

Announcer: Welcome to Featured Faculty, a podcast series about Anderson University professors and their lives, both in and out of the classroom.

Jordan Yaney: I'm Jordan Yaney, and my guest today in the studio is Dr. Wayne Priest, professor of psychology and chair of the Psychology Department at Anderson University. Dr. Priest, you've been teaching full-time at Anderson since 2009, and you also went here as a student, so you're quite familiar with the university. We'll come back to that later on, but I wanted to start out by asking you about your first job in the field of psychology, when you worked at for the local juvenile court system after you graduated from college.

Dr. Priest: Okay. I actually worked for what was called the boys residential unit. The boys residential unit was operated by the court. It's when boys were struggling with behaving, making it to school, and they did something that got them into trouble with the law, and the law decided, we're going to take these kids out of their home for six to nine months, and we're going to have them live, at the time it was at a the YMCA, second floor of the YMCA, and we're going to have them just talk about life, go to a mental health center, but talk with counselors there, make sure that they get themselves to school, make sure they do their homework. It just, basically we became parents of these kids, and so they had 24 hour coverage, and we just kept them, and tried to teach them how to have a healthy life.

Dr. Priest: I liked that a lot. The problem is when we'd send them home, you'd see them out on the street. You'd meet them somewhere, and they often just reverted back to the way they'd been living, because they just readapted back to the way things were at home, so.

Jordan Yaney: How long were you at that job?

Dr. Priest: I was there about two years, so yeah. It was a good two years. I enjoyed it. I learned a lot. It was my first job out of Anderson University, so it's like, wow, I'm being a professional. I loved it because I was making a decent wage, and I had full benefits, and for the first time in my life I had full benefits. I was like, ah, this is great stuff, so.

Jordan Yaney: Yeah, and that was your first job out of AU.

Dr. Priest: Right.

Jordan Yaney: Reflecting back to your time at Anderson, what did this place mean to you as a student while you were here?

Dr. Priest: Okay. I started out my college career at the University of Missouri at Columbia. I was going to be a political science major, and become a lawyer. I became a Christian when I was 18 there, and started really reflecting on what I wanted to do, and I was still unclear what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew it had something to do with God. I just wanted to learn more about God, and what God wanted from me. I remember making a deal with God, which is really poor theology, but God dealt with it anyway. I made a deal with God. If I'm a Christian, I want to be able to ask honest questions, and can you honor that? I think

in my entire life, God is honored that, and so after about a year and a half at the University of Missouri, I said, "I need to go somewhere where I can learn more about Christianity, about God."

Dr. Priest: As I looked around, I was raised in the Church of God, and so I looked around at other Church of God schools, and I thought way too restrictive, given my time at the University of Missouri. I thought I could probably tolerate the restrictions that Anderson University has, and so I said, "I'll go over there." Without ever seeing the place I applied, was accepted, and just showed up in the blizzard of '78 for the first time on campus and said, "Here I am. Let's register for some classes and go."

Jordan Yaney: Welcomed to AU.

Dr. Priest: Yeah. Right. Right.

Jordan Yaney: You graduated here. You began working in the juvenile court system.

Dr. Priest: Yeah.

Jordan Yaney: You are a professor of psychology.

Dr. Priest: Right.

Jordan Yaney: Talk a little bit about that.

Dr. Priest: That's the journey onward. I actually had two undergraduate degrees. I had a degree in religious studies and I went ... I remember going and asking Dr. Farman if I could take a class that sounded interesting to me, and I can't even remember what class it was. It was some class in psychology. I had had general psychology at the University of Missouri. I was in a class of like 525 people and he said, "Sure, you can take this class." It was a senior level class, I remember, and it was way over my head, but it was so ... He was such a good teacher and I was so intrigued with it that I picked up a second major in psychology, and so I've always been interested in both religious studies, theology, and psychology, and so I'm real interested in how they go together. Right after my graduation, I went to the School of Theology here on campus. I worked as a carpenter on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, took all my Tuesday, Thursday classes, and then it started taking my Tuesday, Thursday classes and working Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

Dr. Priest: That worked out. It took me three or four years to get the seminary degree, which is a two year degree, but I was actually able to pay it off, pay it while I go, which I appreciated. But I never wanted to be a preacher. It was real clear I was not wanting to be a preacher, but I was real intrigued with knowing what God wanted from me, and I'm just chasing after God, I guess. Soon after my master's degree from seminary, I went over to Ball State and got my master's in counseling, and it just happened to ... I was aware of the Center for Mental Health here in town, which is now called Aspire, and they had no job openings. I went down there, and applied, and very fortunately a good Christian man was working there, and was hiring at the time, and so I said, "Yeah,

I'd love to work here," and so I took a job basically doing group therapy with some of the most disturbed individuals.

Dr. Priest: If you're any more disturbed, you'd be in inpatient, basically. It was kind of like a baptism by fire, just walking in every day, trying to help people who were basically in therapy 20 hours a week, and most of the therapy was group therapy, and so I got to do therapy with other therapists. There was always two therapists in the room, and that was a great education, like you can never get anywhere else, to watch other therapists do their craft, and in talking to them afterwards about, why did you do this? Why did you deal with this person, and not this person? Why did you go here and not there? For three years, I got an excellent education, and got paid for it at the same time, and helped a few people, I hope, but it was helping people.

Dr. Priest: It was a struggling with, I think, doing God's work as a psychologist. Even though you don't talk theology, you don't say God's name all the time, it's just trying to help people who are hurting. I think that that was extremely enjoyable. I made great friends with all of those therapists. There were about eight therapists overall, over that three year span, and so it was a great time. Just good.

Jordan Yaney: Yeah. It sounds like a very drastic start to your career path to now, having been a professor. You worked previously at Huntington University.

Dr. Priest: Yes. While I was at Huntington, I was one of two people that taught in the psychology program, so it was extremely overwhelming because I had to teach half of the psychology courses, and so I don't care how much psychology you've had, or classes of any subject you've had. To come in and teach half of the subject matter is just overwhelming. There were probably the first three or four years that I was working 80 90 hours a week. It was just crazy. I would come home. A lot of this was before kids, and I would eat, and then I'd need to go back to work, or I'd work at home until like midnight because I was teaching new classes four semesters in a row, and then I'd reteach them. By that time I'd forgotten much of what I taught two years ago, but I really enjoyed the interactions with the students, engaging them. It wasn't therapy, but there was that, being helpful.

Dr. Priest: What all my life, my adult life, has been about is investing in people's lives and being helpful. I very much enjoyed it, even though it was a cut in pay that hurt, but you make do for what's important, so.

Jordan Yaney: That, what you just said about helping people just reminds me of what is drilled into our heads as students, is that servant leadership.

Dr. Priest: Yes.

Jordan Yaney: That is what God calls us to, and it seems like that's something that you have a real passion for, and that actually leads us to, in 2009, you took a full-time job with Anderson University, so talk me through a little bit of that transition from Huntington to AU. Was it the overwhelming workload? Was it, I feel like I need a different, a change of scenery, maybe. What was that like?

Dr. Priest: It was very difficult to move. I liked my job at Huntington, and I liked the people I was working with, and so I was asked to apply. I wasn't looking, but the chair of the Psych Department here asked me to apply. I told him I would, but then I didn't have time to do it, and the application process ended like in three days, and he calls me up, and he says, "Are you going to apply?" I said, "Well, I was thinking about it. I just don't have time." He said, "Would you please get it done?" That tells you a little bit about how I wasn't terribly excited about leaving a place where I liked, but what was very enticing about AU was, I knew the professors. I knew that I'd be working with quality, godly people who would be healthy. There wouldn't be drama that I have to deal with, and so having a extremely healthy workplace, in regard to personal relationships with the people that work there, also only having to teach one quarter of the psych courses instead of one half of them.

Dr. Priest: The course load, even though the course load's is same, I get to repeat far more classes, and that was enticing. I also, by this time, had a few rent houses that were close to Anderson University, and driving down here one hour to fix them, and driving back one hour whenever that had to happen, that was getting old as well. If I could live, five minutes, 10 minutes away, that was better, so all ... For those three reasons, at least, AU was very attractive, and plus, it's my alma mater, and I feel like that they've poured their lives into me, of people at AU, and I think I can give back.

Announcer: This podcast is a production of the Andersonian, the student newspaper of Anderson University. For more in this series of faculty interviews, please visit andersonian.com.