall, and Laura Carter. We have 10 grandchildren.

**Favorite professors:** Christy Wilson, Gordon Fee

**Favorite class:** Evangelical Awakenings in America, taught by Dr. Richard Lovelace.

**Favorite memory:** The professors—they were not just excellent teachers and scholars, but also mentors, and brothers and sisters in Christ

### What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell, and how has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education in with other life events?

In July I will begin my 45<sup>th</sup> year with Needle’s Eye Ministries. I came to Gordon-Conwell just shy of two years into the faith, following a business career in a family-owned business and two Fortune 500 companies.

We knew God had called us to Gordon-Conwell, but I thought I would ultimately be going into the pastorate. At the start of my second semester, over about a two-week period in our daily devotionals and independent of one another, the Lord made it clear to me and my wife that he was leading us to minister to the person I used to be—the hard-driving, success-at-all-costs business person.

I had never heard of such a type of ministry, so I went to my advisor, Dr. Christy Wilson, and shared what we thought God was leading us to do. I still remember his words, “Well, Buddy, wouldn’t it be just like God to use your past for his future?” Done deal—we never looked back!

Subsequently, I changed my degree program to gain flexibility in course selection. Through Dr. Wilson’s encouragement and tenacity, I was able to get an independent reading course approved by the Academic Affairs Committee (on the second try!). It was entitled “Effective Evangelism With the Executive and Professional.” That course’s work produced a paper which became the initial strategic plan for Needle’s Eye Ministries.

We began Needle’s Eye in July of 1977. Last month I transitioned from Executive Director but will remain with the ministry—doing a lot of ministry, a little fundraising, and no administration! Needle’s Eye has evolved and kept up with the changing times, but our mission has never changed. We are committed to introducing marketplace men and women to life-changing faith in Jesus—encouraging them to impact their workplaces and our community with his values, ethics and love.

Forty-five years out, I can't imagine Needle's Eye without Gordon-Conwell. How thankful to God I am for the professors, the experience of the Gordon-Conwell community, and the lasting friendships forged during my years "on the hill."

**How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your work and what has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence?**

As I mentioned earlier, the theological education I received at Gordon-Conwell was outstanding. The ability to marry that education with my business background was providential and an absolute blessing from the Lord.

Perhaps as impacting as the education I received at GCTS was the ability to be mentored by and observe the lives of godly professors. I will never forget a fall night in 1975. It was my first semester, and I was in a New Testament Survey class taught by Dr. Gordon Fee. That night "Doc" was teaching the Gospel of John, and as he began to "unpack" the incarnation, this world-class scholar paused and backed away from the microphone. It was obvious that he was overtaken by God's love as he remembered not just the text but its personal implication for his own life. What an incredible, and unintended, example to a classroom full of seminarians. It doesn't get any better than that!

**What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are just entering the working world?**

I think I would like to primarily address those alumni who are entering the world of non-vocational ministry. As you become a teacher, digital communication specialist, marketing manager, etc., I encourage you to see your work as your ministry because it is! Paul reminds us "whatever you do, work at it with all your heart... it is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23-24). Additionally, and perhaps even more stunning, is his admonition to Titus that work (in this case, quite secular work) done well attracts the lost to Jesus (Titus 2:9-10)! And oh, by the way, don't forget that none of the disciples had prepared for "full-time vocational ministry."

**Do you have any publications or any links you'd like to share?**

To learn more about Needle's Eye Ministries, please go to our web site:  
<https://www.needleseye.org/>.

If you would like to check out or purchase my book, *Navigating the Needle's Eye: Forty Years of Ministry to Business and Professional People*, go to:

- <https://wipfandstock.com/9781532685071/navigating-the-needles-eye/>
- [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
- **For a signed copy** contact Needle's Eye Ministries office at [frontdesk@needleseye.org](mailto:frontdesk@needleseye.org) or 804-358-1283.