

The Rev. Dr. Kelly Burkley spoke about his work in child Advocacy Centers and helping children move past abuse to Baylor students on Wednesday evening.

Burkley spoke in the Marrs McLean Science building about his experiences in Child Advocacy and Ministry work to students. He spoke on the legal aspects of his work and about the interpersonal struggles he had experienced as a result.

Burkley's work in Child Advocacy centers around Forensic Interviewing, which involves the victims speaking to Burkley about their encounters and the gathering of important data.

"Based on cases that are reported, 1-in-3 girls or 1-in-6 boys will be the victim of, or the attempted of sexual abuse or sexual assault on them, by the time they are 18 years old," Burkley said. "It is estimated that for every one case that is reported, at least ten go unreported. Over 90 percent of the time, children know their perpetrator."

Burkley said that the process before Child Advocacy Centers was one "where nothing got done" and part of an era where "pets had more protection than children in this country."

Burkley talked about the strain that information of these incidences could create. Burkley said that "separation" was key to "leaving work at home," even when it seems hard to do so.

"The hardest cases for me to deal with, are child death cases," Burkley said. "That's just, that's tough. On Sunday mornings after a child death case, I'm flat."

Burkley said that "startling" data sets have been uncovered in the Waco area, including a case of a "sex ring" that was "targeting young girls in middle school" with predatory behavior.

"They made arrests on them, they got them," Burkley said. "These guys were in their twenties, one guy in his thirties, and they were hanging out where the kids were hanging out."

Burkley said that the process of the Advocacy Centers is set up in a way to ensure "no child slips through the crack" and to ensure "no case goes unattended." The process involves multiple meetings in several different places, to make sure that all possible information can be addressed.

Burkley said that his work as a pastor impacted his work in Child Advocacy in such a way that his “focus” and his “emphasis” was changed regarding the idea of “ministry.”

“Wherever God lands you, bloom,” Burkley said. “My motto every day, my prayer before my feet hit the floor is ‘Lord, use me today in such a way that I can help someone reach their greatest potential, and know you.’”

Burkley said that “it is a dangerous world out there,” but said that he hasn’t “lost the joy” because “kids are really resilient.”

Professor Robert Darden attended Burkley’s speech. Darden said that he was “depressed” hearing the statistics of sexual violence against children.

“There are very few things that can bring a grandparent to tears,” Darden said. “And it’s just even the thought, the hint that somebody could hurt these babies of mine.”