

How God Made Pastor Dishon Mills

SUMMARY OF MY PERSONAL HISTORY IN MINISTRY

My mother is a great woman of faith and raised me to have a personal relationship with God. From the time I can remember, she cultivated my faith. I was brought up in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), which was a cult at the time, and did not have a full understanding and appreciation for either Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit. I also bore scars from the racism and cruelty of those within the denomination and ostracism and ridicule from those outside. In 1995, the leadership of WCG instituted sweeping changes that ultimately led to the denomination abandoning its erroneous teaching and becoming a mainstream evangelical church. WCG later changed its name to Grace Communion International (GCI), signifying its new birth as a remade denomination by the grace of God. At the time of the doctrinal shift, I agreed with the theological changes, but harbored resentment and anger because of what I perceived as needless sacrifices and pain throughout my life. I left WCG and there was a period of time that I turned away from God and religion. Thankfully, God never turned away from me. Those years were very dark for me and I engaged in a lot of behavior that was hurtful to others and me. After a period of time, God helped me to remember how happy I was to serve him and he drew me back into a relationship. He inspired me to get to know him and his truth for myself. My wife and I began an exploration of the Bible and Christian denominations in the hope of finding an authentic worship experience. In April 1998, I committed my life to God through baptism.

This time of rebellion against God, searching for truth, and seeking a relationship with God taught me so much. My period of rebellion helps me understand those who harbor anger towards God and gave me a humility that helps me love and support those embroiled in sin without arrogance or judgment. My period of searching enables me to identify with those who flee from religion in pursuit of something more real. Like so many, I have experienced religion at its worst, but I have come to learn that being a Christian is not a religion but a relationship. I have a passion for learning about the heart and mind of God and I have fallen in love with the Church. I am driven to accurately understand Scripture and how to apply it in my life and the lives of others. My period of seeking a meaningful relationship with God is ongoing and wonderful. My communion with Him feels new and fresh and I desperately want others to feel this love that surpasses all understanding. It is clear to me now that God allowed me to experience a period of darkness to give me a passion for Christ's mission. I know what it feels like to feel lost, and I know what it feels like to later realize that I have always been surrounded by His love. This has ultimately led to me becoming a pastor.

I was actively involved in ministry from 1998 to 2010 - twice as a youth pastor and once as an assistant pastor. My wife and I attended several churches looking for a

place that held to similar beliefs where we could grow and serve, including: a WCG church, a progressive Baptist church, an evangelical “megachurch,” a conservative Baptist church, and a Pentecostal church. Like a world traveler, our wanderings taught me lessons I could not have learned in any other way and opened my eyes to ties that bind all those who call on the name of Jesus. Although God moved us from those congregations for valid reasons, I believe each of them became a part of me in some way.

When God, in an unmistakable way, called me back to GCI in 2010, everything fell into place. In Trinitarian Theology, the adopted theology of GCI, I found the doctrinal foundation for which I was searching. I created a list of my own personal “statement of beliefs” and I always struggled to make it line up with the doctrine of the church I attended. I started reading the literature of GCI and found a belief system I could adopt without reservation. I found that much of my past experience made sense and I could clearly see the hand of God orchestrating my life.

DEFINING MINISTRY

By the words and actions of Jesus Christ, we can best understand “ministry” as a God-ordained service assignment (Matt. 20:25-28; Phil. 2:7). The word is used to describe both individual good deeds and one’s purpose and destiny in Christ. Jesus’ ministry was to the Father (John 5:19), and similarly human ministry must have God as the focus. All human ministry, therefore, is our participation in Christ’s ministry to the Father (Gal. 2:20). It is not the sole work of the clergy, but ministry is something in which all Christ-followers are invited to participate (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). The Holy Spirit has disseminated gifts to us and we are encouraged to use them as a means of expanding the Kingdom, the Divine life we have access to in Christ (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Pet. 2:16). God has also ordained a purpose for each of His children and has set aside work for us to do (Jer. 29:11, Matt. 16:24; Heb. 12:1-2).

I believe a major aim of the Christian life is to discover and walk in our ministry. I consider this process a lifelong adventure, so I learn more about ministry every day. God has showed me that my most important ministry assignments are to my amazing wife and two beautiful children, in that order. I relish in the ministry roles of husband and father and consider myself the richest man in North America. In truth, I actually believe I am the richest man in the world, but I do not want to come across as arrogant.

ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

Based on my ministerial and life experience, the following are what I believe are the elements of a healthy church. These elements constitute the foundation for the pastoral ministry God has placed into my hands.

Strong Teaching

The Bible and the truth of who Jesus is must be taught in an engaging, thought-provoking, understandable, and interactive way. I believe that the pastor should not be the only teacher in a congregation, and those with the gift of teaching should be given opportunities to do so. (Matt. 5:17-19; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Discipleship

We should not simply talk about Jesus. Because of His love, we should want to live like Him. Discipleship is an integral part of any congregation. Members should study how Jesus lived and have regular opportunities to imitate Jesus (live missionally and incarnationally). (Matt. 28:19-20; II Cor. 2:14-17)

Community

The Gospel must be lived out in relationships. In a healthy congregation, every member feels connected to a community both in and out of the congregation. The Sunday meeting should not be the focus of the worship experience, but rather a celebration of what God is doing in the lives of connected people. (Matt. 5:13-16, John 17:20-23)

Service

We imitate Jesus by serving our community with our time, resources, and God-given abilities. (Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 4:10)

Multiplication

All living things reproduce. This principle can also be applied to churches. We actively participate in the spreading of the Gospel through the multiplication of leaders, ministries, and churches. (Genesis 1:11, 22, 24, 28; II Cor. 10:15-16)

Joy

Our lives with Christ and worship experience should be enjoyable and free of guilt, coercion, and fear. (John 15:10-11; Rom. 14:17)

In conclusion, everything I am and will ever be is because of God. He is the lover of my soul and the author of my destiny. I intend to explore the depths of his love for all my days, and I invite you to walk with me.