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# THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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United Church of Christ Living Water Association



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*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,* John 3:16. That one verse played such an extensive role in laying the foundation for my theological perspective. At the young age of eight years old, I believed in that love, and though I may not have had a concrete understanding at the time, a love affair had begun nonetheless. That biblical verse sparked my curiosity to what true unconditional love meant.

I was raised in the church and active in Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, Youth Choir and Junior Usher board. I also participated in various church functions and actively spent time with Deacons and other church clergy. However, my understanding of the love that is expressed in John 3:16 still remained immature. It's interesting how one can be active in church and still remain barren of an intimate relationship with God.

Nevertheless, I think that is an invaluable facet of God's love. He doesn't want a connection based on dictatorship, where one feels forced or micromanaged. Rather, he wants a deep intimate and transparent relationship. God also is patient and allows the love to develop over time. This journey started for me at Philemon Community Baptist Church at 8 years old, where I confessed and accepted Christ as my personal savior.

That day still remains very vivid in my mind, when my Pastor gave the invitation at the end of service. I remember telling my mother, I wanted to be saved. We both got up and she walked me down the aisle to the front of the church. My Pastor proceeded to reiterate Romans 10:9, *that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* At the young age of eight years old my theological perspective consisted of knowing that I was loved and would not be going to that "hot place" called hell because I made that personal declaration.

Since that time, my thoughts and beliefs have evolved. Instead of Romans 10:9 being viewed as the completion of something, I now believe it's the beginning of everything. The carrying out of that verse saves you from the penalty of sin. It begins a relationship where you are constantly growing, learning and becoming wiser through God. This relationship adds value and worth with time and intention. I'm a witness that the more effort you put into the flourishing of that relationship, the more you will get out of it.

The next procedural step for me was going through our church's new converts class. This class was designed to inform in more detail what it means to receive salvation. It explained the

reconciliation between humankind and God, that Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on Calvary conquered. The sessions gave me a chance to ask questions that at a young age I couldn't fully comprehend as a child. The class lasted for one to two months and we would meet every Sunday morning during Sunday school hour.

After the completion of that class, my parents scheduled my baptism. We discussed this ceremonial command of Christ in our new converts class as well. We see this direction in Matthew 28:19, *go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. The writer in Acts 2:38 emphasizes this, *then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*. Baptism as I believe it, is an external expression of a rebirth, a new walk with God.

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17 states, *therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*. As I matriculated through my Christian pilgrimage, I began to feel the Holy Spirit tugging on my heart at a young age to preach the gospel. At first, I admit it was fearful being so young and having to accept the weight of that calling. Initially, I told my parents of the burning call in my heart to preach and then met with my Pastor to share my convictions. Once I spoke with him, I continued to pray earnestly before publicly announcing it to the congregation.

We decided to move forward and make an announcement in front of the parishioners on the first Sunday of January in 2010. My Pastor called me up to the pulpit during service and I announced that I felt God summoning me to spread his word. I preached my "trial" sermon for our youth day the second Sunday in June of that year. From that point forward, God has blessed my ministry, allowing my steps to be ordered and to be presented with opportunities that have enabled me to travel the country and advance the kingdom of God.

This calling to be one of God's chosen messengers is a sacred privilege that I do not take lightly. I believe without any reservation in my soul that I was born to preach the word of God. Howard Thurman, a well-known African American author, philosopher, educator, civil rights activist and theologian once said "don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive". Through ministry, I am able to come alive and walk in my purpose to fulfill Christ's agenda. I find joy being an instrument, a humble servant in the Lord's church to help shift a narrative in the

savior's direction. Nineteen years later, and it still blows my mind that I was providentially selected to share good news about the world changer named Jesus. It was his love painted on the canvas of Calvary that italicizes the reason why we partake in Holy Communion. In fact, the story recorded in Matthew 26:26-28 says, *and as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it; for this my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

As I continue my ministerial journey, it's important for my spiritual growth to continue to be immersed and connected to a community of seasoned Pastors. I am so thankful for the mentorship I have received from Rev. Dr. Williams Curtis and Pastor Reginald Willis. They both have instilled in me the discipline needed to press on in spite of the weight associated with the responsibility. It's under their tutelage that I have developed the love for in depth study, reading and higher education. They have assisted me to further refine the gift I already lay hold of. I appreciate their guidance, example and humility much more than words can describe. I am the preacher, Pastor and man that I am today because of them. I feel confident in the Pastorate knowing that I have those two gentlemen behind me, along with God walking with me. I am forever indebted to them taking me under their care.

Overall, I love and believe whole-heartedly in God and I desire to be used in a meaningful way for his glory. I have faith in his word, and I am committed to spreading the tangible love of my redeemer. The dedication to my divine assignment is fueled by an internal, crystalized faith, in a God who is able to save souls, change communities for the better, liberate the oppressed and accomplish what human limitations are incapable of accomplishing. This faith also drives my vision as Pastor of East View United Church of Christ and my commitment to engage the members and surrounding community, city and wherever else God permits our footprints to reach. The objective is to do the work God commanded of us, so that we leave our mark and add to the bettering of this world. Simultaneously, making disciples for God's kingdom by teaching and preaching biblical concepts and principles. I appreciate you taking the time to listen to my theological perspective and the spiritual journey that has brought me to this point.