

Spiritual Heritage

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My spiritual heritage begins with a godly grandmother whose example and teaching led my father (her son) and my mother to give their lives to Christ while I was still an infant. They enrolled me in West Birmingham Christian School (affiliated with the a cappella churches of Christ) when I was 4. I spent the next 13 years (K-12th grade) attending a school where Christian values were instilled in every classroom and where daily Bible study, Bible homework and verse memorization was the norm.

I gave my life to Christ when I was twelve. I knew I was a sinner and that Jesus was my only hope. I was immersed into Christ for the forgiveness of my sins on Wednesday, April 12, 1972 during a Gospel Meeting with B.C. Goodpasture.

During those years (at WBCS and as a young Christian) I was very evangelistic among my non-church of Christ friends and even independently went door knocking in the neighborhood seeking Bible studies. I am thankful to God for this period of my life because it laid the spiritual and biblical foundation that I have drawn upon for all of these years. It gave me a solid and conservative view of the authority and inspiration of the Bible as well as a foundational knowledge. I was later even disappointed in some of my college Bible classes because they were “Sunday-schoolish” in comparison with the depth of my senior high school Bible classes.

My best friend in high school, Jeff Jenkins, now minister of the Lewisville (Texas) Church of Christ, encouraged me to accompany him and later take turns preaching with him at various country churches around Birmingham, AL. The early encouragement from these churches as well as Christian mentors in my home congregation, including my beloved grandmother, led me to feel I was “called” to be a minister. My heritage had not given me the vocabulary to describe it as such at the time, but since that time I have clearly seen the leading of God from the time of my earliest memories until today.

I began college with the determination to be a preacher. I attended Faulkner and Freed-Hardeman universities for my undergraduate degrees. It was only when I attended Harding University Graduate School of Religion (now Harding School of Theology) to work on my MDiv that I realized that my earliest experiences in school and college had only taught me “what” to think. Finally, at HUGSR, I began to learn “how” to think for myself.

In all, I have been blessed by 37 years of Christian Education. I received my MA and MDiv from Southern Christian (now Amridge University Turner School of Theology) and my DMin degree from Harding School of Theology.

I must admit that my heritage also did not prepare me well for a personal, experiential relationship with God. God was always seen as distant, detached – a strict disciplinarian. My

education had given me a better intellectual (factual) understanding of God and the Holy Spirit. However, emotionally I still felt distant at times. A turning point for me was Henry Blackaby's book, *Experiencing God*. For the first time in my life I felt God was moving and at work in me. It changed the way I prayed, preached, made decisions. Since that time my ministry has been dominated by the desire to help others overcome the same kind of spiritual disability. I see God in every moment of the day. Prayer is no longer limited to the time in the study or on my knees, but a regular walk and talk with God through even the most mundane of life's activities. He is a presence within me to be consulted, listened to, obeyed, or trusted in daily details.

After 23 years of ministry in the Southeast, I moved to San Diego, CA because I wanted to work in a more fertile evangelistic environment. I found the people to be spiritual (in a postmodern sense) and searching for answers. My goal was to assist the church as it moved from a primarily inward focus to a more outward focus. My challenge was to help them understand the needs of others – the unchurched, the younger generation, the post-literate, post-modern, and those among the relaxed, youthful, beach culture. I worked to design our infrastructure so that from first contact a seeker was brought into deeper levels of commitment leading to salvation and ultimately being equipped for service. I have a passion for the lost – especially the unchurched.

My current ministry is with the Southside Church of Christ in Grenada, MS. This is a wonderful church of about 120 members situated in North Central, MS. Being a small church in the middle of the Bible belt, has provided many challenges and joys. We are a very close knit, loving, family based church. It has been hard at times to direct our focus outward, but we have managed to attract new families all long and engage in meaningful ministry.

I believe it is THE PRIMARY responsibility of leaders in the church to equip members for greater maturity and works of service. I believe ministers should not only DO ministry, they should be actively training people by letting them accompany us in our ministry. Churches have traditionally depended upon the primary worship service and Sunday school to fill discipleship needs. However, these must be supplemented by special training sessions, small groups, hands on ministry, and personal mentoring. I have reached a degree of maturity in my life that makes it easy for younger Christians to come to me for mentoring.

I believe the church is to be a grace-filled, accepting, loving church family. Having, raised three now adult children, I think our youth should be given priority in the programs, leadership, and tools necessary for them to thrive spiritually.

I believe an informal, upbeat, inspirational, celebratory styled worship is vital when it comes to reaching seekers. People need to come expecting something to happen and not be disappointed. Worship needs to be experiential, participatory, visually and artistically stimulating.

I believe elders and ministers should work together as a team. Elders and ministers have different, but similar responsibilities. Elders oversee the work of the church and ministers are

responsible for faithfully teaching and preaching the Word. As such ministers are always subject to their shepherds. However, there is also a spiritual authority that comes from being God's spokesman – a delegated authority, mind you – but an authority none-the-less. When the two work together as a team, wise men are able to make fully informed decisions and the two can stand together as they meet the shepherding needs of the church.

I have a Doctor of Ministry degree in preaching and Church growth. I have spoken in several venues including the Pepperdine Lectureships. I write my own teaching material and booklets (none published yet, but I'm working on a few ideas). I have preached full-time for 35 years and have worked with two large multi-staff churches.