



HOMEWORK, HUGS HOPE

The Influence of Just One Christian Teacher

by President Matt Proctor

"When you

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even in high school, SHELBY DAVIS
FRAKES knew she wanted to be a teacher.

Growing up in Denton, Kansas ("it's very, very, very small"), Shelby says that others often commented on how well she worked with kids. When Shelby was in junior high, she watched as her mother returned to school to finish her education, eventually becoming a high school English teacher.

As the middle of three sisters, she also watched as her older sister became a nurse, but Shelby's path was clear. "I've always enjoyed really old people and really young people. But I knew I couldn't be a geriatric nurse because I couldn't handle drawing blood," she says with a smile. "So I decided I would be a teacher."

During her years of attending Mission Lake Christian Camp, Shelby had encountered several Ozark Christian College camp teams, and when she learned that OCC had a co-operative program with Missouri Southern State University in education, her course was set. She would go to school in Joplin.

Of course, it didn't hurt that a boy she met at camp—Joshua Frakes—was also coming to Ozark to study for ministry. After their freshman year, Shelby and Joshua were married.

"OZARK LAID A GREAT FOUNDATION"

Shelby was grateful for the partnership between OCC and MSSU. "I'm a very organized person, and I like the fact that the whole program was already planned out. The advisor at

MSSU who was solely dedicated to OCC students made the process wonderful."

The first two years, she took all her classes at Ozark. "I loved Old Testament History with Gerald Griffin and Life of Christ with Brian Brubaker. I didn't love English Composition as a subject, but I did love Jackina Stark as a teacher. There was never a dull moment with Jackina," says Shelby with a grin.

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teaching, one of the gifts Ozark
gave Shelby was a Christian community: "I was great
friends with three other girls who started in the co-op
program at the same time. We all stuck together and helped
each other get through."

Another gift was academic discipline. "Both Josh and I worked forty hours a week our entire college career, and I went to school year round, including summer classes, for five years. Discipline was the only way we got through, and Ozark laid a great foundation for that. Ozark forced me to learn how to study, write and manage my time, and although I didn't enjoy that discipline at the time, I don't know how I would have made it without it."

(continued on next page)

Homework, Hugs & Hope

(continued from previous page)

Shelby also speaks well of her three years at Missouri Southern. "Of course it was different at Southern. I was used to OCC classes starting with prayer, and on the first day of Biology class at MSSU, the teacher started by telling us we could bring him "Jack Daniels." But overall, my time at Southern was good."

She found a great Christian model in one of her professors. Lorinda Hackett is associate professor of teacher education, a sponsor for Campus Crusade for Christ, and an outstanding instructor. Shelby says, "She taught how I wanted to teach."

"IT JUST BROKE MY HEART"

"Of course, your classes can't prepare you for everything," remarks Shelby. "There's always something that will throw you for a loop." After graduating from MSSU in December 2010, she was hired to begin teaching 2nd grade at Joplin's Emerson Elementary in the fall of 2011.

Shelby knew she would face challenges her first year of teaching. "Emerson is in a tough part of town with a lot of poverty. 97% of our students are on free or reduced lunches, and the twenty-three kids who were going to be in my class were a pretty rough crowd. When I was hired, the principal warned me, 'They have some major behavior issues.'"

But the challenges would end up bigger than Shelby could have imagined. On May 22, 2011, an EF5 tornado tore through Joplin, damaging or destroying ten schools including Emerson Elementary. The school system did a heroic job of finding alternate sites by the time classes started in August of 2011, but the temporary facilities, lost curriculum and disrupted students made for a demanding school year.

Emerson Elementary was destroyed in the May 22, 2011 EF5 tornado.

"When we started school in August, the Emerson Elementary kids were spread out among five buildings, so it was a bit chaotic," observes Shelby. "Plus the Emerson neighborhood was right in the path of the tornado, so about 80% of our students were affected or displaced by the

storm. A lot of our kids didn't have anything. They were living with relatives or in FEMA trailers. When we were filling out forms on the first day of school, so many of them said, 'I don't know my address.'"

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Shelby remembers one little boy whose home was destroyed by the tornado. "This single mom and her sweet little boy had lost everything and were staying with some friends. They were trying to stay out of the FEMA trailers and get a new start. But one day this little boy came to me crying. Someone had broken into the house where they were staying and stolen their new TV and PlayStation. They had



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been through so much already, and now this. I told his mom to let us know how we could help, but it just broke my heart."

"THIS IS MY MINISTRY"

Because of the turmoil in their lives, it took longer to gain these second graders' trust and settle into routines, notes Shelby. "I prayed every morning on the way to school, 'God, give me what I need to get through this day.' They were ornery, but we got through it," she says with a laugh. "I tried to give them a positive atmosphere every day. A lot of them don't have that at home."

She took the opportunity for a subtle Christian witness. "Every single morning last year, I started by playing the song 'Good Morning' by [Christian artist] Mandisa. That really got them pumping!" Shelby knows that she is one of the few positive adult role models in some of her students' lives.





"I can really help these kids. This is my ministry."

"When you work at a school with high poverty, you never stop worrying about your kids. On Christmas break, you're thinking, 'I hope they have food at home.' Some of them have a hard home life, and you're not just teacher—you're counselor and social worker and mom."

In fact, that's why she chose to teach in the public school system. "A lot of times, the kids in private school come from good backgrounds. They've got people who care about them. But when this opening came up, I thought, 'I can really help these kids.' This is my ministry."

So Shelby seeks to show the love of Christ in tangible ways. At Christmas all the kids in her class got a gift, compliments of a local church. "It was the most amazing thing to see their faces when they opened those presents!"

In Mark 10:16, Jesus physically embraced the children, and Shelby knows the power of blessing a child as Jesus did. "We lost one of our Emerson students in the tornado, and our principal reminds us, 'You never know when the words you say to a student as they head out the door will be your last words to them."

"So every day when my students left to go home, all of them had to give me either a high-five, a smile or a hug." Shelby says, "Most of them opted for the hug."

Teaching, she believes, is a chance to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a child's life. "Most of all, I want them to know that I love them."

