

Pastor John Ogletree: Baptist and beyond

October 5, 2020

Pastor John Ogletree has been the pastor of [First Metropolitan Church of Houston](#) for 33 years. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on church and ministry. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated minister to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where else have you served in ministry, and what were your positions there?

I served for 18 months as the minister of Christian development at Antioch Baptist Church in Houston.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Dallas.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I accepted Christ at age 6 in the Morning Star Baptist Church in Dallas.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

I received a bachelor's degree in government—now political science—from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from South Texas College of Law in Houston.

About ministry life

Why do you feel called into ministry?

I was practicing law and had been in it two years when I felt the tug of the Lord on my heart. I did not understand it at first, even though my father was a pastor, because I was 30 years old and practicing law. I counseled with my pastor for nine months before getting assurance that I was being called into ministry.

What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?

My favorite aspect of ministry is seeing people grow in their faith.

What one aspect of ministry gives you the greatest joy?

I do enjoy leading people.

What one aspect of ministry would you like to change?

If I could change anything it would be the expectations and demands on pastors.

How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?

I have come to see how much relationships mean within the church. Much time, energy, compassion, empathy and love are needed.

How do you expect ministry to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

We have been shifted by COVID-19 into a digital/virtual world, and we will not go back to church as it was before. Now, we must major on

people—including members—outside of the four walls of the church. Monday to Friday has become more significant.

Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing your ministry.

1. Establishing a nontraditional culture in the church I started.
2. Going through a failed construction project.
3. Commencing the construction project again.

What do you wish more laypeople knew about ministry or, specifically, your ministry?

I wish laypeople understood pastors are human, too, that discipleship requires more than worship attendance, and that they have time to serve in ministry.

About Baptists

Why are you Baptist?

Baptists have done a superb job in evangelism and getting people saved.

I see myself beyond the denomination. I, for sure, have Baptist blood flowing in my veins, but I have embraced a much broader aspect of the body of Christ.

What are the key issues facing Baptists—denominationally and/or congregationally?

Denominationally: Tradition, anti-women-in-ministry, racism, being known more for what they are against than what they are for.

What would you change about the Baptist denomination—state, nation or local?

The Southern Baptist Convention needs to detach itself from the lingering acceptance of white southern beliefs about race and injustice.

About Pastor Ogletree

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

Pastor Michael Bell really has been a mentor in shepherding through preaching. He really guides his congregation on the issues relevant to them and the community.

Pastor Dwight McKissic really has been a mentor in the area of how to be Baptist without being trapped in tradition. He moves through many circles and has developed relationships in the varying groups of Baptists, as well as other denominations.

What is the impact of ministry on your family?

I have been married 47 years to my high school sweetheart. We have four children and 13 grandchildren.

Ministry has had a positive impact on my family. My wife and three sons preach the gospel and have served in ministry with me. My wife is our executive pastor. My oldest son is my successor, and my middle son has planted a church. My youngest son is our youth pastor. I need to embrace the future of the church and make sure I pass the baton well to my oldest son.

Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors, and explain why.

My favorite authors are Tony Evans, R.T. Kendall, Howard Thurman, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Bryan Stevenson, Michelle Alexander and Tim Keller.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Philippians 4:6-7 keeps you settled no matter what you are going through.

Who is your favorite person in the Bible, other than Jesus? Why?

Moses is a favorite. He was a leader who made it through challenges and made mistakes but had a close relationship with God.