



Pastor Jim Teaches

My Personal Faith Journey

Early Upbringing

Every story has a beginning; mine begins on August 31, 1958. On this day, I was born to the household of Joe and Frances Garrett. This was a very loving and nurturing household where I learned to love and be loved. My parents were wonderful people; yet they were not highly involved in church, and only my Mom had a relationship with Jesus. I actually have my first remembrance of any type of experience with God as my Grandfather, or Papa, would take me frequently to the Methodist church which was literally in my backyard. I still have the Children's Picture Bible that was given to me in Sunday School for my fifth birthday.

Salvation

Soon thereafter my Mom began to take my brother and me to the local First Baptist Church and we were officially church attenders. I remember that my Mom seemed to love her church experience very much and Tim and I enjoyed learning the Bible stories and participating in the boy's club (RA's) there.

During the Summer of my seventh year, something very wonderful happened to me. It was mid-afternoon and there was a knock at the door. Mom answered the door and discovered that the Pastor of our local Baptist church was standing there and desired to visit with us. During his visit, he talked with my Mom and learned how all of us were doing. He soon, however, turned his attention to me and began to tell me that the stories I had heard in Sunday School were much more than simple stories, they were actually true tales that illustrated God's love for me. Through this attention, I prayed with the Pastor and gave my heart to Jesus. It was an experience that "took" at this very early age.

Salvation came relatively easy for me because, for some reason, God had granted me a very tender heart. I remember as a young boy that I was standing in the lunch line at school (also located in my back yard)

and “gave the finger” to some other third graders in line. My spirit was so crushed by performing this act that I immediately ran out of the lunchroom and to my house where my grandmother had to calm me down and walk me back to school. This sensitivity has played a large part of my experience with Christ and has been used as a “keeping agent” in my walk with Him.

Growth in Christ

From that time on, my Mom carried Tim and me to church every time the door was open. We participated in RA’s, church basketball, church baseball, and many drama and music activities. Through this, we developed friendships that were helpful in our growth in Christ and are still maintained to this day. My closest friendships were with Ricky Vaughan and Dan Davis. We were three Baptist boys who as young teenagers were musicians and put together rock bands and Christian music bands. We were, in fact, the “iron that sharpened each other’s iron.” Because of each of our commitments to Christ at early ages, we were able to produce a “positive peer pressure” (which we called “pure pressure”) upon one another. We each have remained drug free and alcohol free, and each married our respective wives as virgins because of our mutual commitments.

Calling

I have been actively involved in ministry since I was 15 years of age. I recognized God’s calling upon my life at that young age and sought the guidance of my pastor. This calling felt larger than simply that of being a disciple; in fact, it was a desire to preach, teach, and nurture people. I did not fully comprehend the call at the time, but I followed the recommendation of my pastor and tried to do everything **but** preach, teach, and study the Word for about three months. I got with Rick and Dan and we poured ourselves into our music. (I thought this advice was somewhat crazy to be honest with you.)

At the end of the 3 months, I came back to my pastor and notified him that he was crazy. In fact, I was miserable with his recommendation. He then assured me that this “trying” was a part of God’s calling and that if I could in fact do something else and be content then I probably wasn’t called to “full-time ministry.” (In the past 29 years I have been very thankful for that assurance of God’s calling in my life.) Since then, I have sought to voraciously pursue God’s calling by study, by pursuit of ministry opportunities, and by experimentation with various avenues of service.

In efforts to “pursue ministry”, I attended Furman University in Greenville, SC for 1 ¼ years to enhance my musical skills. There, I was involved in a discipleship process through Campus Crusade for Christ and, through a New Testament Theology assignment entitled, “The Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” I came to a new understanding of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

At this point, I married my High School sweetheart and we moved to Lakeland, Florida where I transferred to Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God. I attended there for 3-½ years and earned my BS degree in Pastoral/ Practical Ministry. (I also have studied at Lee University in Cleveland, TN, Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs, GA, and Global University in Springfield, MO. All of these

endeavors again, were with the intent of broadening my ministry skills and capabilities.)

In recognition of my ministerial calling, I was licensed by the Southern Baptist Convention at age 15 on August 17, 1973. I was ordained by the Assemblies of God on May 10, 1988 and am currently an Ordained Bishop with the Church of God, Cleveland, TN.

God has equipped me with skills in communication, music (guitar), computer information/management systems, and martial arts as well as an incredible love for youth and children. I also have a desire to help to equip and nurture people in their relationship with Jesus Christ. I have been in full-time ministry since 1981 and have spent the vast majority of that time in youth and children's ministry although some musical skills were utilized as well.

I have experienced success in ministry by seeing my last youth group built from 33 young people to over 250 in regular attendance. The church I now pastor has grown from 35 to 75-80 in less than two years. In the past, I have seen more than a dozen youth whom I have pastored go on to be pastors or missionaries (and count my own three children in addition to these as they prepare in college right now for further ministry.)

And to top it all off, I have an incredibly gifted and supportive wife and with her encouragement have never doubted God's calling on my life because of that time of testing as a young teen (not that there haven't been times I wanted to quit, however.)

Importance of Supportive family

I can say without any hesitation that my relationship with Christ has further been enhanced by my relationship with my wife. She is the one who has been my accountability partner and best friend for the past twenty-five years and with whom I have been privileged to rear three amazing children who are all servants of God. We have grown together, cried together, laughed together, hurt together—in fact, we have attempted to do everything together and therefore have a very strong family relationship and have all family members serving Christ in some grand capacity.

Highlights

- Salvation at age seven
- Early Christian friendships beginning at age ten
- Calling to preach at age fifteen
- Falling in love at the age of fifteen

- Licensed to preach by Southern Baptist Convention at age fifteen
- Marriage at the age of eighteen
- Attending Southeastern College and graduating
- Birth of 1st miracle child- Crystal
- Birth of 2nd miracle child- Amber
- Birth of 3rd miracle child- Jamie
- Being ordained through the Assemblies of God
- Moving to the Church of God, Cleveland, TN
- Being a career Youth and Children's Pastor
- Working in a mega-church for 10 years
- Pastoring at my current location in Ashland, OH
- Attending Ashland Theological Seminary

Theological Implications in my walk with Christ

- Election- For some reason, it seems as if God was seeking me. I was too young to know, understand and appreciate the implications of seeking Him and therefore had no thought of doing such.
- Divine Protection/Keeping- Many are the times I had opportunity to use drugs (even to the point of actually having them in my possession on many occasions), to drink alcohol, or to engage in promiscuous activities but there was some type of providential covering keeping me from those activities.
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit- I also didn't seek this one out but was accidentally, providentially assigned a leading topic by a highly liberal professor in a non-Pentecostal, Southern Baptist institution.
- Calling- There are no preachers in my close family (although I do have an uncle who is a pastor but was always so far away from us) and therefore had no one to look up to and "follow in their footsteps." This, too, was a divine act of sovereignty.

Pastor Jim Garrett

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