

A Brief Introduction, Jim Jackson

Born and reared near Tampa, I attended Odessa Baptist Church and graduated from Chamberlain High School, 1959. Having made a serious commitment to Jesus Christ, shortly thereafter I felt called to become a pastor, and soon married my wife whom I had known since early childhood. We moved to north Florida where both of us attended the a junior college which has become Florida Baptist University. Later I earned both a Mater of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. I was called as a student pastor at age twenty and have served as a pastor since, first as a Southern Baptist and later, a Presbyterian USA.

I became Presbyterian at age fifty and have served in Providence, Grace, Foothills, and Savannah presbyteries. My experience has been in rural, suburban, and city churches. In the larger ones, I served as senior pastor with a staff of ministers. I became Presbyterian when The SBC took a radical right turn in the seventies. I was influenced by reading Shirley Guthrie's book "Christian Doctrine," and attending summer pastor's schools at Stetson University, Furman University and Princeton Seminary.

As I understand it, my greatest pastoral skills are in preaching, teaching, personal relationships and counseling. I served Presbyterian churches in South Carolina, Texas and more recently Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church here in Georgia. That church experienced significant growth and soon will be able to call a full-time pastor. It proved to be one of my most happy and productive experiences.

My wife Linda and I have two grown children, four grandchildren, and three greats. We came to Brunswick from Spartanburg, where both of us were active in First Presbyterian, she in the choir and I teaching Sunday School and a ladies Bible study and mission group. Upon arriving here, she joined First Presbyterian on Saint Simons, and I, Savannah Presbytery. Alan was pastor here then and we loved both him and the church. Though I knew of his call to Spartanburg, I only served as a reference after the church interviewed him. We hated to lose him, but he's serving a great church.

We moved to Brunswick three years ago to be near our daughter Ella and son-in-law Patrick Kent, both of whom belong to Saint Simons Presbyterian and serve as ushers. Ella is director of the spa at Sea Island. Our son lives with his family in Charlotte, NC.

My Call To Pastoral Ministry

My call to pastoral ministry became clear to me while I was in the eleventh grade of high school. Within a period of two weeks I lost three friends by auto accidents and drowning. Until that time, most of my thoughts were about myself. But the shock of those deaths led me to an evaluation of my purpose in life, believing that God does have purpose in human lives. It wasn't a matter of my being afraid of death as it was a matter of the fear of dying after having wasted my life. The Holy Spirit laid a heavy burden on my heart for my fellow humans. I became concerned that others might come to know the new life I had discovered in Jesus Christ, a life of peace, purpose, and power. My initial feeling was that I wanted to be a Godly layperson.

Months went by and slowly through prayer and consultation with my pastor, I began to suspect that God might be calling me to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through preaching and teaching the gospel. Soon thereafter, my pastor suggested that I try preaching and offered me an opportunity on a Sunday evening. Several weeks went by as I prepared a message upon challenging young people to serve Jesus Christ. I used as my text David's battle with and victory over Goliath. Truly nervous and walking all over the rostrum, I delivered the message with several youth responding in commitments. It was as though God was saying to me: "Son, you've finally got it right." I had never felt better in all my life.

I knew nothing about the pathway of formal preparation that was ahead. I had never had a pastor who finished college or gone to seminary. I don't even recall ever having heard of a theological seminary. My academic record in high school initially kept me from being accepted by accredited colleges, so I attended and graduated from a three year Bible College. Thereafter I was accepted by and later graduated with honors from Carson-Newman College. As a Baptist, I was able to pastor churches throughout my academic career, which lasted thirteen years. I earned Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Experiencing the trials, difficulties and rewards associated with doing pastoral ministry over forty-eight years, I continued to feel a strong sense of calling to the work. So given the opportunity, I would do it all over again. Some things differently of course.

Faith Statement

At age seven, I made a child-sized commitment to Jesus Christ and was baptized by emersion in a lake in central Florida. I'm sure my motives were mixed. What I had been taught about Jesus Christ in Sunday School led me to admire him. And I'm sure I didn't want to go to the hell so well described by my Southern Baptist pastors. Then too, making that public commitment would give me "a leg-up" on completion among my cousins with my devout Grandmother Jackson. It wasn't until I was seventeen that I came to make an adult kind of commitment to Jesus Christ as my Savior. That experience of repentance and surrender was truly life-changing. A burden of guilt was lifted, a sense of peace with God entered my heart accompanied with a true and meaningful purpose for living.

Having read of that change in my life, it is rather easy of understand that my faith is truly Christo-centric. I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is presented in the New Testament. True discipleship is more than simply believing, rather it includes a commitment to following Jesus Christ in this life. A sincere faith expresses itself in a life of faithfulness. Thanks be to our Heavenly Father, this journey is empowered by his presence of the Holy Spirit. Like Abraham, we are called to follow God "unto a land we know not." In our journey we encounter difficulties and temptation, but it isn't as though we don't have help or that God's providential grace can't bring good out of our trouble.

For me the life of Christian faith isn't without doubts or even failures of one kind or another. It's more a matter of fervent trust than "cock-sure-ness" about all things theological. It's in the journey, not in passivity, that we best know intimacy with our Creator.

For me also the Bible is essential to our faith, though I reserve the words "inerrant" and "infallible" for God only. I believe it is all it claims for itself and comes to us as part of God's revelation. The ultimate revelation of who God is and our manner and purpose of course is Jesus Christ. By faith and critical studies I am able to honestly declare that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is profitable for doctrine, belief, and behavior. In like manner I affirm the Apostles Creed and the creeds of our confession as worthy representations of Christian truth.

