

## Chapter 01 – Introduction

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**Announcer:** Carlton Pearson is an American minister and gospel music artist. He gained recognition as the pastor of the Higher Dimensions Evangelistic Center Incorporated, later known as the Higher Dimensions Family Church, located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His church flourished during the 1990s, attracting an average attendance of over 6,000. However, his theological beliefs in universal reconciliation led to a significant shift in his ministry's trajectory.

Due to his convictions about universal reconciliation, Carlton Pearson faced challenges within the Joint College of African American Pentecostal Bishops, and his peers eventually labeled him a heretic in 2004. Despite this, Pearson remained steadfast in his beliefs, taking on various roles throughout his career. He served as the senior minister of Christ Universal Temple, a prominent New Thought congregation in Chicago, Illinois, and later became involved with a new Higher Dimensions fellowship in Chicago. Furthermore, he worked as an affiliate minister at Tulsa's All Souls Unitarian Church.

Additionally, Pearson is a gospel vocalist who has received accolades such as two Stellar Awards and a Dove Award nomination.

As Carlton tells his oral history, he goes behind the scenes with Oral Roberts and reveals the hardship brought on for his belief in the Gospel of Inclusion.

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## Chapter 02 – 14:07 Family of Preachers

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**John Erling (JE):** My name is John Erling and today's date is February 21st, 2019. So, Carlton, would you state your full name, please?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Carlton D. Pearson.

**JE:** And what does the D stand for?

**CP:** D'metrius.

**JE:** And where does D'metrius come from?

**CP:** It's a Greek reference to measures and angles and angels. Mom just named it — she just heard it and liked it and ...

**JE:** She just liked the sound of it.

**CP:** (In agreement) Mhmm. Demetrius. But instead of being spelled with D-E it's D-M-E-T-R-I-U-S.

**JE:** D'metrius. I like that.

**CP:** (In agreement) Mhmm.

**JE:** Did you pass that onto any of your children?

**CP:** My son.

**JE:** Okay.

**CP:** Not "Carlton." His name is Julian, but his middle name is D'metrius.

**JE:** Sure. Your date of birth?

**CP:** March 19th, 1953.

**JE:** And that makes your present age?

**CP:** 65.

**JE:** And we are recording this in the recording facilities of VoicesOfOklahoma.com. Where were you born?

**CP:** San Diego, California.

**JE:** Let's talk about your mother. Your mother's name and a little bit about her — her personality. What was her name?

**CP:** Her name is Lilly Ruth Johnson Pearson. She was born in east Texas in 1921 or something like that. She's 89, so whatever that is. She is the only daughter of Gilbert Johnson and Cora Lee Evans Johnson.

Her grandfather, Lon Evans, was half white. His mother was repeatedly raped by the wealthy landowners that they were sharecroppers with — indentured servants, almost — and eventually she got pregnant and had him, and he's the only one of her children whose name was Evans, and the father acknowledged him. He gave him the name. They live, to this day, the family does, on part of the property the Evans gave them.

And so, Papa, my great-grandfather, whom I knew, had 26 children that we know of (Chuckling). 5 by his first wife, 10 by his second wife. And the other 10 or 11 — just various. Papa was a rolling stone. But he was a pentecostal preacher back in the early — right after the, what we call, the Azusa Street Revival, or the Pentecostal Revival from 1906 to 1909.

Sometime within that period he received what we call the baptism of the holy ghost and his father gave him the initial property to build the church to get the colored saved — they were, because they were drinking and fighting.

So Papa started a little church and started preaching. He looked so much like a white man that he could actually stop lynchings. Because his name was “Evans,” he would get on his horse and just ride up there and stop it. To the day he died, he was a very kind brute man, but spiritual and mystical — could barely read. Prayed for the sick, was known for praying for the sick, casting out devils and all that kind of stuff. But he died without running water or electricity in his home. I remember how frustrated I was when I went down there as a kid to Texas and realized that my great-grandfather, whom I worshiped because he was such a man of God, was so poor. I mean, really, really poor. His house, his daughters, the ones — there were a couple of them that were around my age and they were still at the house; and he was sick, of course — a lot towards the end.

But, anyway, it was just interesting. And I went to his funeral and played the piano at his funeral. There was no piano player.

**JE:** How old was he when he died?

**CP:** Papa was 91, 92 or something like that.

**JE:** Wow. So that's your great-grandfather. Now, your grandfather, was he a minister too?

**CP:** On my dad's side. My maternal grandfather wasn't. I led him to the Lord myself. He went cold turkey — stopped smoking, because we thought you couldn't go to heaven smoking. He stopped smoking cold turkey after smoking 50 years. Died right here in the Hillcrest hospital, living with me at the time.

**JE:** Your grandfather?

**CP:** My mother's father. I think he had lung cancer. But he never has emphysema, never went to hospital for that. In fact, he never went to the hospital until the time he was living with me, which was a few days before he died.

**JE:** So your mother's personality. What was she like?

**CP:** She's pretty strong. Mom was a cleric and she was the dominant influence in our household, the dominant influence on me. She wasn't real attentive. She was an only child and my dad was the eldest of 7. Daddy was the caregiver and caretaker. Momma was sort of a caregiver but she never relished being a mother and having all these kids and giving up her life. She was beautiful, she could sing like Ella Fitzgerald or somebody — and would have done that but her parents would not have it, because that was "worldly" and stuff like that. So we got most of our affection from our father.

**JE:** And his name? Your father's name?

**CP:** Adam Lewis Pearson. His dad, Elector Pearson, was born in Boley, or at least met his mother — my grandmother, Donie, in Boley, Oklahoma. And I didn't even realize that until I got down here in 1971, that my paternal grandmother was from Boley. Her aunt and my uncle, Bill, came to California in a covered wagon back in the turn of the century and they were like homesteaders. They put fence around — just 5 miles north of the Tijuana border. You know, nobody wanted that property, so...

And we lived out there for 7 years, and he had hogs, and chickens, and stuff like that. In fact, the third Church of God in Christ, which is our denomination, was built by him — the second, by my dad's dad — the

physical building, it's still there in San Diego, California, St. Luke Church of God in Christ.

But my uncle Bill and aunt, who had no children, started a Sunday school in a converted chicken coop, and that began the Woodland Park Church of Christ, which we attended for 7 years. They were founders of that church. So we have a long, long church history within that area. But my grandparents backslid when they were — I don't know what age they were. But my grandfather, part Native American, part African-American, a really good-looking man, he was a womanizer with the women of the church. And that went on for years. A lot of the preachers struggled, because we were from a sexually-repressed background anyway as holiness preachers and people — Pentecostal, tongue-talker, pew-jumper, devil-thumpin', Bible-totin'-and-quotin'...

So they were suppressed racially, educationally, and they were afraid of God, afraid of the white man, afraid of the devil, afraid of the other members of the church — a lot of psychosis in that group, now that I look back.

**JE:** Was this your paternal or maternal?

**CP:** Paternal grandfather. Elector Pearson.

**JE:** You said they backslid — mother, too?

**CP:** After a while. About 2 years after granddaddy did, grandmomma — we called her “grandmomma” — did too. She was a preacher, a powerful preacher. She could out-preach Daddy. My mother said she would pray until she would look like she was an inch off the ground, just elevating — levitating off the ground. But because she was a woman, they would not allow her. They would not ordain her. They were always demeaning to women. And she would go out for weeks with my grandfather, or her sister — my Aunt Carrie — and they would hold revivals for 2 and 3 weeks, and Daddy would be left at home with the kids. You know, with his 6 siblings, taking care of them.

I remember one time I was feeding my daughter. My wife was at the church and I had my little baby daughter, Majestè, in my arms, and she started crying, and I went to the refrigerator and brought out some milk

and fed her.

And Dad said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "That's Gina's milk."

He said, "What do you mean 'That's Gina's milk'?" He had never heard of pumping. They had these machines. Gina pumped the milk.

And he said, "Well, isn't that something? Can you imagine her crying all night?" He said, "My baby sister would plum cry all night like that and I didn't have anything to give her." He said, "Sometimes I'd stick my finger in her mouth or I'd run behind a produce truck and if a piece of lettuce or a cabbage leaf would fall off, and I'd boil it and try to give her something to drink." He was very moved by how blessed I was based on how he was raised.

**JE:** So then, your father. Was he a minister as well?

**CP:** Yes. (In agreement.) Mhmm.

**JE:** And what was his personality like?

**CP:** Daddy was pretty phlegmatic. Just very calm. Always calm. He was the stabilizer. He was not emotional about anything. He drove slowly — always too slow for me (Chuckling). Daddy was the kind of guy who would tell you what you could do. My mother was the kind that told you what you should do. I needed both of them. Mother would have killed me if it was just her because she was too — she drove me too much. Daddy, if it would have just been my dad, I would have never done anything because he was just so calm about it. I needed both of those energies, both of those personalities to get me to do the things that I did.

**JE:** How many brothers and sisters did you have?

**CP:** Five others. Well, the first one, Caroline, died just within hours. And then my sister, Antonia, followed by my brother, Jingles. We called him "Jingles," but his name is Elector Lewis. And then my sister Rene, then me, then my 2 baby sisters, Gail and Monica.

**JE:** How many bloodlines are coursing through your body, then? You mentioned Native American. What blood do you have in your system? Do you have some Native American?

**CP:** And Creek. On Daddy's side, Creek Indian. In fact, my grandmother, Donie, her maiden name is Mingo, like the street out here. But she was born in Boley. And my mother's people were Cherokee and white. Scottish, because of the Evans side. Irish-Scottish, I guess. I took my mother to Wales and to Scotland — we didn't find any of our roots there — but she just wanted to see it.

**JE:** So then the African-American comes in from?

**CP:** Well, on my mother's mother, was dark-dark black African. My grandmother, I never met her. She died when my mother was small. And on my dad's side, Donie... Nobody's really sure of my grandfather because he was adopted — my paternal grandfather, Pearson. They say his name was something different. But my grandmother's dad was black. African. More African than Indian. Her mother was more Indian. I saw her once or twice. Had real long braids all the way down her back — on my grandmother's side. So you won't find very many, in Oklahoma, African-Americans who don't have some Indian blood in them.

**JE:** Your father's profession? What was it?

**CP:** Well, he started preaching when I was about 14 years old. But he was just a — at one time her owned service stations and QuikTrips. Not QuikTrips, but 7/11s. But Daddy could barely read. He was, most of the time when we were coming up, he worked at Convair, which made big airplane wings during World War II — I and II. And he worked there for several years and then he worked for another man — sort of in a custodial position — most of his life. He cleaned banks. My brother and I would clean banks, and restaurants, and stuff like that with him.

But then we had a smart cousin on my mother's side that got him into the 7/11 business. So we owned 3 of them. And my grandfather — my maternal grandfather — worked for Brother Daniels, one of the deacons in our church, who owned a service station and then, later, two. So we did service station work ... My dad could have been a millionaire, but he just couldn't manage money and he just didn't understand that kind of a thing at all.

**JE:** Well, when he got into 7/11, did he then accumulate some wealth?

**CP:** Ehhh... They didn't manage it well. People thought we were rich. The Pearsons were very frugal and industrious. We owned ... My uncle, from here, my Uncle Bill who came out in the wagon train — covered wagon, he had the first black-owned fire department. Not department, but fire station. We lived out in the country and I remember when the houses would catch fire, they would burn to the ground. So he started ... he bought an old fire truck and had a little garage.

My dad's grandmother owned the first black-owned service station in San Diego. They just were not educated people. They had no formal training; they were just industrious and hard-working and they would come up with ways to make money. So that's just in Daddy's line of the family.

But he could have been a millionaire if he had had the proper surrounding of men ... My mother didn't like the fact that the 7/11 store sold beer, and wine, and girly magazines, and all the Hustler, and Penthouse, and Playboy. That's where I first saw them. And, so, Mother felt really bad about that because we were actually selling cigarettes and selling ...

**JE:** Yep.

**CP:** ... wine. So that was a struggle between them and eventually it didn't work.

### **Chapter 03 – 5:15**

#### **Preachers Voice**

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**John Erling (JE):** Did you start singing, show any music ability at an early, early age?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Yeah. I sang for my mother's Sunday school choir when I was 12. I didn't have a vibrato and I wanted one really bad. I remember praying for a vibrato. Fasting. I went without food for several days because I saw these people with these wonderful vibratos. I could hold a tune and, you know, music was on both sides of our family. But I didn't like my voice because I didn't have what I thought was an adequate vibrato. And I



remember the day I was on a three day fast and I was in the shower in my house. I was about 12 and I remember it just burst out of me, this vibrato. And I mean, I would look at people sing with vibrato and move my mouth the way I felt that you were — mostly women. But that day it just burst out of me.

**JE:** What do you mean when you say vibrato?

**CP:** (Performing a sample vibrato) Ahhh-Hhhh-Hhhh. That part of the song — instead of a straight tone? (Performing a sample vibrato).

**JE:** And before that, you couldn't?

**CP:** I didn't have a vibrato that I can remember — just a straight tone. And in the black church, particularly, these women had these big old — mostly women — these big verbose vibrato that would shake and tremble and their jaws would shake. I remember their throat. I would look at every part of them singing. It was pretty common.

My grandmother on my mother's side was a singer. All my aunts on my dad's side were singers. It was, it ran in our family. But mother, when she was directing the children's choir, I remember she had a young girl named Josephine trying to sing this solo and she just couldn't do it. And mother never pushed her kids and she was so disgusted. She's like, "Come on, boy, sing this song."

And I sang it and then it became very popular, that particular song, all over the city of San Diego. They went "Where's that Pearson boy? Let him sing."

**JE:** And the song was?

**CP:** It was a song that was called Dip your Finger. "Dip your finger in the water. Come and cool my tongue. I'm tormented in the flame" It's about Lazarus and the burning in the fire.

My mother sang that when I was about six or seven years old out in the country. I remember one night after we'd all gone to bed, we were still on the piano. She was sitting at the piano singing that song. I crawled out of my bed and just at the foot of the piano, she couldn't see me. And I was watching her feet push the pedal down and she was singing that song and I started crying, I just love the song. And she heard me crying and I said,

“Boy, what were you doing in here? Get back in bed.”

And I said, “Tell me about that song.”

And she told me that her mother taught her that song. And that's the first song I sang with a vibrato that confirmed to me that I would be a singer.

**JE:** Okay. So you were singing at an early age. But before 14, you sang public. I mean, you must have been...

**CP:** 12. I was 12...

**JE:** 12. I mean, when you must have been singing earlier than that — around the house — and it was coming out of you.

**CP:** Oh, yeah. Mama sang. My older sister sang, we stood around the piano, my aunts would come over and sing. Singing was so common in our house. So I remember the first time I did a solo was “O’ Little Town of Bethlehem” when we still lived in the country.

Before I actually did a solo, I was probably about nine. As I remember, I remember the preacher's daughter, Betty Sweet, put on a Christmas play and asked me to sing that song and I was pleased with it for some reason. I sang it to my satisfaction, but I didn't have an authentic — and I wasn't known as a singer. My older sister was. Tanya. So I was recognized as a singer after I sang that one solo at 12 years old with my mother' choir.

**JE:** But then, obviously, you want to become a public speaker as well. Did you do like I did in Sunday school Christmas programs? Did you speak? We had Sunday school pieces that we memorized and said.

**CP:** We call them speeches.

**JE:** Okay. And that was when my first, at six years old, I knew I was doing something good because I could project my voice and people would... So as I look back, that was mine. So I suspect you were the same. You stood on stage and either memorized a speech or whatever. Is that true? Some of your first public speaking?

**CP:** Interesting that you would bring that point up. It's very similar to yours. It was the first time I had spoken in a microphone. A because we had moved

to town and I had to do my Easter speech and all the kids came up and did — memorized their speeches. And when I spoke to the mic, it was so loud, my voice projected so loud. They said, 'Whoa, wait, that's a preacher there! That, that's gotta be a preacher,' the folks started saying.

And that, for some reason, I never forgot that. "That boy got a preacher's voice." So I bought into that and I knew that I would use my voice to speak. And that's my primary self-worth is that I can talk.

**JE:** Yes. And it also reminds us that when we see children who are performing and whatever it is...

**CP:** That we recognize it.

**JE:** ... that we recognize and tell them that, because both you and I felt that.

**CP:** Yep.

**JE:** And here we're talking about 80, 90 years later. I speak for myself, right.  
(Laughing)

**CP:** (Laughing)

## **Chapter 04 – 5:45**

### **Student Body President**

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**John Erling (JE):** So then you went to school and the first education was in San Diego.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Yes.

**JE:** Elementary?

**CP:** John J. Montgomery Elementary School in Otay, Chula Vista County. But Otay just above the Tijuana border, that's where I went all the way to the fifth grade. My grandmother died when I was 10 and then we moved back into town. I was born in town and at 4 years old, my folks moved out into the country.

**JE:** And then junior high school there? And high school?

**CP:** Uh-huh. Memorial Junior High and San Diego High School. I was student body president of San Diego High School, the oldest largest school at that time in our town.

**JE:** And you were involved in activities there in high school? Singing or anything like that?

**CP:** Well, I was a Thespian which I was, I was a part of the play — high school auditorium was the city auditorium before they built the convention center. Billy Graham actually spoke at that. We used to call it The Great Castle; seated about 3000, I think. And we, but we had an orchestra pit and for all our musicals. Mr. Walter Stewart, we call him Wally Stewart. We'd have these big musicals. "Bells are Ringing," all that kind of stuff. And I was in those plays and we had to do original public addresses, extemporaneous speech, debate. I was involved in all that stuff. All of that was preparation. I didn't realize that at the time but I was a student body president. It was 50% white, 20% black, 20% brown — native — and about 10% otherwise, but it was the school and I was very involved.

That was in the sixties. Doctor King had been killed and the Black Power movement had come out. The free flower kids, and free sex, and the girls stopped wearing underclothes. And I remember like girdles and bras and things and I remember how sinful I thought that was when I was the student body president. I had to see all that guy sitting on the grass playing guitar, you know, LSD and all that stuff, in the sixties.

In all of that, I forged out some kind of self identity around Christianity, actually held Bible studies down in my office at San Diego High, was a student representative of the Board of Education, and hoped to one day be mayor of the city of San Diego. That was there before I was gonna come to ORU. But I was very involved there.

**JE:** So then your faith was important to you from the get go.

**CP:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** And into high school and then you stood up for your faith in high school? Yeah?

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** And they knew you to be... I suppose they call you religious or whatever.

**CP:** Mr Thornton — Frank Thornton — was the principal and he liked me because I was a calmer. I would calm the tension around blacks and racism down. And they let me have Bible studies in my office in the mornings at the at the school. In fact, as a student representative, a man named Johnston came to me — because I took my Bible everywhere I went and I would put it on the desk so they could actually see it. And so he came over to me, a white man, named Mr John Johnston. He said, “Carlton Preston?”

I said, “Yes, sir?”

He said, “San Diego High School?”

I go, “Yes, sir.”

“Notice you have your Bible there with you.” I thought he was gonna tell me I couldn't bring it.

And I said, “Yes, sir.”

He said, “I'm very proud of you. I like that. We're glad to have you part of what we're doing here. You're doing a good job, son.” And he encouraged me, even into college. He sent a little money every once in a while when I came to ORU. I remember that experience. Well, obviously he was a Christian but we were the tension — the racial tension — with the Black Power thing, which started in San Diego, and then the riots out there after Dr King was killed. There was so much tension and I was constantly trying to calm African American people down from having riots on our campus. And so when I ran for student body president, my whole thing was togetherness. When I ran for mayor of Tulsa, it was, it was “One Tulsa.” So I've always had this inclusion thing in my spirit as a child, all the way up to 66 years old.

**JE:** Well, you might have faced a couple of kinds of prejudice because you're black. Did you feel racism because of that?

**CP:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** And did you carry your Bible in the halls of the high school? Wherever you went?

**CP:** I remember when I first when briefcases came out, that was big time for especially black kids. I would carry mine in my briefcase. But prior to that, I would carry it out. I wanted people to see it.

**JE:** So did kids make fun of you?

**CP:** No. Most black kids were church oriented. They went to the Baptist, the Methodist church. They all knew I was saved. That's the term they used. Carlton Pearson. I would go get my sisters from parties and take them home and my little sisters when they were wearing, I mean, I remember when mini skirts came out and I thought that was an anathema. So, uh, I pretty much had a reputation as being a very straight-arrowed Christian kid. And even though when I was student body president, these gorgeous girls who were the homecoming queens, I had to judge if their dress was too short or too tight or whatever. Those girls trusted me. None of them ever liked me. They always went for the big macho football players. And they'd bring all their problems to me for counseling...

**JE:** Because you weren't threatening. (Chuckling)

**CP:** I wasn't threatening, no. (Chuckling) I had to tell them they had too much cleavage or that the dress was too tight or short, and they didn't think anything of it. You know, I was thinking, "Jesus, help me!" But I was always disappointed that they never had any particular interest in me. (Laughing)

**JE:** (Laughing)

**CP:** I kept saying "It's because I'm black and they were all white." But they were very respectful and I wish I knew where some of those girls were today.

**JE:** What year did you graduate?

**CP:** 71.

**JE:** In 71.

**CP:** (In agreement) Mhmm.

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**Chapter 05 – 14:50**  
**Meeting Oral**

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**John Erling (JE):** Coming to ORU. Tell us about that came about.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** I think I was in the eighth grade at Memorial Junior High School, a group called the...

**JE:** In San Diego.

**CP:** In San Diego. The group was called the... It wasn't The World Action Singers. What was it called in those days?

**JE:** Musical group?

**CP:** Yeah, from ORU.

**JE:** I thought it was The World Action Singers.

**CP:** Well, then maybe ...

**JE:** They had a different name back then?

**CP:** Before... When I got there they were called the World Action Singers... Before that... I've never forgotten the name before. But, anyway, there was another name for 'em. They came to First Assembly in San Diego at 6 and Fir. Everybody knew that's where it was. The biggest Pentecostal — white Pentecostal — church in town. I went down with my mother. We were the only blacks there to watch this show — the concert.

12 beautiful young people in their teens, you know, early teens or late teens, were on the stage singing beautiful music, perfectly dressed, perfect white, clean-cut American Christians. Pentecostal Christians. Tongue talking Christians. And this guy wasn't white, he was from South America or something. He was the speaker that night, a young, charming, young, powerful, young, passionate fellow. I remember him preaching and he used the word "chastity" and I didn't know what it meant. And I looked it up, but it related to holiness and, you know, avoiding sex out of wedlock.

So I was very impressed with the group. Very impressed with the concert. It wasn't really my kind of music, it was white Pentecostal music. That's the

way we would have described it in those days. But on the way home from the concert, my mother said, "When you get ready to go to college, that's where I want you to go."

Now, she had been supporting Oral Roberts, Morris Cerullo, TI Osborne — you know, \$5 a month, all those two or \$3 here and there — for years. But I never watched the show til the year before, my senior year of college. I may have seen some of the tent revivals, black and white television, on occasion, but I wasn't that interested.

But when I came to my senior year, I didn't think of any other school. I actually applied to two others, but it's \$15 every time you send an application and I couldn't afford that. So I prayed, I said, "God, where do I, where should I go to school?" I felt led to go to ORU. So that's the only school that accepted me.

**JE:** Oh, really?

**CP:** Yeah. Chuck Ramsey. I remember hearing his voice — so warm — it was like an angel. He was so welcoming. He was the only one that didn't have a heavy Southern accent. When I called on her, even the telephone operator sounded like Mayberry and Gomer Pyle. I thought, "Am I going to Mayberry?" And I associated that, of course, with racism — that southern drawl, but he didn't have it. And he kept taking my calls and kept encouraging me and telling me I could come.

**JE:** I know Chuck as well and, but he was the first recruiter for Oral Roberts.

**CP:** Yeah, he was; he was head of the admissions office at that time in 1971.

**JE:** Okay.

**CP:** So if you call to come to the school, he's who you talk to; he made the final decision.

**JE:** On you. Had he met you in person?

**CP:** No, no, just on the phone. He said to me — I ran into him in a restaurant the other day — and he said, "This guy had the clearest, most articulate, forceful voice of any student that ever called in." He's never told me that before that he was impressed with my articulation and my voice. He



discerned my spirit through my voice and said, "We're gonna have him," even though I had a science and math deficiency when I came, and I didn't have a full scholarship. I had no scholarship and I had no money.

**JE:** Okay. How do we then enter ORU with no money?

**CP:** Well, they didn't make me pay right away. Oral was looking for — in fact, the night I met Oral, it was in August of 1971. They had a reception. As soon as I shook his hand, the first thing he said is, "Do you sing?"

And I said, "Well, I try."

He said, "Well, talk to my son down there. We want to see if we can get you in the World Action Singers."

I didn't even know what that was. Oh, they were called the Collegiates! That's what their term was before. Now, I use the term World Action Singers and I wasn't sure what that was. But he was looking for integration in his group and he wanted to keep ethnic people, blacks, Hispanics, or whatever — he was always for... I didn't realize he was Native American and had gone through the impoverishment that we had and he identified with me in that way.

But we instantly connected. I mean, in seconds — that night, when I shook his hand, I fell in love with him. I, I mean, I just, I hadn't heard him preach. I wasn't following him. I just was following what I call the Lord and my mom, when I came here, but I loved him instantly. He could clear his throat and I would feel the holy ghost. I was so into that man. It was almost like a worship thing.

**JE:** Okay. So you were like 19. 18, 19?

**CP:** I was 18.

**JE:** 18 years old. Well, then let's continue here with Oral. Did he — how much interaction did you have that first year? Did he reach out to you and want to visit with you? How did you... because you must have built some kind of a relationship.

**CP:** Well, I sang one time in chapel. For some reason, we had chapel on the fifth floor of the LRC in those days. We hadn't built the other half of the

LRC — Learning Resources Center. So I went to the piano one day and sang: “I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus...” and I think Ron Smith, who was at that time, Director of Operations that had just built the, the university village heard me and Bob Stamps, who was the chaplain recognized something on me or in me and, and Oral slipped in there one time and heard me sing, and then they started asking me to lead the music for his seminars. He used to have partner seminars where he'd raise money to buy — to build dorms and stuff. Excuse me.

So, I remember they asked me that the first time, and his daughter, Roberta, was playing the organ and later on, Joy Lamkin and Helen Stubblefield, whose name is Trowbridge now.

I kept leading the singing and Ron said to me one day, “You know, the president likes you.”

And I said, “How would I know that?”

He said, “Well, he does or you wouldn't have been singing twice.”

**JE:** That must have just been...

**CP:** It was like, “Oral Roberts likes me?” I don't even know if he knows I'm in the room but he noticed everything from my shoes to my fro and had an opinion about everything. But they let me come up that next spring my freshman year that spring, I auditioned for the World Action Singers. I did it twice and I didn't make it to the third time, which was that spring. But I had been leading the singing all along.

**JE:** Okay, so you auditioned twice and didn't make it.

**CP:** I did. I couldn't read music and I was auditioning for a tenor part.

**JE:** And because you couldn't read music that was...?

**CP:** Well, Richard was looking at it that way. But I remember when the first time they asked us to do it, they said “Tenor, sing the tenor line.” And I didn't know what a tenor line was. And I said to the guy next to me, I didn't realize it was exposing my ignorance, by saying, “What's the tenor line?”

So even if I looked at it, I wouldn't know what it meant. Everybody else in

there were gifted musicians, they had trained and they knew how to read music — sight read — and I never did. Still don't.

But Richard heard me sing. And I remember when I — he was standing in front of me — when I said, “Where is the tenor line?” He quickly turned away, as if he didn't hear me say that, because he didn't want them to see that I didn't know and didn't want me to see that he didn't know. But I think he'd already made up his mind because his daddy said, “We want to get that black kid in there — Carlton Pearson — he's who we need.”  
(Laughing)

Other people said I was just his “token black” and “gopher” and all that stuff. But I knew in my spirit that that was part of my destiny — that I was to be supposed to be a part of the ministry. I didn't realize a full scholarship came with it, but I had gone for one. My bishop Blake, his son Charles Blake, is the presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ right now, who was my chief consecrate to the bishop for and he performed my wedding — chief officiate. His dad said, “Son, when you get down there, when the old man recognizes you're there, he's gonna want to keep you.”

I said, “And what does that mean?”

He said, “Well, listen to him. But don't forget your roots, don't forget us.”

Remember the term “don't forget us,” which meant the Church of God in Christ.

“He's gonna wanna keep you.” Bishop Blake said that. And Oral did the day he met me. He knew that I belonged. He told me that later. But I felt it. And so I got a full scholarship. Bishop Blake said, “I'll give you \$100 a month for one year.”

And he did, along with the man my mother worked for, Dr. Warner, a white man. When he first met me when I was 12, I shook his hand. And he said — my mother told me this later — he said, “That young man had a grip when he shook my hand. He's going places.”

And then, six years later, when I was 18, he remembered that. And at the

end of that year, that money stopped. And that's when I got a full scholarship. I mean, that took care of everything to live for 5-and-a-half years.

**JE:** Because you traveled with the World Action Singers.

**CP:** Became a World Action Singer and traveled with the Oral, did all the specials, all the seminars, led the music.

**JE:** And you couldn't read music?

**CP:** Couldn't read it.

**JE:** Even today?

**CP:** Even today.

**JE:** So you got through all that by ear.

**CP:** By ear. I could hear it one time. I didn't realize that was extraordinary, but we were rehearsed all the time. And so all the other singers were dependent on the sheets on the music sheets and sometimes for lyrics, I might notice. But I could hear my part and remember my part. We would sing acapella on planes and in airports and people would gather around the singers and it was a good witness for the Lord, and it advertised the university. Oral liked all that stuff. And we did too. So I always felt that was my ... These were things that were occurring that were in my opinion, now, acts of God, but I didn't know it. It was just doing what you're supposed to do.

And I learned how to ski. Colin Stihl used to be in charge of the big trucks and putting up the big tents and taking them down. And he one day called me when I was working at ORU and said, "Let's go skiing."

I said, "I've never skied before."

He said, "Well, come on out to the lake."

I got in the car with him. I said, "Explain to me what skiing is and what happens."

Now, here I am from the West coast beaches and all that stuff, but I've never skied, knew no black people that skied.

He said, "I get in the water, my wife throws me the..."

**JE:** Oh, water skiing you're talking about.

**CP:** Yeah, water skiing, not snow. I hate snow. but skiing, First time I did that, I skied all day with a left boot on my right foot. Bad experience.

**JE:** But Oral, he became your mentor.

**CP:** Yes. And occasionally tormentor. But he took to me right away. I actually was one of the few students that had access to — I could walk from my dorm up through the gates into their house. Everyone would cook food for me. I sat in this — I was in the swimming pool. Sometimes they'd let in — the summertime — they let the singers go up there and swim because we had to stay on campus and shoot all year long for his TV program.

So, I remember one day Oral sat on the edge of the pool until sweat was running off his brow and talked to me. He could have said "Come on in the house," but he sat there, and Joyce Lamkin, who had lupus and died in 1974, said to me, "Do you realize what just happened to you?" She's a black girl.

I said, "What do you mean?"

She said, "Oral doesn't take that kind of time with anybody, not even staff. He sat there until sweat was running off of him talking to you."

We were talking back and forth. He said, "You're blessed."

And it dawned on me that time that maybe this guy really does like me. I didn't notice that he wasn't sharing with the other kids. We were just talking. I was fascinated with getting his attention, asking him questions and he was just talking. So that began, and as the years went along, in 1972, this is important. For Black History Week, it was called then, I invited JO Patterson who's the presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, whom Oral knew and admired because of his preaching style, to come and speak for us. And he did a chapel and then he invited Oral to come to our

major convocation which has, you know, 50,000 people coming to Memphis, Tennessee — the largest Black Pentecostal denomination in the world.

And oral, the following November, would have been 72. Oral asked me to go with him. First time I got to ride on the private university jet — just me and Oral and two security guards. Dude, that was big time.

**JE:** It sure was.

**CP:** We walk into that place. And we're talking the whole time. I'm kind of briefing him on what to experience and expect when we got there. He wanted me to go on stage with him so he could advertise his young black student and recruit more black students. But they wouldn't permit me to go on the stage because that was like the Holy of Holies where the 12 men that run the denomination sit like some cardinals or archbishops in the Vatican.

But I went through the crowd raising my own offering because all those old little sweet saints — “Hi, Baby! How you — here, let me give you something.” And everybody would give me \$5, \$10, \$20. My honorary was almost as big as his. (Laughing)

He kept on saying “No, come on to the stage.”

I said, “Sir, I'll explain it to you later. I can't go on the stage with you. Go on, I'll meet you at this spot afterward.”

And so I remember they handed him an envelope — thick envelope full of cash — several \$1000 would have been probably \$3000 or \$5000. And he said, “Oh, no.”

I'm thinking, “Dude, are you — what?” He refused the money.

**JE:** Oral refused the money?

**CP:** Yeah. And he said to Bishop Blake, he said, “Donate it to your mission department.”

And I'm thinking “I cannot believe you're not taking ... at least give it to

me!”

We got on the jet and I said, “Sir, why did you refuse the offering?”

He said, “Well, I never accept personal, especially cash offerings, from anybody. I've never done that in my whole years of ministry. The IRS is watching you never know who's there. They would use that against me.”

I said, “Well, you could have just taken anything. You know, I'm struggling down. You could have given it to me.”

He said, “You're all right, boy.” And I was.

**JE:** But you had raised enough.

**CP:** I had cash.

**JE:** You took your money.

**CP:** Oh, all cash in my pocket. I said, “I kept my offering, sir.” (Laughing)

## **Chapter 06 – 6:13**

### **900 Foot Jesus**

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**John Erling (JE):** What did you really like about him? What's one or two things that you really liked about Oral Roberts?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** He was gutsy and focused. He was the most focused, ambitious — as I call it, that's where I got the term “AIMbitious” man — I've ever been around. He had a remarkable ego and that is part of the component of anybody achieving anything on this planet.

He was so resolute and he didn't take “no” for an answer. And I like the way he articulated his words. He spoke with such confidence and authority. I've learned so much from him. He filled the room every, any room he would walk in. I don't care how big it was. If he was there, everybody knew it, and he wanted it that way, I think.

**JE:** Yeah. (Chuckling). Sure. Yeah, he did. Did you agree with his method of raising money, the 900 ft Jesus and all those things that were going on? And then one time he said if he didn't raise a certain amount, he'd be "taken." And I interviewed him and I didn't really clarify that — if he meant death or if he'd be transfigured or not...

**CP:** He meant death. The 900-foot Jesus thing was very common — that kind of quote/unquote "revelation" or "vision" was common among Pentecostals because we were extravagant people in our imaginations and our superstitions. We believed in angels and demons and manifestations and dreams and visions. And based on the Elijah's of the scripture and all the dramatics of the biblical narrative.

So we didn't think anything of it. Neither did his partners. Actually, Oral had in his mind — there's a famous picture of Jesus with his arms around the United Nations building. I'm sure you remember it, it's famous.

**JE:** Yes.

**CP:** That's what he had in mind. He saw that and it would trigger that same strength in our minds. That was a very American patriotic thought. His partners gave a lot of money because of that. The second the media saw it differently as a manipulative thing — and it was, he was a master manipulator. To do that kind of ministry and to raise that kind of money to build a university and a hospital, if you can't manipulate a crowd, you don't belong in the pulpit.

You know, if you can't convince — manis is the Latin word for it — if you can't handle the crowd and convince them or persuade them to believe what you're teaching, whether it's for a tumor to disappear, or for a hospital room, or dorm room to be built, then you don't belong in that field.

So very unapologetically he did it. We discussed it. I was actually sitting next to him in the prayer tower the day that he was presenting this thing about needing the money. And he was gonna address Jimmy Swaggart, and I asked him not to, and to talk about Jim Baker because those two scandals occurred back to back.

I said, "We don't know enough about this, sir. I'd rather you not talk about



it." I wasn't gonna be there. I was leaving town. He just decides to go into the prayer tower and present this to the country.

And he said, "Carlton, are you in town on Monday?"

I said, "No, actually, I'm leaving town, sir."

"What time?"

"Early."

It wasn't really early, but, because he was going to be in there at nine o'clock, he wanted me there. And I thought "Jesus, I don't want to see that." Because Peter Jennings, [Tom] Brokaw, these guys are gonna be watching him.

**JE:** Okay. And what was it he was going to talk about?

**CP:** He was going to raise the 11 million. We needed \$11 million. We needed 9 million, I think, or something like that.

**JE:** Well, why did they all come to watch this? If he was making a pitch for money? Why did they ...

**CP:** We were gonna buy prime time and make this pitch. That's the day the guy that had brought a \$1.6 million or something — the dog racing guy from Florida — I remember when he walked in the room. Oral was nervous. He didn't know if the man was honest, that the check was good, we knew nothing about him, but we needed the money and he was doubting as to whether he was even going to take it.

But I came late because if I figured if I came late, I'd never be seen on camera. I have to sit on the edge. He saved me a spot right next to him.

When I walked to the room, "Come on." I sat right next to him, right in front of the cameras.

**JE:** Okay. Why was it so important to have you there?

**CP:** Because I'm black.

**JE:** Did you feel used?

**CP:** Yes. But I wanted to be used. I had told him. He had said to me in 1974, "25% of my income is from black people," he would say. "Richard has the indispensable name of Roberts. He is my biological son. I need a spiritual son and I need a black one. And that's you."

**JE:** So he adopted you as his son.

**CP:** That day.

**JE:** Kathie Lee Gifford and I were quitting at the same day. She was going to go into Hollywood. In fact, I drove her to the airport to catch a flight to go out to LA. But I was gonna leave the group too because Richard and I never really got along. I love him like a brother. But we were always rivals — unspoken rivals. And, so I decided to leave and then Oral called me and he didn't want me to leave. And that's when he said "I need the black son and you need to stay here."

**JE:** So then, all right. So then you understood his method of raising money and all and bought into it as well, right?

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** As a president of a university, he told me this because they wanted me to succeed him. I didn't have my degree. He said, "Son did Eisenhower have a degree when he was president of Columbia?"

I said, "I don't know."

He said, "Well, he didn't." He said, "The president has to be able to set policy and raise money."

I was already on the Board of Regents. He said "You can do that. I've seen you raise money, you have to raise money."

I said, "Yes, sir."

**JE:** But he wanted you to be the president.

**CP:** Well, I found out that he said that to a lot of other guys too, but he said, “I want to get 10 years on you.” I was 25. He said, “I want to get 10 years on you. When you're about 35, you get a little bit more experience under your belt, and I'll help you; I want you to be president in case Richard doesn't make it.” And he said, “I want you on one end and Billy Joel Doherty on the other, Larry Lee, and Benny Hinn over here and y'all.”

I said, “We got him covered. We'll take care of him.”

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## **Chapter 07 – 7:45**

### **Associate Evangelist**

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**John Erling (JE):** So then you did graduate from ORU.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Yeah. No, I didn't. Well, I walked because Oral wanted me to walk and he handed me the empty thing. But I thought it was a diploma. I'd done all my courses, but I didn't take my finals. They offered me a job and I just said, “Well, I'm cool; I'm good for life.” And I went home early for, in 1975 I had to come back and take those classes. But I didn't take the finals and it was a stupid error because Oral wanted me to have the degree from — he said, “I want you to get your degree from ORU. And you're gonna walk and I'm gonna hand it to you.”

It was a big thing. But I was in the class of '75. I didn't walk 'til '76 or something like that, because I stayed there till '77 as a staff person.

**JE:** Okay.

**CP:** I was on the Board of Regents. But I stayed as an associate evangelist. I was the only associate evangelist of the ministry other than brother Bob DeWeese who had transitioned. He died. And then they gave me that job.

**JE:** Oh, so that was your job then in '77 for that year.

**CP:** Up 'til April of '77. Richard and Patty and I were headed on the jet out to, out to LA one time. And that was my first time just with the three of us on the private university jet. And I said to Richard, “Man, Richard, if I was you, and your dad was my dad and I had access to all the stuff you have access

to, I would change this world for Christ, for Jesus.”

And Richard said, “Well, Carlton, you don't have a wife and children,” which is true.

Now, I didn't realize that he and Patty were in a tense argument, right then. They were dealing with stuff. I wasn't paying any attention. So he was saying to me in front of her, “I can't do what I could do because you and children are obstructing my life.”

And I said to him, “Well, your dad had a wife and four,” which was the wrong thing to say. That jet got dead quiet because I compared him to his father, and he never liked that, and I understand why and that I shouldn't have done it.

But then Patty piped up. “Carlton, how would you like to be associate evangelist of the ministry?”

And I thought, like, “In whose dreams? What are you talking about? That will never happen.”

She said, “I'm gonna look into it.” And eventually they hired me right after that.

**JE:** So then did you conduct your own crusades or meetings ...

**CP:** Yes.

**JE:** ... in and on the behalf of Oral Roberts?

**CP:** No, I did my own meetings, but I always spread the quote/unquote “gospel” of ORU, whether I was hosting TBN, I was hosting Christian television — I would do three-hour live shows. I never was on once that I didn't mention ORU or him. It was always part of the conversation. I did that for years all over the country. The first black to consistently host, at that time, the largest Christian television network on the planet — still is the largest television network on the planet.

So, but I wasn't paying that much attention. I was just doing me. I'm doing Oral. I mean, I was a part of the family. And he liked it and that kept him

and the university in the public sight when we were going through the worst financial times of the ministry.

**JE:** Because people were drawn to you because of him, but because you were black, it was part of it, and then you were exceptionally talented in speaking and singing. So you had a lot of things going for you.

**CP:** Plus, I had the whole denomination of the Church of God in Christ, you know, in those days. So, Fred Price and I were the first black preachers on nationwide television. And he's old enough to be my father. So, and I was on, and I made a ... when Paul Crouch heard I had a little TV program here, he said, "You have your own television program?"

I said, "Yes."

So he said, "Well, let's get you on the network." He said that on life television.

**JE:** On TBN?

**CP:** Yeah. Trinity Broadcasting Network ...

**JE:** Trinity Broadcasting Network. Yes, sir. It's ... things just started happening. And Oral thought it was the blessing of God on my life to succeed him or, as he said, "Success without a successor is failure."

I said, "Success without succession is failure."

But anyway, he thought that I was a great asset to the ministry and I meant to be. Wanted to be; I loved it.

**JE:** Yup.

**CP:** I introduced him to JO Patterson and I was wanting to connect him with the Church of God and Christ and, and make Pentecost more ... We wanted to make Pentecost pretty — not ignorant, not backwards, not the scorn of the Christian protestant faith. People laughed at Pentecostals, and so Oral brought dignity and elegance, and the university, and all this stuff. And Kathryn brought this elegant, dignified way of doing healing — Kathryn Kuhlman. So I was admiring both of them and I felt I was the

representative of the black expression to these brilliant, more refined presentations of something we all believed.

**JE:** And for those who may not know, it was the component of speaking in tongues that came along with the Pentecostal.

**CP:** Yeah, that was the main...

**JE:** That was the issue there that a lot of Christians didn't buy into, you know, and still don't.

**CP:** Right.

**JE:** But that was ... you wanted to bring pretty to that part of the...

**CP:** Right. Because it was associated with ignorance and exaggeration. And so he would teach on it and he kind of de-emphasizes and he started emphasizing it more towards the end, and I did too, and it's just part of our ... It's sort of a cult thing, but it was also a culture.

**JE:** I said earlier he was your mentor. And then you said, "... and my tormentor." What do you mean your "tormentor?"

**CP:** He was really hard on me. I mean, he was very critical of everything I did.

**JE:** Even though he was promoting you. Do you think it was for your ...? Okay, I'll let you tell me why.

**CP:** Well, the same way he was ... He was afraid I was going to get big-headed and proud. He wanted to clip my wings a lot. And he saw that as a downfall, if it ever happened to me. He thought I was so good I should be pompous and proud. I didn't know I was that good. I was just doing me. But he would not be overly complimentary. He would compliment everybody in the room. Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn ... Church on the Rock, whatever it is. Larry Lee — all my contemporaries. Of course, Copeland was older than me.

But he would go around the room in the Board of Regents and compliment everybody. When he got to me, he said, "Carlton has always understood us."

I said, "Dude, that's all you got to say about me?"

And then I started the church and then the Azusa things. We're going around the country and we're having huge crowds and creating traffic jams. Then he got a little bit more vocal about it. I think he was a little bit more sure that I might not get into excesses.

**JE:** What about ego for you? Did you have that ... would you ... Let me say it this way: Did it become a problem to you, do you think, your ego?

**CP:** No. I was very confident and it came across as arrogant, but I knew the difference. Because I despised ego-driven, arrogant pricks. That's what I call them in the pulpit. I just despised them. I'd seen some really crazy stuff and I was determined never to be that. And so, even with him, and all the great guys, you know, I saw where ego played a strong role if it was quote/unquote "sanctified," we could do anything — we could be proud, we could be egoic, we could be aggressive, ambitious, as long as it was "sanctified." You know, that was the term we meant that the Holy Ghost kept it in line.

**JE:** You were ordained in the Church of God in Christ.

**CP:** In '71.

## **Chapter 08 – 11:08**

### **Higher Dimensions**

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**John Erling (JE):** Okay. So you're here in Tulsa and you form your own church.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** In '81. I formed my own ministry in '77 and called it Higher Dimensions Inc. And then in '81, I started a church called Higher Dimensions Evangelistic Center, because Oral Roberts was Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association — OREA. And then we changed it to ORA, Oral Roberts Association, but I was associate evangelist at that time.

And so he was trying to, again, trim down the overly religious part and make it a world-class university and a ministry that appealed to intellectuals, and scholars, and corporate executives, and people who move the world. He would paraphrase the scripture, "...Go into all the world and

preach the gospel to go into every man's world," meaning every person's world, whether that's sports, entertainment, whatever. He would say, "We don't separate the 'sec-ah-lurr..." — he couldn't say "secular" — "we don't separate the secular from the spiritual here." You know, he was an inclusionist in that sense. And so I got a lot of that stuff from him.

**JE:** Yeah. Did he put his blessing on you starting Higher Dimensions? Was that okay with him?

**CP:** Yes. He put his blessing on the Souls of Fire choir, which is the oldest, longest singing musical group on the campus. It's as old as I've been. It's 48 years old. Every other group, including the World Action Singers, dissipated. Living Sound — all those other groups that were started on the campus — ours stayed; it's still there to this day. He liked that and he pushed it.

But I was traveling and evangelizing and he saw me as getting experience. He always had in the back of his mind that I might be there if he needed me, if Richard failed. So I got a lot of experience on the road. He saw me. He said, "You pulled yourself up by your own bootstraps. Nobody gave you anything." In other words, I didn't have a rich famous daddy like Richard did. Richard used to say, "How would you like to be the son of a rich, famous evangelist?"

Nobody was comparing me to anybody. Richard had to constantly be compared to his father. So it was agony. You know, I was sensitive to how hard it was. He would get so nervous before going on the stage. He would vomit or sometimes...

**JE:** Who now?

**CP:** Richard.

**JE:** Richard.

**CP:** I was hired to travel with him to help train him in ministry. That's what his dad told me. But I didn't know it at the time. Ron told me too. They wanted me because I was established in ministry, you know, four generations, classical Pentecostal preacher, preaching, singing in front of the crowd. Richard wanted to go into the secular world, you know? And be the next Sinatra or a Pat Boone or somebody like Pat Boone. He didn't want to



preach and he ended up doing that. He had to shift and become “Praise God, Hallelujah...”

**JE:** And why did he?

**CP:** Because he couldn't inherit the university otherwise; that's his inheritance. It's a crushing blow that he's not welcome there to all of us — that they actually... I think they may have softened that, but the Greens didn't want him around the property.

**JE:** I interviewed David Green and he talks about that; and he told Richard, “I do not want you here on this campus,” and they gave him X amount of million or whatever. “You stay away.”

**CP:** Yeah. Well, and I understand that part, but for the old man who loved his son to say, I'll give you a million dollars if you X your son out of the picture. Well, we were \$50 million in debt when they came. So Oral was dying, and of course he conceded and he helped work out a deal that would benefit the University, Richard and, ORA, which is wise. You talk about — what is it? “The Master of the Deal?” What does Trump call it? “The Art of the Deal”? I watched Oral masterfully make deals. He could just talk it through. He knew what questions to ask — by himself. He would just sit there and do it — a genius.

And Richard's very smart, smarter than people think. You know, Richard and I both were getting an extra way of graduating. Roberta resisted it. She wanted us to get it legitimately — take all the classes and all that stuff and neither of us wanted to do it. I did it for 5-and-a-half years. Richard, you know, because the president wanted Richard to have a degree and, and me to have a degree, the professors, everybody was gonna work with us. They would never have flunked us because — even if we didn't do the work. You know, they were gonna work with us.

Oral had built the university. He said, “I don't have a degree, but I've got Ph.Ds working for me,” and he would just smile. He thought that was so cool. And I did too, you know. “I didn't graduate but I built a university!”

**JE:** So did Richard legitimately earn his degree?

**CP:** He took some classes and, you know... Eh.

**JE:** All right. All right. So you start your church. This is pretty heady stuff. People were coming to church to hear you preach. They weren't coming because of a commitment to a denomination — a Baptist or Methodist or anything really — It was they wanted to hear Carlton Pearson preach.

**CP:** Well, it really wasn't "they wanted to hear Carlton Pearson preach." They wanted to experience what we created for them as an experience. Nobody talked that much about my preaching. They talked about the experience of the service which included the music, the worship, the choirs, the ambience, and what I call "the anointing." I don't remember people raving over my preaching and nobody paid any attention to what I said until I started saying something — which is the whole inclusion.

**JE:** They did, they did. Tell me about it. I'm also fascinated by great public speakers. How did you construct your sermon? I remember — you remember Warren Hulker in the First Baptist Church.

**CP:** I loved him.

**JE:** And I asked him about that, and he told me he would write out his sermon first and that was able enough to put it into his brain. So when he stepped in the pulpit, he didn't have to read a script. How did you construct your sermons?

**CP:** It was the scripture text — it's called expository teaching. I never had an outline. I still don't, I don't even know how to do it. But normal speakers, you tell them what you're gonna tell them, you tell them that you tell them what you told them — those three easy steps. That's common, but I would open the text. I'd always have a topic. At ORU, they taught us topical preaching was the weakest kind. But I remember the most successful preachers, whether it's Billy Graham or Oral Roberts used topics, you know, standing in the gap or Jesus in every page of the Bible, you know, Oral had these different... He had the fourth man, all these kind of things.

So I had topics, but my topics was based on a scripture, and I would use the scripture as my outline — line by line by line, preset by preset. That's how I taught. So it was easy for me to. I didn't have to really sit down and decide how I'm going to start, where I'm going to end and all that stuff.

**JE:** It just flowed for you, didn't it?

**CP:** Very naturally. Yeah.

**JE:** How about Oral? Did he take notes? He had notes in front of him. How did he construct his sermons?

**CP:** He would write it out only when he had to do it. The short 14-minute talks on television and when you get to go in an hour and a half, you don't have to be that critical. But he would write it out and pretty much memorize what he was gonna say, kind of like Joel Osteen. And when he was in that zone, nobody could get his attention. You could walk right up to him and look at him like I'm looking at you and he wouldn't see you.

So I saw him; I used to study how he would do it. He would stay to himself during these specials because he knew he had 14 minutes or however long in an hour or 30 minutes short to make his point. And we saw television as pretty much just a big 30-minute to an hour commercial more than ministry. But ministry, yes. But it was advertising what you'd have if you stayed with me and if you became a partner monthly.

Now, I used to preach 45 minutes to an hour, then have another 45 minutes/hour altar service. It was a three-hour experience for 3-and-a-half, 4 hours for me every time. Now that I'm not in those circles as much, I can talk 20 minutes, you know? And the whole service is an hour. Like if you go to All Souls or a Unitarian or, or the Episcopal church downtown, Trinity, where we were for a while, we had a lot shorter services. I loved all of it.

**JE:** Yeah. You said Joel Osteen. Is that what he does? He writes this — he memorizes them or...?

**CP:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**JE:** All right. Interesting.

**CP:** Well, you have to be time conscious and so you know you're going to be on an hour — Joel did not want to preach, didn't feel called to preach. And remember I was at his dad's funeral and I told him afterward, I just wrote him a note and I said, "Joel, if you take this church," because that's the first time I'd heard him preach was at his dad's funeral, "So, if you take this church, I will support you. Kenneth Copeland can, hey, we'll all surround you. You can take it to the next level."

We had no idea he'd do what he did. But I came back a year later to preach and he had just gone to multiple services. The building seated 7500. The original one down there. They went to multiple services. The first one had about 4500. The second was full. So he had grown almost 4000 in one year. And so it just kept going. I mean, it went nuts. He didn't expect that. He didn't ask for it. I hope he enjoys it.

**JE:** Your Higher Dimension Church, you had a board of elders. It was interesting because I've been used to elders and all and what they mean in a church. What control would they have over you? It was your church, after all.

**CP:** None. They influenced me. But they, we had, I remember, have to in Oklahoma you have to have three incorporators for a nonprofit 501C3. They don't have to be directors. You have incorporators, then you have a board of trustees or directors. Trustees are different, directors is more of a legal term like regents. There were 41 regents. We were the legal owners of the university, but Oral had the final word because he was the founder. And in Pentecostal circles, particularly if you have an independent ministry that you are the founder of, the people there are very submissive and sometimes subservient to you. You're the man or woman of God. And you say, and Oral would say, "God showed me..." Once Oral said, "God told me," you couldn't argue with him.

He told me that one time. "I don't want — you wanna the final words, son? Just tell 'em God said it." (Laughing) And it works every time now. But he's already done miracles. I mean, he's had these goiters disappear and cancers. And so he's as associated as a man who hears from God. He has God's power flowing through Him. So you don't — it will be almost blasphemous in our thinking to resist him in any way.

## **Chapter 09 – 4:50**

### **Invalid Tent**

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**John Erling (JE):** About miracles. Were you up close and could witness an actual miracle — laying on of hands of healing?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** (In agreement) Mm-hmm.

**JE:** You have, like, one story that you could...?

**CP:** The most dramatic ones were when somebody — unless you do the follow up, you don't know anyway. But when somebody would get out of a wheelchair or throw a cane down or say they could see or hear. And we saw several of those. There's no way to ultimately verify unless you follow that person because sometimes in the moment their eye really does open and they see and then by the time they're home, they're blind again.

To me that's not as authentic, but we have several written reports of the ones I saw were there at the Mabee Center, because I wasn't with him in the tent days. In fact, I remember him saying this, incidentally, in my last long conversation with him, he said, "Not one person was ever healed in the invalid tent." He just volunteered that.

I said, "What do you mean by that, sir?"

"Not one."

I could feel the anger and the disillusionment that God would heal in the big tent. I mean, literally eyes would open and deaf ears would un-stop. But in that place where they were slobbering, and defecating, and urinating, and regurgitating, and they were on oxygen, and they were smelly and hot. And he would go through there in between the sermon and the healing line and literally lay hands on the people, you know?

**JE:** So they had their own tent, you call the invalid tent.

**CP:** Yes, sir. It was a smaller tent, like the Baby Mabee Center.

**JE:** And these were people who couldn't be up on stage.

**CP:** They couldn't go into the main — we didn't want them in there anyway. Because if you fail with them, it discourages the faith.

**JE:** So he'd go through there and he didn't get a healing experience.

**CP:** Never. He was about 90 when he said that to me or maybe 89. He was very frustrated, and I was too, because it's, like, "God at least do one so I can

come out of the invalid tent before I pray for the other people. and say 'I just was in the invalid and there was a man who'd never walked in his life. And here he is right now.'" We couldn't do that. And it seemed senseless that God wouldn't heal. Because if you drive up to the invalid tent, if you come on that side of the tent, it looked like a disaster scene with ambulances and all that stuff. It looked like hearses. People would drive their people in vans or whatever for miles just so or could lay hands on them.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** And it was very frustrating to him that not one got healed.

**JE:** You were so close to him. Did you pick up on healing in your ministry?

**CP:** I had healing. I had been evangelizing. I had my first revival when I was like 16 or 17 years old and I always had healing. I mean, my grandfather — I told you about Papa — was known. People would come from miles around just so he could lay hands on them. So in our culture, healing was common. Black people didn't have insurance, we couldn't go to the doctors that easily. And so everybody learned to have faith. So it was very common for us to have healing and we just believed in it, cast out devils. I cast out my first demon when I was like 17 years old; it was frothing and screaming and cursing and it startled me. I was scared to death, but I did it because I had taught that's what you do by my parents and grandparents and godparents. It was part of the culture, and Oral believed in it as well.

And that's one of the things I was helping to make Richard feel comfortable with on the road. I was always with him, by his side, if he was praying for the sick — or especially in those settings. Pentecostal services always attract weirdos. And so somebody's always gonna do something weird, stupid, or scream; they want attention, so they're gonna start doing the demon thing and then you gotta go help them. You could cast the devil out or knock the devil out.

**JE:** Well, let me just say about your church. It grew to an average attendance of over 6000 people.

**CP:** In a week's time. That's three services and Wednesday night.

**JE:** Okay. That still is a pretty impressive number. In '96, you were ordained a bishop.

**CP:** Consecrated a bishop; mm-hmm (In agreement).

**JE:** And that was important to you? Or that's just the normal way it goes in the Church of God in Christ?

**CP:** Well, I didn't want to be a bishop. I mean, there were young preachers around me who wanted me to become a bishop so that I could consecrate them to become a bishop. You can find a bishop a dime a dozen these days and three dozen on a good day. So I was very popular as Carlton Pearson very successful as Carlton Pearson. But the Azusa conference attracted so many pastors and churches who wanted to affiliate with me. So I started the Azusa Fellowship, Interdenominational Fellowship of Christian Churches and Ministries. After that, I was consecrated to the bishopric.

## **Chapter 10 – 5:20**

### **Run for Tulsa Mayor**

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**John Erling (JE):** In politics you campaigned for President George W. Bush.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Yes, sir.

**JE:** And why did you go out of your way in order to do that? And did you council with him? And what was your relationship with him?

**CP:** I switched parties from Democrat to Republican when Ronald Reagan said, "I can't help you, but you can help me." In Dallas, he was saying to the church, as a president, there's only so much I can do because of separation of church and state, but I will do for you if you help me get into office.

Now, I was hanging out with James Robison in those days. A little bit more Pat Robertson. But very associated with Oral who was always a Democrat. I mean, Oral voted for Obama and would have voted for him the second time, but he was already gone. But I switched parties because I thought the Democrats — I used to call them "demon"-crats. They'd become too

liberal too John Erling for me in those days. I thought you were a real liberal. I mean, you're really cool guy, but I thought you were way out there because I was such a conservative, prudish guy. I really was.

And so I switched parties and I was invited to Herbert W's office. I mean, to the White House, a few times when he was president. Not with Clinton; I met Clinton in Oklahoma City for the Oklahoma bombing when Billy Graham was there. And not at all for — I met Obama right here in Mr. Kaiser's house. But I never really was invited to the White House or anything because I was still a Republican. No, I became a democrat when he ran.

**JE:** When Obama ran?

**CP:** Yeah. As soon as he ran, I switched parties.

**JE:** I was in George Kaiser's house when Obama was there too. I was at the very same meeting.

**CP:** Really?

**JE:** I was.

**CP:** I wasn't supposed to be there but I was running around with Nancy Ketchel, who was head of the Planned Parenthood.

**JE:** Oh, yes.

**CP:** What was I doing when somebody — head of Planned Parenthood?

**JE:** And I don't often bring myself into these things, but Obama was mixing and talking to people and I started asking him some questions or something. He pointed to me in my clothes. He says you're the best dressed man here in this house.

**CP:** Well, he hadn't seen me yet? I'm kidding. (Laughing)

**JE:** And I got in my car, and I called Margaret, and I said, "I am voting for Barack Obama." And I did, both times.

**CP:** Good, good.

**JE:** Right. Right, right, right.



**CP:** He's such a cool guy.

**JE:** But then you ran for mayor of Tulsa in 2002.

**CP:** Mm-hmm (In agreement). Yeah.

**JE:** And what were you beginning to think? "I want to be a politician and not be in ministry," or you were going to combine them or what was going on?

**CP:** Well, because Tulsa is known in some circles as the place for the worst race massacre in American history, I wanted to take the inclusion consciousness thing. I was just getting into inclusion, radical inclusion. And I wanted to make Tulsa the city known more for inclusion than exclusion and racism, which it has an image of that.

I'd done some research, and I wasn't sure the church would ever fully accept it, because I was feeling the tension and I just worked really hard with George Bush. I'd gone to the mansion when he was still a governor. We prayed and laid hands on him. His daddy was sitting right next to him. I prophesized he was gonna be the next president and all that stuff. And I knew if, as a Republican, I'd probably have ... the White House said they would back me after I won the primary, which I didn't get into the race until October before the April primary. LaFortune, who was a friend of mine at the time, and those guys had gotten in January before and had all those years — months of ...

**JE:** You're talking about Bob LaFortune or, I mean, Bill LaFortune.

**CP:** Bill.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** Bill used to come to the church sometime. He's been over to All Souls. We still remain friends but ... I didn't think I'd win, but there was a possibility that I could because of the Christian vote, full gospel businessmen, fundamentalist Pentecostals. They were all for me. But, as I ran, then the word about inclusion began to get out and that's when they all shifted. They didn't want an inclusionist as mayor, but I came in three out of 13 candidates and I only had, you know, the few months from October when I entered 'til April for the primaries.

**JE:** Was that a good experience for you? You liked it? You lost, but...

**CP:** I didn't really — to be honest with you, I wanted to pasture the city from a non-religious angle. I wanted to pull in east, west, north, south and the Asians and Native Americans and African Americans and make this a really world-class ... Kind of what they're doing now. I was gonna change the river. I talked to the Corps of Engineers, all the stuff they're doing — except I never thought about casinos. I never thought there'd be a casino within walking distance of ORU. That freaked me out. Even though I was, had expanded my consciousness by the time they built it. So — but I was part — I figured this: Either I would become the mayor and do inclusion in Tulsa or I would bring exposure to the message of inclusion. And I didn't know I'd get completely booted out of the Christian world — the fundamentalist Pentecostal world — but I figured it would bring attention to my message.

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## **Chapter 11 – 18:30**

### **Gospel of Inclusion**

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**John Erling (JE):** You talk about inclusion then. Are you talking about the gospel of inclusion?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Mm-hmm (In agreement).

**JE:** Okay. So that was in your mind back then even in 2002.

**CP:** I had already started, I started dealing with it in 2000.

**JE:** Alright. And you were ... After watching a television program about the awful conditions of the people suffering and dying from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** ... and consider the teachings of your church that nonbelievers going to hell. You believe that you had received an epiphany from God.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** And that was in what year?

**CP:** That would have been ... 2000?

**JE:** Okay.

**CP:** '97, '97, '98. Whenever that came out.

**JE:** So you had been preaching the gospel of inclusion as you ran for mayor. Okay. I didn't realize all that.

**CP:** I had been preaching it before I ran for mayor, but I thought that would, I was ... John, I was very bored with ministry. We were creating traffic jams on Sundays. My building was full. My conferences were drawing anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 people to Tulsa for that one week. But I wasn't enjoying it. I felt like we were being incestuous. We weren't reaching the world. We were not really growing. We were just getting fat — swapping sheep. “Recycling saints” was the term I used. And I wanted to reach quote/unquote, “unsaved,” non-Christian people. And I didn't think I could do that. So, I start trying to break out of this mold I was in. I thought I was gonna die in it. And that's when my frustration made me start exploring and then explaining and then, of course, it got off that I was a Universalist.

**JE:** Right. And so then what was that epiphany that you received?

**CP:** Well, there were several but, but what the first one was when my son was born. I was sitting in the house just he and I, and I don't know if he's maybe one year old. He was just crawling around pulling and touching and I was so proud. I was almost idolatrous and I started repenting and I thought I heard God say, “What could that little boy do to make you send him to hell forever?” I can remember it as clear as when it would have happened 24 years ago. And I, without question, without even a hesitation, I was even offended that I thought that way. I said, absolutely nothing. Then I felt I heard God say, or the voices say, “Well, then why do you tell people we do that?”

And I said, “Because it's in the Bible. It's in your word.”

“Whose word? Whose Bible?”

Now, when I say God is speaking to me, it's only really thoughts. And I'm thinking, “You know the Bible. You wrote it. You said people got to accept Jesus or go to hell.”

And so I had this conversation by myself and I never could get away from the fact that ... and so I remember the voice: "And so you're more benevolent toward your children than we are toward ours."

I never heard or even thought of God speaking in the plural, like, "let us make man. They have become like us." I just was ... Normally you would say — God would say, "me" or "I."

"So you love your son more than I love mine or my children?"

I said, "Well, you let yours get crucified and tormented. I wouldn't do that for my son." And I wouldn't do it in order for him — in order for me — to forgive his sister who hadn't come yet. But if he has any sisters and brothers, I'm not gonna ... I don't get it. I don't know why you have to do that to one to forgive the rest. If you forgive them, you take the pain, you know. But don't kill somebody else. That's just a weird thought I was thinking.

And later on, when my daughter was born, and I'm watching television, my dad's sitting there and my daughter's little fat cheeks and I'm watching Peter Jennings talk about the Tutsis returning from Rwanda to Uganda. And I saw them sitting in the streets and I felt guilty for having the baby, and home, and food. And those little children, I remember that one baby pulling at its mother's breast. The mother's breast looked like a deflated balloon. There was nothing there. And the mother was not even looking at the child — just looking empty at nothing. No hope. And you could see literal bodies and kids with swollen bellies and bloated, distended stomachs. And I thought, "Something's not right about that." That these have to be Muslims, because the scripture says, "I once was young, now was old, never seen the righteous forsaken nor its seed begging bread."

I knew those kids were beggars. So I assumed they were Muslims and that they were going to hell. So I said, "So, God, you're just sucking those people right into hell."

And I remember the voice saying, "Well, can't you see they're already there? People who believe in hell, create it for themselves and for others. You believe that stuff; that's not us." Now I'd never even thought these kind

of thoughts. So I felt that it was an epiphany. That was a revelation or an earth-shaking, faith-crushing, if you will, revelation and experience for me. So then I shared it in church the next Sunday, which was stupid. And it was a shock of my people, though they agreed that we create hell for each other.

**JE:** So you doubted the existence of hell as a place of eternal torment.

**CP:** Not torment. It's the eternal torment is where my issue was — not punitive. I said, "If hell is either remedial, purgative, or corrective, I could buy into it." But eternal doom when the scripture says, "His mercy endures forever." That's where I had the problem.

**JE:** So you said, then, that hell is created on earth by human depravity and behavior.

**CP:** Yeah; because we believe in it. I was thinking if God hates — if I believe that God hates Catholics and will ultimately torture them, or God hates Muslims, or God hates atheists or God hates gays and then he will ultimately torture them. I don't have a problem sort of condoning torture of them. Now, that's what Hitler thought, who called Jesus his Lord. Hitler felt he was helping God kill the Jesus-killers — that was behind his thinking. And he used that when he talked to Christians when he was running against a Christian in Germany, he said Jesus was his lord.

And so we've been all saying that and yet white Christians have used the scriptures in Jesus to torment blacks and other people. So I had all those mixed emotions in my mind at that time. That was pushing me into inclusion. Part of it was the pain of racism. Part of it was the, the torture here in Tulsa. And I had done some studying on Wall Street and the riot and I had a lot of mixed emotions about a lot of things and it always ended up being religion is the bottom of it all.

**JE:** So this, then, became the gospel of inclusion.

**CP:** That in the finished work of the cross, all sin and sinners were atoned for.

**JE:** God's love is for everyone.

**CP:** And toward everyone.

**JE:** And all are going to heaven.

**CP:** Ultimately, we'll all be in the presence of God because all of our sins are washed away; and that the gospel was not that you need to get saved. The Gospel is that you are safe with God. There's no issue between you and God that hasn't been resolved in Christ.

**JE:** Because Christ died on the cross. You were saved because at that moment...

**CP:** ... At that moment. "While we were yet sinners," the scripture says, "Christ died. As in Adam, all men die. So in Christ, all will be made alive." So Buddhist, Hindus, atheists all die because of the first Adam, supposedly, and that they would all be resuscitated.

**JE:** All right. So then you said you preach this on that Sunday and you said you shouldn't have or you were stupid that you did?

**CP:** Well, I didn't think about it being reacted to. I thought it would be responded to by faith because I'm talking compassion to people who know what pain is, and know what marginalization is, and what being discriminated against is.

**JE:** You thought they'd like this.

**CP:** Yeah; and they did, in general. A few people didn't and passed tapes around. Because I was doing a series on evangelism. And so that was, I was saying, "The reason you guys aren't witnessing is because it's, first of it's illegal to do it. And you're too intelligent now to walk up to somebody and say, 'Do you know where you're going to spend eternity? You're going to hell if you don't receive Jesus.'" Because people stop doing that. Not even Southern Baptists do it as much anymore.

So I said, "Here's what you should tell them. Tell them that their sins are forgiven. I don't care if they're a street person, if they have a needle hanging out of their arm, if they're HIV positive, tell them they're loved by God or redeemed by Christ and they're on their way to heaven. They just don't know it. The good news is that the bad news is all wrong."

That was sort of a simplistic approach to Christian universalism. I wouldn't have used that terminology anyway. I wasn't thinking of that terminology. I was just thinking of the world.

“Behold, the lamb of God,” John Baptist said, “who taketh away the sin...” — not sins — “...the sin of the world.” He took away the sin. He didn't say of Jews or Christians or the church. He said the sin of the world. So I said, “We've been misinterpreting that. If he took away the sin of the world and the world's sin is gone.” And that's gospel.

**JE:** All right. Let me just throw a few Bible verses at you — and I'm not here to contest you at all.

**CP:** No, I want you to.

**JE:** You are a theologian and I am not. And you have discussed this with some major theologians in the country and have written about it a lot. But let's just do the simple Bible verse that I remembered. My first one was John 3:16.

**CP:** For God so loved.

**JE:** “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” So the thing that catches me on this is “believeth in Him.” So there are many faiths who do not believe...

**CP:** In Him as savior.

**JE:** Right. And you're saying Muslims who don't believe him, believe in Him as a savior are also going to heaven.

**CP:** Here's the scripture that I used to counteract that or at least to confront it. John, the same writer but he's 40 years older now. He's in his nineties. And he says “Little children, I write to you that you don't sin,” same guy. “But if anyone does, little children, if anyone does sin, he has an advocate defense counselor with the Father. He has an advocate with God, Jesus Christ, the propitiation, who sacrificed for our sins.” He says, “little children, I write to you that you don't sin. But if anybody does, you have an advocate, Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation or the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” And here's inclusion. The next line says, “And not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.”

So, and he says, Paul says, “God is the savior of all men and especially those who believe.” So, he's the savior of all based on believing, he's the savior of

all men, but has a special relationship with believers. That's the way I interpret that passage. And then later on it says, "What if some don't believe? Does that nullify or make of non-effect, the faithfulness of God? What if some don't believe? Does that mean God's intention is thwarted? Does that make God's word non-effective?" And of course, the inference is no, of course not.

The next verse says, "Let God be true and every man a liar."

**JE:** And a couple other from scripture.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** "That which is..." Jesus is talking. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Now, I just, it's easy. Now, today you can Google and get all this stuff in a second. Here is a clinical view — description — of what "born again" is.

Born again is a phrase used by many Protestants to describe the phenomenon of gaining faith in Jesus Christ. It is an experience when everything they have been taught as Christians becomes real and they develop a direct and personal relationship with God. And that pretty much accurately describes what "born again" is in the church. So when Christ said, "Ye must be born again," how do you deal with that?

**CP:** Well, when you look at the Greek word for must, it's ... Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night and says, "Teacher, we know that you — Rabbi, we know you were a teacher sent from God because no man could do these miracles except God be with him."

Then Jesus says, "You must be born again."

And he says, "What do you mean born again?"

The word again in Greek is "anothen," A-N-O-T-H-E-N. English would be "another", "ether".

"You must have had some kind of ethereal, esoteric, transcendent, transformational experience or you wouldn't recognize my divinity,



Nicodemus. You're a member of the Sanhedrin Court. None of you guys like me. You don't think I'm God or Messianic or anything. You guys think I'm a demon. So, you know, you come to me say, 'We know you are a teacher sent from God.' You've had an awakening, dude."

So Nicodemus goes, "What do you mean, 'awakening?' I'm not born again? I don't know what you're talking about."

So Jesus explained to him awakening. I believe that the "born again" experience is not confessing a few words in some kind of mantra mechanically, like most Christians tell you to do. I think Buddha was awakened, the word Buddha means "enlightened" anyway. I think that Jesus is our Buddha and Buddha might have been his because for 18 years, the Bible is silent on where — I don't know where Jesus was. I don't know whether he was in India or Egypt, but they clearly stopped talking about him from age 12 to age 30. Where did he go? Why this conspicuous absence? What did he learn? Was he metaphysical? Did he learn? Go to the ashrams and learn from the shaman and the healing sciences and all this kind of stuff? So it's easy to say yes or no, but when you do the research, you find out that Christianity itself has borrowed from a lot of myths and mythologies of religions that preceded it by thousands of years.

And so, most theologians — Christian, protestant, theologians, and Catholics, too — don't know this stuff hasn't done, hasn't done the research. If they did go to a seminary, they went to be inseminated by the particular denomination that wanted them pregnant with their ideas. So it's a longer answer. But yeah, the born again experience simply is a metaphor for an awakening.

**JE:** Okay And one more.

**CP:** Yeah. I love 'em.

**JE:** John 14:6, "Jesus said unto him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me.'"

**CP:** (In agreement). Mm-hmm. So I'm asking then to Jews, Muslims, and all who don't see Christ in that same way, how do they get into heaven if we believe what Jesus said?

**JE:** The same way I got in your house; you just opened the door and I walked through. I didn't kiss the door or acknowledge the door. I acknowledged you because I was invited. So Jesus is the door, I guess for Moses and Abraham and Adam and all that kind of stuff. Cain who killed his brother, he's the door for all of them. It's like the air that we breathe. We don't necessarily acknowledge the air, worship the air, we don't even know the air, we just experience it.

I see Jesus that reference to him is not as "the man" but the Christ. Like, Jesus is the man; Christ is the science — the science or knowledge of salvation comes through that ethereal revelation. It's not so mechanical as we Evangelicals tend to make it be.

When he says — and we don't even know that he said that because we ... John, you got to understand that we don't have any of the original manuscripts of scripture. We only have copies of copies of copies. I don't even consider the Bible, the inspired word of God. I consider it the inspired word of men — and no women, men — about God and God is not definable.

You can experience God, like you experience rain, and water, and fire, and love, but you don't know it. We call ourselves knowing it, but it's ... I think God is unknowable in that sense. So, I, yes, I've expanded it to where there is God before the Bible, besides the Bible, and beyond the Bible, or beyond sacred script or prescriptions.

The Bible is a prescription and it doesn't always work. So I think we have to experience God beyond all that or we're gonna get stuck and people get King James mixed up with King Jesus. They think King James, they go into all the world and preach for every creature or critter that isn't white.

**JE:** Well, this does blow up every missionary program there is in the world. If they're going to believe in inclusion, doesn't it?

**CP:** Yes, it does.

**JE:** There's no point in it even though it..

**CP:** Well, the point of the mission is not to save people, but to inform people that they're saved and safe with God. Once people start feeling guiltless

and get away from the shame of being a sinner who's despised...

See psychologically, John, it erodes your psyche when you — and you become psychotic — when you presume that an invisible entity that's ubiquitous, all knowledge, all knowing everywhere present and, and all wise, all powerful, has an opinion about you and says, “be perfect as I am perfect.”

It's like, “What? I can't — I'm never gonna be perfect like you.”

So you're always feeling guilty and that drives people to drugs, and drink, and violence, and anger, and self hatred. I think the whole thing needs to be thrown out. We don't need new wine. We don't need old wine, and old wine skin, or old wine-o's, or old whiners, which religion is: Protestants, always whining about something. But new wine, and not repairing old wine skins. But replacing — my thing now is “Let's replace this old model. It just doesn't work.”

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## **Chapter 12 – 11:45**

### **Homosexuality**

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**John Erling (JE):** What about Oral after you publicly announced the inclusion gospel? How does he take you and talk to you? What does he say to you?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** He called me first, on the phone, and pretty much ripped me apart and left me in tears. It wasn't so much what I was preaching as what I was doing, which was destroying my ministry. Exactly what he said would happen, happened. And he was trying to ... his first son committed suicide. He couldn't save him. I'm his second — first spiritual son — and I'm about to commit ministerial suicide. And I think he was going to try to help me avoid that. And I mean, he laid it on me. In fact, the one time he said, “Stop this so we can stay in fellowship.”

**JE:** The two of you.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** Which he meant, "We're not gonna hang out if you do this."

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** And I started, I said, "So you're not gonna hang with me anymore? You know, this is the end?"

**JE:** Did he say yes?

**CP:** He backed off a little bit, yeah.

**JE:** This brings tears to your eyes.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** It's that meaningful to you now. Did he have many conversations or were they just limited? Or did he draw the line pretty fast?

**CP:** He pretty much drew the line. I went to his office, he sent me letters. We talked on the phone several times. My last lengthy one was 3-and-a-half hours at his place where you went.

**JE:** In his condo in California.

**CP:** In Newport Beach.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** I wasn't supposed to have a conversation. I was in LA preaching. Whenever I was there, even through all of this inclusion stuff, I always went to see them. If it was 10 minutes, I would go by and kiss them. If we had time, we'd have a sandwich or something.

That morning, I was gonna have breakfast. I had a flight out of LAX and it's about a 45 minute drive depending on the traffic. So I got down there, we got to talking and he had told a gay preacher who came to me and asked me, "Was Oral a prophet?"

And I was offended by the question because this man knew God and was involved in ministry and had been outed by somebody. And so he said, "Is Oral a prophet."

And I thought, “Well, of course, you know, he's a prophet. Why are you asking me that?”

He said, “Well, I was there at this place for a therapy one time — Oral was counseling him — and he came out of that back room and pointed his finger in my face and said to me,” this young man said, “If you ever become the leader of a homosexual church, a curse will fall on you from heaven.”

**JE:** Wow.

**CP:** And he said Oral — and he named another preacher Lester Sumrall — two of the great apostolic Pentecostal preachers that believe in healing, and deliverance, and all that stuff. He said, both of them said they don't have success with gay demons. That was the terminology.

So I said, “I think you misheard him. There's no demon we can't ...” At that time, I was believing that homosexuality was a demon.

I said, “There's no devil we can't cast out. He wouldn't have said that to you, sir.”

So when I was out there, we had finished eating and she had said to me, “Carlton, I think Oral and I are tired, we're ready to go home. I think we finished our work.” She said, “We're getting old.”

I was uncomfortable with the statement. So I made a joke; I said, “Well, you've been old since I've known you,” and then she started laughing.

She said, “But, no, we really — we're ready to go. I'm just waiting for him to go. I want him to go first because he wouldn't last two weeks without me.” She said, “I finally got him to use the toaster.” She said that to me. Of course, he lived like four years after her, but I won't go to that whole story because it's pretty sensitive and beautiful.

But anyway, I was about to go in my rent-a-car, turn it in, and get to the airport. And I said, “Oh, by the way,” Because I had forgotten to mention this conversation he had with the young person. I said, “You told so-and-so that you couldn't cast a homosexual demon out of him and he thinks he's

going to hell, you devastated him. He felt pinned to the wall. He actually started crying and telling me 'I think I'm going to hell', Bishop Carlton," which he called me.

And he got me and he said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Sit down, son."

I said, "Sorry, I've got to catch a plane."

He said, "Change your flight; get your Bible and sit down."

So I did. And he made me read the scriptures because he couldn't see and hear as well. I'd look it up, sometimes I couldn't remember exactly. I go to the concordances and ... but we went through all 66 books of the Bible — literally. His conclusion was, he said, "First of all, contrary to the popular belief among my brethren, I believe gay people are born that way. They don't catch it like a disease."

He was seated and, remember, I was standing next to him because we had just got into the conversation. And I said, "Based on what scripture?"

And he paused, I said, "I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity?"

And he said, "Yes, yes. Born in sin and shaped in iniquity." So, then, he ended up saying, "There are certain propensities that are in my life — capacities that have always been there — over which I've never had complete victory. I mean, complete victory; I've been dealing with them all my life."

And then he broke that down in our conversation. But Evelyn, for the first time in the 40 years of our relationship, she served us and then sat there in the room, for our conversation without invitation. She normally would go get her hair done or whatever. She sat there, and I was kind of complimented that she cared about our conversation.

She interrupted him several times and he said, "Evelyn, let him talk!"

She kept saying, "Well, all you were successful with him, and you helped that guy."

“He wasn't free. Evelyn, he wasn't free.”

He actually said that he cast the devil out of Jimmy Swaggart over the phone. (Laughing). Not in that conversation — in an earlier one — when he said, “I had it in my hand like that.”

Of course, I understood all that. I've done that too over the phone to singers and preachers the way they call me. That's just the way we think.

**JE:** But you're not actually doing it.

**CP:** Well, the person on the other end will squeal and scream and cry and cry.

**JE:** They'll feel it.

**CP:** And, yeah, and then say, “I'm free.”

Swaggart — because he called the next day — Francis answered the phone.

“This is Oral, is he free?”

She said, “Well, I'll let him tell you.”

**JE:** Jimmy Swaggart.

**CP:** Yes. So he got on the phone

“I don't want to talk. This is Oral. Are you free?”

“Glory to God, yes!” And he went through the whole thing.

**JE:** But your 3-and-a-half hours with him wasn't all about homosexuality, was it? It was part of it.

**CP:** It was about humanity, really. I would title it: Human Beings Being Human. Human sexuality is a subject that needs to be discussed before homosexuality, human sexuality. And that's basically what we talked about.

But here's the end of it: When we finished this conversation, this is the

truth. He gets up from his chair — I'll never forget it — and stands up, sticks both hands in the back pocket and looks up toward the ceiling in that house, which wasn't a high ceiling, as you recall, and he said, "I've listened very carefully to everything you've said."

And I'm sitting there like, "Oh my God, what's next?"

And then he says, "And I like what I hear." That's all he said. That wasn't a full-fledged affirmation. But it was as close as I was gonna get with him when he said, "I like what I hear," it basically said he liked the direction in which I was headed. It was making sense to him because I basically convinced him that his own son, Ron, wasn't in hell.

**JE:** Because he was gay.

**CP:** Well, he was gay, and suicidal, and struggling with drugs. So Oral and Evelyn carried that all those years.

**JE:** Did they ever come to terms with that? To believe, as you believe? That day I think it was because she said to me, at the end of the conversation, she says, "I've been married to this man 66 years, Carlton. And I've never heard him say some of the things he said to you today."

**JE:** So it helped him think about his own son, your gospel of inclusion, didn't it?

**CP:** Yeah. Yeah. I discussed that also with Morris Cerullo .I discussed it with other — a lot of prominent preachers' sons die suicidal or gay — powerful men of God. And it's always a question, "Why me? Why would my kid be gay? Or why would my kid overdose?"

Sometimes we don't say suicide. We just say they overdose but it was suicidal. In many cases. We loved Richard so much. We didn't want him to feel so pressured and this thing ripped him to shreds, making him step away, just not step down, but step away. He doesn't want to come to Tulsa. People can criticize about a DUI. Well, that kind of pressure would drive me to become a drunkard or drink because it's so much pressure. People have all these expectations of you and you're a preacher. You can't even cuss folk out.



You know what we found out at the City of Faith? This is interesting. I'm just telling you, I don't care if somebody hears it. I was on the executive committee. We had a way that high profile people, particularly preachers could go into the hospital — because we're all faith people, healing people, we're not supposed to go to hospital — so they could get in anonymously. I have two people in my church working in anesthesia. I went in for some surgery on my foot and my musician went in for some kidney work because he'd been a police officer and shot and I always had a problem with it.

So this couple came to me, I didn't know they were there when I went in, but they said, “Pastor, we need to talk to you. It's really important.”

I said, “Come on.”

It was, “Well, you and Matthew were the only preachers that have ever come through the City of Faith and worshiped and preached when you first went under anesthesia.” He said I started worshiping, and singing, and that Matthew started preaching — would have been the other way around.

**JE:** Matthew?

**CP:** My musician, both from the Church of God and Christ Pentecostal. I said, “Well, was that strange?”

They said, “Yeah, every other preacher came through — just started cussing like a sailor.” (Laughing)

**JE:** (Laughing)

**CP:** ... and they were really shaken. But you gotta understand preachers are some of the angriest people on the planet because we're always talking to an invisible God trying to convince people that invisible God spoke to us and told us to build this, extend that, do that, blah, blah, blah. And so they don't get a chance to cuss when they're inhibited. But when they get uninhibited under the influence of drugs, what's in there comes out; please forgive them. That's a whole other subject. But I relate to it because even Oral did. You know, you don't build a place like that, you get so many betrayals, so much anger. If you look at his teeth and Billy Graham's too,

they've ground them down.

You know, Evelyn couldn't stand to sleep in the same room because he snorted loud, and snored, and he couldn't sleep, and growling at night. She would tell that. I was close enough to him that sometimes on the road I would move her out and put her in a different room, and move the beds around or whatever I needed to do so she could sleep.

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## **Chapter 13 – 9:40**

### **Billy Graham**

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**John Erling (JE):** This is not in order, but when Oral said, “God spoke to me...” And a lot of people would say, “Oh, Oral can actually hear God!” He was talking in his mind that God talked to him as he talked to you.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Yeah.

**JE:** It was all that spiritual talk.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** God talked to him.

**CP:** Absolutely.

**JE:** Did you ever — and I know you didn't expect the whole world to come down on you, but it in a way, it must have sinned that way. Did you ever begin to doubt your epiphany and wondering, “Well, maybe this is not actually correct the way I'm thinking.” Did you doubt it?

**CP:** I never doubted the way I felt, but I doubted the way I was thinking because I believe in deception, that I could have been deceived. I never felt deceived by God. I never felt that what I was saying — it didn't grate against my spirit, but my mind, I was battling between what my soul or my cells literally knew and what my mind thought. That was my big battle.

**JE:** Did you ever think, “Maybe I just need to go back on a pulpit and say, ‘You know what? I think I was deceived in my thinking and I'm no longer supporting the gospel of inclusion and coming back to what I was.’”

**CP:** I only thought of that when I was so poor that I knew if I changed my message, I could become a millionaire.

**JE:** Okay. And I was gonna ask you that, because this had to affect you financially.

**CP:** It did.

**JE:** In a big way?

**CP:** Profound way. I lost everything.

**JE:** You lost house, cars ...

**CP:** 401k, everything in the bank; I still don't own a home. I'm just trying to buy one now, but I did get a publishing deal, and I worked for a church in Chicago which had a very substantial salary. So I was able to, you know, exist somehow. I had miracles along the way. It's what we've always been taught. But I did think — is this the best — I did say this: “Why did you...” to God, “Why me? Why not Oral or Graham? These guys are old and solid and tell them! Who's gonna believe me, you know?” And, you know, they can't lose at this age.”

Billy Graham said to me, though, in Oklahoma City — this is important. We were doing the Oklahoma bombing thing. Frank Keating had called me the night that Jim Baker preacher in my conference, fresh out of prison, was the day of the bombing. I had felt it two weeks earlier, I had told my congregation in a very embarrassing, humiliating, breakdown in the pulpit. I started bawling and crying and stuff. I've only done that twice. And I said, “Something's coming. I thought it was a tornado. I see the vapor. I see the smoke. Pray. Let's push it back, y'all, push it back, push it back.” Because I thought there was gonna be a demonically-inspired tornado during the Azusa conference.

It wasn't that, but it did, it was a bombing that took place on that Wednesday. The next day, Frank called me, the governor called me and said, “Listen, we're gonna have a memorial service next Sunday. I need you to come. Can you come? This thing is really sad.”

And I said, “Of course, sir, I'll be there. My conference ends on Friday.”

He calls the next day. He says, "Man, this thing's gone nuts. CNN is coming. Satellite. The Clintons are coming, his cabinet. I need you to come early..." Because he told me the day before, "Billy Graham is going to eulogize and I want you to close the thing. Give us a high note, you know how to do it, Carlton, just get in there at the end. We're gonna have you be the last guy up."

So then he calls and says, "No, Graham's coming. But so President Clinton, Hillary — I gotta meet the President; I gotta meet; I'm gonna be with him all day. Would you come please and be with Doctor Graham all day?"

It's like, "Dude, of course."

And I was there when Graham got there. So that morning — he got in about 10. They had breakfast for us. We just like ... this is the first time I've had a one-on-one conversation — the only time. We just like hand in glove. The first thing he said after we sat down to eat, Ruth was right beside him, and Frank on the other side, Franklin and my wife and I were there.

He said, "You know ...you know, I've been preaching the gospel for over 50 years and it seems to me that the world is worse."

I said, "What do you mean, sir?"

He said, "I never thought I'd be coming to Oklahoma to preach a memorial for 180-some people dead because the first — the worst — act of terrorism on American soil." He said, "This isn't New York or LA. It's Oklahoma. I'm right down the road from where I dedicated your school so that we could stop this kind of stuff." He said, "You young preachers just have it easy. You can jump on a supersonic plane and go anywhere in the world in hours." He said, "We used to have to get on ships. If we went to India, it would take us three weeks to get over there. Then we weren't going to stay three days or even three weeks. Sometimes we stayed three months." And he said, "My wife raised our kids..." And he went through this whole thing. He was shaking like this.

Because I had said, "Are you preaching? What's your next trip?"

He said, "I'm not doing much anymore. I'm semi-retired. I'm just writing my memoirs." He said, "It hurts to hold a pen."

This big tall, handsome, still-slightly-tanned face, mingling gray hair and thinning and he's shaking like this. He came in that room shaking and he went to every person — every chef, the butlers, everybody was at the door to receive him — and he hugged every one of them. And then we sat down and he said, "I don't even know what I'm going to say to that group today." He said, "What are you gonna say?"

I said, "Sir, you've done — you've almost eulogized Popes. I mean, you are the Pope of Protestantism. You've done so many funerals."

He said, "Yeah, but not, not like this. I'm not sure what I'm gonna say."

I said, "I'm gonna start off with saying 'experience is not only what happens to us, it's what we do with what happens to us.'"

He said, "Wow, I might borrow that from you."

I said, "You the Pope; do what you wanna do."

But he said, "I think I've spent my life trying to convert people that I hadn't convinced; I've been all over the world."

**JE:** Say that again —

**CP:** "I've spent my life, as an evangelist, trying to convert people, but I hadn't convinced people."

I said, "Of what?"

"That God loved them. I wanted to convert them to believing that he was their savior, Jesus. But I think I emphasized salvation over love ... and I think I should just — I'm not gonna try to convert people anymore."

Now, if you can, you can go online and find a conversation that he had with Robert Schuler about the same thing where they basically said that; it's

actually online. His office issued a statement saying that he was having a bad day when he said that.

**JE:** Billy's office said that?

**CP:** Yeah. Billy's office, because of that conversation with Schuler.

**JE:** With Schuler, right.

**CP:** But I think he was having the best day of his life when he said that. But he was saying, he said, "I'm just wondering about a lot of things."

Now, this is the first time he's ever talked to me and he just starts opening up; and he was basically lamenting that he even had to be here for that and he was awkward with it. He said, "I've been all over the world, I've been treated wonderfully all over the world, received. I love these people. I'm sure God does. But I think that I've — I feel like I failed because the world is worse."

Can you imagine that? That was — I hadn't gotten into inclusion, exactly.

**JE:** Okay. So he didn't know about your inclusion.

**CP:** No. I didn't know about my inclusion.

**JE:** Because it hadn't happened yet. Okay.

**CP:** That was 20 years ago, almost 22 years now. So that would have been...

**JE:** What a conversation you had with him. That was wonderful.

**CP:** Riveting, riveting. I couldn't believe it. And when we finished, he said, "You know what? I believe we're going to hear a lot more from you."

I said, "Why are you saying that, sir?"

He said, "Because you have a lot to say."

**JE:** Yeah. You know, he'd go on with Larry King and every time Larry or anybody else would ask him a question, he would admit, you know, "We don't know. I can't answer that question."

**CP:** Very humble man.

**JE:** Larry would ask him probably thinking, “I’ve got you in a corner. Are Jews going to heaven?”

**CP:** Mm-hmm (In agreement)

**JE:** And he...

**CP:** ... He would never say no.

**JE:** No. He said — he probably would say — “I can't answer,” or “I don't have an answer for you”. A lot of people always had an answer.

**CP:** Right.

**JE:** But Billy would say, “I don't know.”

**CP:** Yeah. Instead of just saying, “I rely completely on scripture,” which he could have said, because that's always the way out. “I'm not gonna give you my opinion. I'll just say what the Bible says.” The Bible says. If it is, you know... He wasn't that arrogant about it. And I loved his class when it comes to that kind of thinking.

Once somebody asked him — Larry, I heard Larry ask him — if his son was gay, would he put him out? He said, would he stop loving him? He said, “I would love him more, because I know others would love him less.”

That was a very — and that was way back before people were as accepting of gay people. At that time. I thought that affected me a lot, because I wondered what I would say.

## **Chapter 14 – 9:00 Called a Heretic**

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**John Erling (JE):** So then you were called a heretic. In March 2014, the joint College of African American Pentecostal Bishops concluded that teaching was heresy. How did it feel to be called a heretic?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Well, it was devastating because it was, I was being called a heretic by my peers, not some fundamentalist group with, from

which I was detached. These were men I worked and walked with. I looked in that crowd and I saw some of those preachers sitting there. They didn't know it was gonna be the ambush it was in that particular thing.

But I knew those guys and I knew their stuff. I knew their pain. I know their pathos. I looked at guys a couple that had gotten out of jail, some that I had sent on exact trips to save their marriage, some on others that I had written checks to help them from, from losing their buildings. And I knew they were just men and just women and they were judging me so profoundly. And that was really hurtful.

In fact, when there was a break. And I had preached in that very church many times by the founder and builder who's now gone, John Meares, another preacher had it. He still does. But at that time, I went, they were knocking on the window on the door. It was a big old suite big as this room and, and they were knocking on the door and they wanted to see me. So I, I peeked out that, that whole hallway was jammed with collars, preachers in collars and black suits waiting to see me.

And he said, not a, one of them can come in, the bishop, Ellis, not a one, nobody's coming in here except one guy. David Copeland came in, he ordered him out like a child. Get out of here right now and he walked out, the guys wanted to sort of halfway reinforce me if they could. But I had preached some of the most successful revivals in that church. I was always honored in that suite. That's where the preachers wait before they go out and rest when they get through. And I'd have been treated almost like a celebrity there. Now, they, they literally said, escort him off the property. They escorted me off like a common criminal after saying I was a, I was a – that part was that and my own church, my local church with whom I had covenant, I mean, I had counseled and baptized and prayed with and been to the, – gotten them out of jail and been to the ER, and been there when people died and buried and married. I mean, it was just my own local congregation. I never expected the abandonment there. I did not expect those people to leave.

That was the most painful. Not what anybody from the outside said.

**JE:** Did you feel alone, alone, alone? Did you feel God was with you? Did you feel that he had separated himself?



**CP:** After losing the church? I was very angry at God because I had said to my congregation and I meant it. Downtown, no. God's not gonna let us lose our building. We walked these grounds, you know, doing without food for days, praying, believe and trust in God. I just, we, we miraculously got, I can't tell you today how I got that property because we had just lost a \$400,000 building that was foreclosed. Well, I actually had the people that gave me the original money to buy it. Her brother came in, the Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana at the time, and bought the building back.

So we were, we were on the street. I had to go over here to 41st and Sheridan, where Kinks Auto Mart used to be, and now there's a Walmart there. And Billy Joe had that building. He let us use it free for 30 days. We had to be out of it in 30 days. Somehow in 30 days, we worked a deal to get that property.

So the property itself was miraculous, the man next door to us where we bought 15 more acres, didn't like religious people and didn't have a good relationship with the church that had preceded us, Grace. And my dad, who was such an earthly calm man, he, he made friends with a guy and they start talking about fish and fishing and that guy sold us the property.

So I could count all the miracles. It never entered my mind that we would lose that property. And when we did, I was devastated.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** I mean, it was, it was, my faith was shaken. Not completely, but it was profoundly shaken. And so I had to go back and you know, my mom – we always stop eating when whenever something bad happens, we just fast – as my mother made us fast. If we got a cold, if we had a head, it she'd tell us to fast.

**JE:** Man! When something bad happen to me, I want to eat more.

**CP:** I know! Especially chocolate cake, but she would make us stop. So I would stop eating and we would purge ourselves, and pray, and all that stuff – detox.

And I did that a lot. I did it and–

**JE:** Let's bring in your wife into this.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** You were married at age 40 to Gina Marie –

**CP:** Gauthier

**JE:** And then you have your two Children, Julian and Majesty who I saw on Google, how she performed in that –

**CP:** On the Four.

**JE:** Television program, right?

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** Did such a great job.

**CP:** Thanks.

**JE:** Does Julian have any musical gifts or speaking gifts that he's taken from you?

**CP:** He can sing. He sounds like Drake. That's his favorite artist and he sounds identical, but he would never do it publicly. He's a videographer and he works at MCI diagnostics. But he travels with John P. Kee a lot lately, for the last year and a half. So just doing videography for him, he's doing a documentary.

**JE:** So how does Gina when you talk to her about this gospel of inclusion? Because she was raised, I would imagine

**CP:** Catholic.

**JE:** Oh Catholic?

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** Okay. How does she take to your gospel?

**CP:** Gina. Gina is not a theologian, but she never had an issue. In fact, she had more of an issue with typical fundamentalist pentecostalism than she did with new thought, or unity, or science of mind or anything like that.

I was shocked but she wasn't one of those, those dogged stayed fundamentalist girls. The kind I, I normally would have married.

She was Catholic in her background. She had been a Protestant for about 10 years and was actually going to a little Pentecostal church in Tul- in Louisiana when I met her. And her sister married into the Church of God and Christ family. So her older sister Madeline. But the rest of them were Catholics, profound Catholics and, and so, but, you know, Catholics are not theologians. They don't, some of them don't even read this Bible couldn't for many years to maybe the last 40.

So she, she didn't have a lot of problems with scripture and all that stuff. She loved the more relaxed. I mean, she was, she was comfortable with drinking a glass of wine and I wasn't. She would wear pants to church as a female. I didn't want her to because she was the first lady. And, you know, I had all that prudish background of my fundamentalist Pentecostal hole in this stuff. But she was, she was very, very comfortable with – in fact, she, I think she was actually glad that I got away from that because we could be more focused on each other.

She was always sort of like the mistress. The ministry was the marriage, to be honest with you, which is what I used to say before I was married, when I was single, I would say, "Well, I'm gonna, I'm always going to be married to the ministry. That's my first calling." And that's true with most ministers, they won't say it, but the ministry or profession pretty much is we get our identity from what we do, not from having kids.

**JE:** Right.

**CP:** You know.

**JE:** All right. So she's –

**CP:** ... as me.

**JE:** All right, So this is getting personal now she files for divorce in August of 2015. So then apparently it wasn't because of the gospel of inclusion.

**CP:** No, no.

**JE:** It was a personal thing between the two of you.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** Okay. All right.

**CP:** Not at all because of the gospel of inclusion.

**JE:** All right. And that's what I was wondering what, and then before the divorce was finalized, she dismissed her petition for divorce.

**CP:** Yeah, about seven months after that.

**JE:** Right. And so you're two together today.

**CP:** We're married. We don't live together, but we're married.

**JE:** Okay.

**CP:** She comes and goes when she wants to. When she wants to come home, she goes home, she was there last night. I mean, she eats there and I, I won't remove my ring because as far as I'm concerned, we're still married. She's still my wife and the mother of my Children. But that won't change if she divorces, I'll take care of her till I die.

**JE:** So that still is in limbo.

**CP:** Yeah, it's in limbo. Yeah.

**JE:** All right.

**CP:** I mean, we've been to South Africa together. We've been to Thailand, we travel together, we're going to New York on Sunday together and we, we still –

**JE:** Oh, so you're still friends as we say, and together and all that kind of thing.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** But you do, you live separate lives.

**CP:** Separate lives. But you know, because the kids are there and they're in my hou– in the house with me. She checks on them all the time. She comes by a lot. She can stay anytime she wants to. And, um, she has her cake and gets to eat it too. I have to pay all the bills and I do. But my commitment is for life.

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**Chapter 15 – 13:45**  
**Come Sunday**

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**John Erling (JE):** The movie Come Sunday, based on This American Life, Ira Glass and Marcus Hinchey. And they then did a story of your life on that program. So then the movie comes along.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Well, This American life, which is Ira Glass, and Marcus was the writer. He came in later, and Josh, those guys were with Endgame, came in through Endgame.

**JE:** Okay. And those who played – I can't pronounce his name – who played you.

**CP:** Chiwetel Ejiofor.

**JE:** I'm gonna have to say that. And so Chiwetel –

**CP:** Ejiofor.

**JE:** Ejiofor played you. Condolona Rash–

**CP:** Condola Rashad

**JE:** Condola Rashad played your wife.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** Jason Segel played –

**CP:** ...A combination of primarily Jeff Voth, Brent Sharp, and a little bit of Gary McIntosh.

**JE:** Martin Sheen plays Oral.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** Were you okay with that?

**CP:** He mastered it.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** Yeah. And he didn't even like Oral, but he nailed that role.

**JE:** Yeah. And LaKeith Stanfield and Danny Glover round out the cast. Were you pleased with all that?

**CP:** Every one of them?

**JE:** Were you pleased with the film when it finished? Were you there, and as a consultant?

**CP:** I was, not the whole time. They left out some things that I think would have been more important. And the budget was tight until Netflix got in, because then they were the big guys and they pretty much let them do what they want to do. But they missed; we left some real juicy, more confronting things out that – because they didn't want to offend anybody. They wanted to soft-shoot that part of it. But I think it would have been a lot more gutsy if – because the writer, Marcus Hinchey, is an atheist. He was born Catholic in Italy, raised in London, and now he calls himself an agnostic because he's been to all these services with me. He sits in church and cries and all that stuff, and we're really close friends.

And for 10 years, we worked together all hours of the night. He would call, and when I could get emotional about something, he'd wait till I finished talking about it. And then he would probe that. So he has what he's written is very gutsy, and it's everything, and that would have, if we had, have included more of that, couldn't have included all of it, but more of it, I think it would have been a lot more gutsy in that sense. I'm pleased with it, but not thrilled the way – because I know my story – and I know that the part that was more, confronted, I didn't want to be combative, but confrontive and made people think a little bit more deeply was not included.

**JE:** I think you've shared things here today, more so than were ever seen in that film.

**CP:** Right. Right.

**JE:** Variety Magazine: “For those who choose to sample ‘Come Sunday,’ they’ll be rewarded not only by the compelling story of a devout Christian wrestling with his faith but also by one of the great screen performances of recent years, as ‘12 Years a Slave’ star...”

**CP:** Chiwetel Ejiofor

**JE:** "...captures both the charismatic passion and softer-voiced introspective side of bishop Carlton Pearson" That's pretty good.

**CP:** He captured, I said to him "Play me, but do you." Because his career was just really beginning to get really big. He couldn't do my little nuances, the little humorous things that – and that made the director uncomfortable – and but we were, we thought he was gonna get nominated. He got a little bit unhappy towards the end with something that wouldn't that happened when I wasn't there. So he wouldn't come on and do you know the TV shows and push the movie like he could.

We wanted them to air it in September and they released it in September. They released it in like in March. Well, September is closer to voting and thinking and you know, the Tonys and all that stuff. It would have been fresh, more fresh in people's minds, but it came in as number five of the 10 top of the 80 movies that Netflix did.

**JE:** Really?

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** Well, it's because obviously we know why here's a man who came from what you've talked about in San Diego and your faith. And if it was somebody else who didn't have any kind of faith, we'd say, "Ok, you're an atheist," or whatever, we wouldn't have believed it. But it's because of your background that made that happen for you.

**CP:** Yes, sir. Absolutely.

**JE:** You preach at All Souls on the third Sunday of the month, travel to Chicago to preach once a month in the New Dimensions, Chicago.

**CP:** I used to, I don't do that anymore.

**JE:** Right.

**CP:** I dissolved that.

**JE:** But it's some of the things that you went on to –

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** You went on to do. You were named the interim minister of the Christ Universal Temple.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** ...a large new thought congregation in Chicago.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** For two years. I think you referred to that.

**CP:** Yeah. Yes, sir.

**JE:** and paid handsomely.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** ...and then you left that position.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** ...and you got tremendous coverage all across the country, all sorts of media. And I have a long long list here. And that was probably surprising to you, too, that you get such media attention or not? Yes?

**CP:** Yes. This American Life triggered it all Lisa Bonet of the Cosby Show. Saw This American– heard This American Life and took it to all the producers at HBO. They were gonna do a made for TV. I just happened to be reading. I left Tulsa and went to – so we were getting like 1 to 3 emails a minute the night that the This American Life NPR show aired, I forgot I even gave the interview. It just came on.

And so, but it came on the Friday after the Wednesday that I signed my ownership, involvement, connection with hired the whole corporation, walked out of my office. It was the saddest day of my life. Two days later and it's like I have no friend in the world, except my immediate staff. The following Friday, this show airs and we're getting one, two, three emails a minute from Muslims and Mormons and Jews and Chester Cadieux who lived across the street from me at the time.

When the founder of Quick Trip – when he – we'd never spoken. And when the Tulsa World aired the – put the front page article about Carlton Pearson becoming a Universalist. I don't remember exactly what it said. He



called me. It was the first phone call, but I'd gone to church. When I got home he said, "Carlton, this is Chester. My wife and I have long agreed to believe what you believe." I said, "Really? Write me a check." and help me make it home to save my property.

I didn't really know anything much about him. But, he, I started getting friends like that who would never have approached me and it, but I took all those emails as many as they let me take to come in and went to California to Cardiff-by-the-Sea, just north of San Diego. In fact, I went to a three day fast and I took these emails and I sat in the tub, not with the water in it. I just sat in there because I had a better view of the ocean line. And I read through these emails and I read one from Lisa Bonet and it said "Lisa Bonet of the Cosby Show" and she had her number on it. I called her from the Cardiff-by-the-Sea.

She later came and brought the producer of How Stella Got Her Groove Back and another lady. And they were – she wanted to do the movie. She took it to all the people at HBO and she sort of got the ball rolling.

Jeremy Kleiner of Plan B, which is Brad Pitt's company, flew to meet me and said "My boss wants this movie. You got to let us do it. Have you signed, have you signed away the rights?" I didn't know whether I had or not. I was doing so many things without my secretaries and all that stuff. I had, but Brad wanted to do it because he's brought up in fundamentalism. Born in Oklahoma, raised in Kansas, all fundamentalism. This movie really touched where he was. Jeremy's names on this, on the crawl for something. I'm not sure why.

But anyway, I would like to do a more thorough presentation of the story that goes all the way back to San Diego. Because people are saying, "So what now, where are you now?" I'm nowhere and I'm now here. I spell it differently. I'm in Wakanda. Nowhere If I move the w from now to where – to here – would be now here. So I don't know yet. It's – I want to do more.

**JE:** So when Brad comes in, is he, is this within the last, is this–?

**CP:** That's before I, that's before I did it with the NPR and Endgame.

**JE:** Oh, Do you wish that Brad could have told the story?

**CP:** I think they would have, it would have been a little juicier. Yeah.

**JE:** Because they've done some great things.

**CP:** Well, the first director was Marc Forster and he loved it. His, his wife at the time, we met him in Santa Barbara to – Santa Monica – to talk about it. Then we had Jonathan Demme. Jonathan gave Denzel his first big break. I mean, and Jonathan actually sent it to Beyonce to play my wife. He wanted to make, he said, “I think she should get a academy and I can do it.” Condola just nailed it. She played the role of Gina so perfectly. I mean, I was in tears. And she came in and spent three days with us here on her own do dollar just to, to get to know my wife.

**JE:** Hm.

**CP:** So, and our setting and all that kind of, I explained that the marriage was strained at that time. I mean, I spent 2.5 hours with her, you know, in Atlanta, when we first started shooting, before we started shooting. And so, she wanted to come in and spend time and feel my wife out, and feel us out and all that. She did a great job doing that. Phylicia Rashad is her mother and Ahmad's her dad. So, going through all those, those personalities and walking through all that and learning that whole world is amazing.

**JE:** Mhm. You know, we could point out here that we've talked about you being a gospel vocalist, but you've won two stellar awards and you were nominated for a Dove award.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** I mean, if you were just a singer, you might have done a nice career there or just a preacher. But you hear you have both gifts. Not many people have both at that level.

**CP:** Well, it's not really, it's not my singing or my preaching. It's the, the atmosphere and experience that I've presented. I've always, people liked, I don't know that they like my singing. They like the whole ambience of what I did in those tapes because I have a lot of my old classic songs that, and I didn't do rehearsals, I refused to rehearse. I said “Just follow me, do what I do.” Okay, I'm not gonna, because I'm not trying to be a singing star. In fact, they made me put my name on the contract. I wanted to put

Higher Dimensions. They don't sign. And I'm glad I did now because now I get an after check. After turning 65 I didn't even remember any of that.

I never thought I'd be penniless or without a decent income. It just never, not after I started, just never crossed my mind. I've never been penniless, but I didn't, I knew that I'd be set for life and that I, my parents lost their house because they were on my retirement. They worked for me for 20 years. I was giving them just a couple of \$1000 a month. But that stopped. I did it out of my pocket as long as I could. And my mom lives with me. Now, my dad's gone and their house, one of the foreclosure. Those are things the public doesn't know. But my parents were aging and retired and daddy died of cancer. And mother had a heart attack. We were down at Epis- at the Episcopal Church then. She just had a heart attack one, the only Sunday my dad decided to stay home – because they always came to church – he just happened to stay home that day, or my mom would have been dead when we got home, because my mother won't take an aspirin. She doesn't believe in medicine and all that stuff.

So, but anyway, she's 89 and living with me.

**JE:** And what is your mother saying about the gospel of inclusion?

**CP:** She, as she gets older, she forgets what it even means, and she goes back to the old ways. She keeps turning all the televisions in my house on to Christian television so I can, she wants to keep me safe. But she, she understood it because my mother's parents were really hard on her. She's an only child. Even my grandfather who wasn't a hold in, this guy didn't want her to go to parties. She couldn't do anything. She gave up a lot so she understood it. Not as well as my dad did, because my dad's parents were in hell as far as he knew.

**JE:** So to this day does she worry about your faith?

**CP:** Not as much as she does, the whole family she wants, but she misses her whole identity was in ministry. And when I lost the ministry and the crowds and the choir and what she called the anointing of the Holy Ghost, she doesn't, she can't in her mind at 89 years old put, put anything else other than that as being legitimate.

**JE:** How about all these great gospel songs that you sang and recorded? And, you must have royalties coming in from records that you did. Isn't that true?

**CP:** Yeah, I do.

**JE:** I mean, The Presence of the Lord in This Place, and Living, He Loved Me, and Send It on Down and all that.

**CP:** I didn't write those. But I, I –

**JE:** No, but I'm just saying those songs. Do you sing them now?

**CP:** Oh.

**JE:** And they still have great meaning to you? And those songs still make sense, don't they?

**CP:** Yes.

**JE:** In this inclusion?

**CP:** Yes.

**JE:** Even the Old Rugged Cross?

**CP:** Oh yeah. Blood songs at Andraé Crouch's Funeral when they sing The Blood Shall Never Lose Its Power. I was there. I didn't realize they had cameras on me but it was live, people were singing whereas I was singing the blood songs. Well, I don't even believe it's – a lot of the theology – but I remember the experience, I'm crying, I'm raising my hands. I still speak in tongues. I sometimes sit up till two, three o'clock in the morning listening to Azusa music. It just refreshes my soul like nothing else does because that's the way I've lived. That's been my source for inspiration and encouragement. And it still is.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** I'm going to the Stellar Awards next month as a guest of some people and they have a private booth for me. So I don't have to mix among people that much, but they love me when I go. All the singers and gospel singers I still hear from them. Usually when they get in trouble I hear from them.

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**Chapter 16 – 15:00**  
**Questioning the Bible**

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**John Erling (JE):** One more about the Bible. You said one time “The Bible sends a lot of mixed messages. I don't think of it anymore as the inspired word of God but the inspired word of men about God, and some of it has expired.” Those are your words. Can you talk about it a little bit?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Yeah. Alluded to it earlier that the Bible is an ancient book written by people. We don't know much about their private lives, and we cannot absolutely authenticate that any of those books are not forgeries.

We don't know who wrote Genesis. We think it's Moses. The reason we say this is because by the time we got the copies, their authors were dead, and we don't have any of the original handwritten copies, except the closest to it of the Qumran scrolls. They're not as ancient as the book itself is of the history. Of course, the history of the Bible chronologically puts us about 6018 years old, 19. But scientists tell us humans have been here at least 200,000 years or 300,000. So, I no longer, I mean, I majored in Biblical Literature - English Bible, and I minored in theology and historical studies. So I love the scriptures. I teach them, read them and, you know, reverence them. I just, I don't take them literally, I take them seriously, but just not literally.

**JE:** But you have to, there are parts of it you have to believe. You believe that Christ – the only way we know that Christ died on the cross is from the Bible.

**CP:** And the sad thing about that is there's no other record that he even – that historical crimes ever existed. That's the frightening part.

**JE:** So what do –?

**CP:** No, no, the Romans are known for keeping accurate records. He's not in their records and their annals neither is Pilate.

**JE:** All right. Does that bring doubt to you?

**CP:** It worries me. Not because it only worries me because I love the story. I love to tell the story, you know, just like with my theme in glory. I've sang that with tears, and I can still sing it with tears and maybe a little bit fears because I think it is an inaccurate presentation of truth, and it has, it has in one way beguiled billions of people for millennia and it's gotten us off track as the species, and it makes us – it generates fear and terror. So that's the part that I am threatened by more than anything else

**JE:** What about the crucifixion? Did that happen?

**CP:** I believe in that asphyxiation on a cross occurred because that was the most despised of the ancient executions. It's not a Jewish way of killing the Romans did it. Jews didn't kill Jesus Romans did according to the scriptures.

The problem is we can't prove any of it in any other place. There's no record of the crucifixion in the rules and annals of Roman history that's bothersome to me. And when you study other religions that Christian– that are predating, predate Christianity by thousands of years, you find mythological images, whether that's Krishna from Zeus to Je-zeus – Jesus. There's these images of gods who have sex with women like the whole Olympics is about sons of the gods. Whoever could run the fastest, jump the highest, or jump the farthest was considered the son of the gods that Zeus or somebody from Mount Olympus had to've had sex with a human.

Now, the Hebrew scriptures say that the sons of God fell from heaven, saw the daughters of men that they were attractive or lovely and married them, and created giants. That's in the Bible that God inseminated a 12 or 13-year-old girl against her without her knowledge, not necessarily against her will, but it was, it could have been considered by, it could be considered statutory rape for today's laws. The Holy Ghost would go to jail.

**JE:** You're talking about Mary now.

**CP:** Yeah, Mary, but it's God having sex with humans. That's the whole thing that brought about the – according to scripture – in the sixth chapter of Genesis, that's when God, after these angels, fallen angels, evidently they were all males. There's no female angels that are noted of in scripture, had sex with humans. Women. The next chapter says, God says, my spirit will not strive with man. The very next chapter, he's mortal, "In fact, I repent or regret that I even made him". And then he drowned every human being

on the planet except for eight. And soon as Noah comes out of the ark, he commits evidently an act of incest with his son, him. And then God says, "The water thing ain't working, didn't really do it. Next time," which says he didn't have any confidence in this anyway. "Next time they're gonna screw up again. Next time we're gonna burn him."

Now, that's a little harsh way to say it. "I'm gonna burn the hell out of them next time" and I want it to sound jolting because this thing we call the Bible with all of the superstitions and myths has done us great harm as a species. It's blessed my life in uncountable ways, incalculable ways. It blessed the life of my family. It took us through Jim Crow, and racism, and slavery. We always had this Jewish hope for Messianic presence. Islamic race still waits for the Messiah, so do the Jews, but it gave us hope.

Now, I don't know what else would have done it the same way. Perhaps something would have. But that – I call theology – God thought, and God talked that particularly God thought and talk gave us some sense of hope even though we don't trust that God's love because we could violate it by looking at a woman's breast. And suddenly Jesus said, if you look on her, get lost after her, you committed adultery.

So we're all adulterers. My dad was, his dad was, his dad was all my uncles, holy ghost tongue-talking preachers, all the bishops I know, except the ones who are gay, look at women lustfully, even though they're married, or at least they admire them if they don't desire them. If you admire them long enough, you're gonna desire them.

So it's just human, and I'm not putting them down. I'm not, I don't mean to sound like I'm demeaning any, I respect them. And I accept the fact that Paul, who wrote two-thirds of the New Testament, said, "What I wanna do right, when I want to do good, evil is right there with me." In my inner being. I delight in the law of God. But I find another law at work, not just latent at work – kinetic – it's active in me making the law making me a prisoner. Paul the apostle said, "I am a prisoner to the law of sin." He's talking to the European church, not Jews. He's talking to gentiles in Italy, wrong. I'm the prisoner of the law at work within my members. Then he said, "Oh, wretched man." That's why Newton. John. Newton could say that. Say "The wretch like me." We Christians think we basically are

wretches. And that's just in my mind. I've thought it all my life. It's self-loathing, it's not self-loving. I loathe me, still to this day, because practice doesn't just make perfect. It tends to make permanent. My friend Miles would say, "I still wrestle with self-loathing." My mom does, all my four sisters and one brother. Most Christians I know.

I don't care if you're the bishop or the son of a bishop. You don't like you, you're not – you don't have permission to like you. And there's a commission to love you, love yourself. We don't love ourselves in general. We and none of us. We're afraid to say God doesn't love us because that sends you right to hell. But no Christian I've ever met believes that God likes him. Most people who I know, believe their parents love them. But doubt if they really liked them. I never thought Oral liked me except differently than he may have liked some of the other students because I fit into a mold. But if I messed up, he told me.

So we are humans. We always walk, "She loves me, she loves me not. He loves me, he loves me not." We go through this, and that's what is, has created the kind of psychosis, psychosis, mental illness that I'm trying to address as tactfully and tastefully and timely as I know how.

**JE:** I just got to bring back to the Bible. Some of it you believe, and some of it you don't. I mean, you were quoting it just now, and you're just talking about the Apostle Paul. And all, so I mean, there are real parts of that Bible that we can say actually happened.

**CP:** Well, I believe it like, I believe angels and demons, I believe it like, what is it, Dan Cox who wrote, what's that 400 page? I read it – book about the Illuminati and all that stuff. I believe that stuff. Some of it's embellished, some of it's figurative, but there's some substance to it. I believe the sun is 93 million miles away. I don't know it. And if they told me today that it's actually 63 million miles, I wouldn't go into therapy over it and have somebody counseling me.

So I can take the Bible seriously and not take it literally. And I do pick and choose because some of it's somewhat verifiable. We think maybe the writings of Paul, for the most part, are legitimate, but we can't prove it. The only non-Jew is Luke, Saint Luke. Everybody else in the Bible, the Bible was written by Jews, to Jews, for Jews, about a Jewish understanding of



divinity.

So, and Christianity is a Jewish religion. The whole idea of a Messiah, Christos.

**JE:** And my brain is telling me to ask you as we begin to wind this up. But the crucifixion of Christ on the cross, are you doubting that happened?

**CP:** I don't really care that it happened anymore.

**JE:** I thought his dying was the basis of the love that we have in inclusion.

**CP:** It's a violent love. And so I don't embrace gods – I think it's pagan – for gods who demand blood transactions or blood actions to absolve people. I think it's violent. I think it's very carnivorous. But it's biblical because the first worshiping, the first murder, you know when the first murder in the Bible is between Cain and Abel. And it was around how to worship God. One brought, one was vegetarian that was Cain. He'd be popular today. He brought, got some kale or something. Abel brought some neck bones. I mean some – he brought blood, and somehow they knew that God preferred the blood even though he said you could only eat the trees and fruit and leaves in the garden.

Now they're out of the garden, and Abel, the second son, brings blood and so blood, and sacrifice, and which means victim-ization. The word sacrifice comes from the idea of the victim; whatever animal was gonna be, the sacrifice was the victim that they killed.

We emphasize blood. But the scripture actually emphasized breath. He gave up the ghost, numa, Greek breath. We prefer blood rather than spirit. But he gave up the ghost, said "It is finished" and gave up the ghost or spirit. So I'm more interested in spirit than blood. So I can do without.

Now, asphyxiation, crux is the Latin word for cross. A fixture X he choked. That's how he died. He stopped breathing, he didn't stop bleeding because the blood kept running out of him for a while. But we're bloody people. We're very sadistic, and we have a sadistic God. That part I reject.

**JE:** What about the Triune God? The father, son, and the Holy Ghost Is that part of your –?

**CP:** I don't care about, I mean, I like it. I'm, I'm a Trinitarian in that sense, Father, son, and Holy Ghost. But, the word Jehovah, Havah is the Hebrew word for Eve or female. So Jehovah, which really means male and female. If the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete Paraclete, maybe God and the feminine Holy Spirit – nurturing – were intimate, and then here comes the son. That can make sense. That would be Trinitarian. To say ice, water, and mist are the same chemical substances. Father, son, and the Holy Spirit. That's the way I've used as an example for years to explain Trinitarianism.

But to me, all those are peripheral things. They're not – they're doctrinal wastes of time.

**JE:** Well, there are some of you who are listening, I'm sure are more interested in Carlton, what he's talking about. He's written two books about it.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** The Gospel of Inclusion and God Is Not a Christian, Nor a Jew, Muslim, Hindu...

**CP:** ...God is with Us, and is as Us

**JE:** Right. And so those books are available on Amazon.com.

**CP:** Mhm, Gospel of Inclusion is for the fundamentalists who need a scriptural definition and verification of universal salvation.

**JE:** And as I talk about your books, I want to talk about my book. These are stories from the website that we had published just in the last several months.

**CP:** I didn't know about that.

**JE:** And so I can say, well, my book is available too on Amazon.com

**CP:** Voices of Oklahoma. I love it.

**JE:** Yeah, these are stories, and John Hamill from our community is the writer, and we're the producer of the stories. This is a great way for me to let people know I can hand this out or sell it.

**CP:** And what stories are in there? is Frank Keating in there? The former governor or, Oral Roberts in there? Important people, like me? No. (chuckles)

**JE:** There are some people who are Yeah, it's a variety of people that are in here.

**CP:** Your audience may want to know.

**JE:** We have over 200 stories to tell. So I present this story, this book, to you.

**CP:** Thank you, sir.

**JE:** And I have signed it to you.

**CP:** "Thank you for sharing your story with Voices of Oklahoma. I admire your—" Anytime. Thank you, sir. Yes.

**JE:** You are welcome. And I want to thank you.

## **Chapter 17 – 7:12 Is There a Heaven?**

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**John Erling (JE):** You talked about Oklahoma City and the bombing, and I think about some of the infamous murderers, Timothy McVeigh.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** He's the one that did the Oklahoma –

**JE:** Right? So because of the love of God, is it, is he in heaven too?

**CP:** He was in hell while he was here. That's what made him do what he did. There is a Hitler, hateler or hurtler in all of us. There's a part of us that is vicious and sadistic and hateful. And by the grace of God, there go I.

So Timothy was vexed and turmoiled I wish I could have spoken to him. All rapists and murderers and violators and the viscous –, I don't judge a person, John, by what they do as much as by what they were thinking 10 minutes before they did it or 10 hours or days or years because hatred – pain – accumulates and it can cause people to have outbursts.

So if there is a loving God, I should say if, in fact, there is someplace in the farthest reaches and rhythms and regions of consciousness an intelligent, or a science, a knowing, con-science, conscious with knowledge, scientia, conscientia in Latin with knowledge. If there's something that knows a principle, if not a person, a law of the universe that works, I would figure that, that reality, if not being, would have some ultimate goal that is good.

And that unless God, the biblical God, does admit that he wants a divorce. I mean, he wants out of the whole relationship, and he drowns everybody, and he's vicious, and he says vengeance is mine, and he's judgmental and jealous. So I don't believe in that God anymore. But the Bible, that is the God of the Bible. So I can easily, easily deviate from that God that I'm scared to death.

But I believe that the ultimate good might just be the ultimate end, might just be good. And that if hell is remedial purgative, corrective, then I'm for it. Eternal doom, con doom or condemn or condemnation. I don't believe in that God by choice and by conviction.

So Timothy McVeigh had a mother and a father and had siblings, wretched, but so did John Newton and his father, who abused him physically and the white ocean maritime people that he worked for. Before he ever met a slave. He was mistreated and abused and stayed in. He hated those cold, slimy darkened ships. If you read his history, who wrote *Amazing Grace* and still owned slaves for 30 more years.

So I mean, I just look at humans with a different kind of compassion. I try to put – feel the person's pain. When somebody tells me that George Washington had slaves. I don't freak out. Or Abraham Lincoln or that 100 years ago, people looked at blacks differently than they do now, in Tulsa, Because 100 years ago, most white people did, even in the north.

It was common to have slaves a 100 years ago. I mean, 200 years ago or back when we, in the 1700s the first slaves arrived in 1609, and they were British. Slave trade was Britain, not American. They brought them to America. Only 1.2 million or so came here 25 million throughout the rest of the world.

But they were treated worse here historically. That's what we're told. So when you take all that stuff into consideration, I can forgive. What does that, what does that love story says? "Love means never having to say, I'm sorry," doesn't mean never needing to say, I'm sorry.

I basically love humanity. I'm committed to humanity, and I love him. And so when you understand, you don't have to have an apology.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** It helps, but.

**JE:** We talk so much about hell. Is there a reward? Do you – Is there a heaven? Do you believe we're going to heaven?

**CP:** No, I think everything is consciousness. I don't believe in streets of gold. I don't prefer them. I'd rather be in Maui. I don't want walls of topaz and just too obs – you know, that's too extravagant. I like to believe – because none of us really knows – it's all speculative. Faith actually means "I don't know." You only need faith because you don't know. You need faith because you doubt. The knowers don't need faith. Knowledge transcends it. But because we don't know, I believe in a – if I want to believe in a scripture – I believe in the one that says mercy unto us forever. Yeah, it's an Old Testament passage, but how can mercy endure forever and hell endure forever? One would cancel out the other. I would vote for mercy.

You get to choose what you want to believe. Most people know what they believe, but they don't always believe what they know. So I'm wrestling with that, to be honest with you. And I think that in some alternate reality, I could actually accept reincarnation faster than I could. Eternal weeping. kneading, and gnashing of teeth. There's no redemptive virtue to that.

**JE:** Or eternal heaven?

**CP:** Or eternal heaven. I would get bored with – the song we used to sing is "Walk Around Heaven All Day." I don't wanna walk around no place all day. I wanna feel productive. God, creation itself evidently was active creating and wanted to experience itself as a human. That's the only way I can explain why we're here. What if creation wanted to experience itself as created? And so here we are. Some, some form of a deity.

That all that stuff I'm rethinking it all makes more sense than accepting the traditions that there's nothing reasonable about all about these, these traditions.

**JE:** So when you die, what is your hope beyond death?

**CP:** I hope this is my last time around. But if I haven't learned everything I need to, I'll probably come back a few more times. I'd rather believe that when I die, I hope I will experience a reality, more bright and brilliant, better – not bitter – than this one. Whatever that is.

**JE:** So your chances of reincarnation are greater than living in a heavenly existence.

**CP:** I would believe, if I'm not worthy of that heavenly existence, if you have to earn it, I'm not sure that you would. But if you do, other than Jesus' blood, washing our sins away, which is my Christian background. I buy that and that preempts – It's not that I wouldn't believe in hell, I just wouldn't believe anybody would be in it – that ultimately because, as an Adam, all men die, so “In Christ,” the scripture says, “all will be made alive.”

That's gospel. So I either believe that – that everybody ultimately sees God and is God or that we come around Buddhists 'till we reach Karma, which is Nirvana through Karma. Nirvana, to where we don't have a desire, we lose desire, whatever that is. Really, we get to the 23rd Psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want, I shall not desire. I shall not lack” I can buy that.

## **Chapter 18 – 13:52**

### **Steve Ripley**

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**John Erling (JE):** Well, Carlton, we're actually here because we both attended the funeral of our friend Steve Ripley.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** Mhm.

**JE:** And you spoke so eloquently at that service, you opened and closed it. Shows how close you were to the family. They selected you to do that at

the end of the service we talked about then recording your story. So that's how we connected, even though we'd known each other in the community. It's one of those moments and one of those coincidences –

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** - that bring us to this point. And Steve, of course, was so talented recording artist, record producer, songwriter, studio, engineer, guitarist, inventor. And then he was a leader and producer of the country rock band, The Tractors. When I interviewed him for the third time, he said what I'm about to say, I do not want to be on the website until after I die. Unfortunately, he died January 3rd, 2019. And he talked about you in that segment, and you've listened to that segment and heard what he said, but that's, you talk about him, you interacted with him. You did music, you recorded kind of talk about him and your relationship.

**CP:** Well, he was one of the easiest and we, we recorded for 25 years, and I wasn't always in the studio with the engineers and what have you because a lot of that was done in Nashville. But with Church Studios, which he owned, we were happy to find that because it saved us a lot of money. And then he was, he was instantly one of us.

He had no arrogance, not even any austerity about him. He was just very rustic and earthy. And, and when they introduced me to him, they didn't introduce me to him as the owner. They said he's the engineer and he didn't act like the owner. He looked like a hired, he acted like a hired hand. He was crawling around on the floor, repairing and fixing and plugging things up and adding running across there. But I knew that he owned the place and his consciousness. It was his baby. My album became his baby; our production. He would come into and give me hints or instructions or sometimes criticisms because if I had to redo something on what I did. And for some reason, I thought, who's this white dude telling me how to do my kind of singing, and he, he was right. Everything he said he didn't sing our kind of music. He loved it. But he, when he said, "Do it this way, do it again, you got another one in you?" I instantly believed in. We didn't talk a lot about our comments, and I loved him. There was something about him that was very pastoral as I said at the funeral, he cared for all of us. I took my kids down there, and they were infants when we would record. He was always grinning to make sure that they were comfortable if they

needed anything and baby stuff. He's really into babies, and I just connected with him almost instantly.

**JE:** Yeah, and he was born into the Baptist church. So his faith of the gospel that spreads to many denominations was the same as yours. So he fully understood what you were. And did you feel that connection from him?

**CP:** I did, I felt like he was a believer. He wasn't super religious at all, but you knew that he was spiritual, almost mystical. He had a connection with the Earth and, and dust. I mean, tractors, red earth, red necks, red country. He was a really rugged guy that was, but I didn't feel any end of racism in anything at all. He was just a cultural Oklahoman. He loved Oklahoma and loved Oklahomans, and I was, he, he totally disarmed us. Never alarmed us.

We felt he could fix anything, and he did, from an organ a Hammond B3, which he loved, to some piece of equipment. He had all this stuff in there. And he was running around. I don't remember seeing a bunch of crew with him. It seems he was doing a lot of it himself. And, David said, "Pastor you can trust him, you can trust him." So I did.

**JE:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, he talked about his brothers being mechanical, and he wasn't in the sense that they were like they could fix a car. But he was, he said, but I realized I was mechanical and what you just –

**CP:** With technology

**JE:** and then he created, invented new use of the guitar, made guitars and all that kind of thing. So he, I only knew him for a short time. I wish I'd known him longer.

**CP:** Mhm.

**JE:** But you, he, he likes to talk about it was a crack in the cosmos. Dylan fell down, and Leon fell down. Well, Steve Ripley fell down from that cosmos as well.

**CP:** I think so too, I do too. I think the same thing.

**JE:** Special man.

**CP:** He, his last text to me was about, I had my, I had it on my phone. He saw my daughter sing on the Four, and he'd been watching that, and he's



congratulated me on that because he'd remembered her almost in diapers. Literally just crawling around the floor there in the studio. And, he saw the movie and was very eager to discuss it. I was on my way out. We had planned that I should go out to the farm and just sit with him, and we were just gonna talk theology because he agreed with my expansive, radically inclusive theology and made that very clear to me.

And when the shift took place, he was one of the few people with whom we had worked, who, who did not change his attitude, professional people who did not change his attitude towards us at all. In fact, the last CD we recorded, David mixed it down there with him, and the record companies would not even release it.

**JE:** Because –

**CP:** Because of inclusion. The radio stations, we released a couple of songs, they played as singles, and they went nuts. The people started calling, asking for the album, and then the, when the record company sent the albums CDs to the bookstores, the bookstores wouldn't even open the boxes. The Christian bookstores sent them all back, and that album has only recently been released. I do not know by whom I offered him thousands of dollars to let us buy it back because it was songs that our people had written a lot of original songs, David who went \$50,000 over, over budget producing it and let him do it because it was his first soul album that he could produce. And it was just the most anointed – that's the term we use – of all the ones we, all the several ones, including the ones we got several awards for and nominations for. So it's really heartbreaking.

**JE:** I stumbled into another blowback that you had from the inclusion story. Your records weren't even played, they were sent back and not even sold.

**CP:** Yeah. And all my books and CDs were taken off the bookshelves of the Christian bookstores here in Tulsa. And, that was very hurtful.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** But some –, one of the times, incidentally, when I was wrestling with cancer, one of the times this is a story that I'll never forget. And I've told it publicly a few times. I was very angry at fundamentalists because of, not because they rejected my message, but because they rejected me as a

human being and my people as human beings.

And it was the time I just returned from Ghana, I had a pretty violent reaction over there with bleeding and all that stuff and embarrassing, and I came back home to get it correct – some of – they did some work when I was in Ghana, I spent the whole night in the hospital, but I had to come back here and get some other work. And I remember when I went into my urologist's office, it wasn't my normal urologist was another guy, and he was very kind, and the lady was kind, and they were gonna do recatheterize me or something like that. And it was, that was always embarrassing to me. And she, the lady, said, what would you like me to put some music on for you? Christian music? Because, you know, I was a preacher, I thought Christian music, not necessarily. I'm gonna be mad at Christians for a while because they stopped playing my music in this city on a Christian radio station.

So I'm laying there, I went through this pretty humiliating treatment. They finish the walk, and I'm laying there naked on this table with my face toward the west wall. There was a wall there, and I was, it was probably one of the lowest times in that whole few years period. I went with, with treatment of cancer, and I said, you're probably done with me. God, this is, I'm not, this is humiliating. I'm angry. I'm alone. This is pretty much probably it. I'm not going to deal with this the rest of my life.

And the radio station was still tuned to this Christian station. And one of my songs that I recorded, I'm in the room by myself. The doctor's gone, the nurse is gone. They said, clean yourself up and come out, we'll see. And my song "I'm working on a building. It's a sure foundation. I'm holding up the blood stain benefit." I couldn't believe it.

My song came on, and it was that song, I'm work – boy, you got stuff to do. You're working on a building because it's a sure foundation. You got a life to live. I mean, it, it, that moment was most transformative of all the moments of the whole experience. And the – and I had an attitude toward the nurse. I had an attitude toward the station. I had an attitude towards God and me. And that one song which I recorded, which wasn't one of the hit songs on the album, just changed my life. I think I recorded that song for me for that moment. And maybe nobody else on the planet.

**JE:** Well that moment is about as big as your epiphany moment.

**CP:** Yes!

**JE:** Because then you knew that there's nothing for me to do, and he wants me to stay alive.

**CP:** Yes, yes yes.

**JE:** Well, we stumbled under a good story there.

**CP:** Yeah.

**JE:** But Steve talks about the choirs coming in the studio. It's a church studio, and everybody getting around and singing around the Steinway. That must have been a great experience.

**CP:** With that choir, our church choir, that was mostly our church choir. The Azusa Choir was a combination of all the voices that came in from around the country and a lot of our other choirs here, local choirs in Tulsa, because that choir would be 200 voices.

But the 20 or 30 that we consistently had for the recording to, to make it, to clean up all the recording. Those kids were really covenantly-connected and they would worship for 30 minutes or an hour. And Steven, we're paying for the hours. He never charged us for over – staying overtime – he never put pressure on us. I mean, he could tell when the energy shifted, and they weren't going to rehearse or just, I mean, they started worshipping and ministering to each other and crying and, you know, and getting happy, what we call, getting happy and quick, but he just watched them do it.

**JE:** And he didn't charge you for this?

**CP:** And he did not charge us because he knew it was a shift in the spiritual energy. That's the kind of man he was.

**JE:** Yeah. You're a survivor now of your cancer.

**CP:** Yes, sir. I'm cancer-free.

**JE:** That's great to hear. Did you ever have contact with the Gaithers, Bill and Gloria Gaither at all?

**CP:** Oh, yes, I've been to their home. I love them every time they came to Tulsa. I was there.

**JE:** Ok.

**CP:** I love the Gaithers.

**JE:** They should have. I don't know if they ever thought about including you at some time, bringing you up on stage and singing, or did they? Did you ever do any of that?

**CP:** Well, he invited me and Carmen. Carmen never did go, and I would have gone with her if Carmen had gone. Carmel was a gospel singer in my church. I'm not sure why it was never an official thing with contracts at all, but I would have done it.

He always referred to me from the stage, and I loved Vestal Goodman, who I had tried to get – the one, one of my major regrets at my recording of the Azusa music was I never got Vestal. And I used to, I want her to sing Peace in the Valley with me. Another wonderful singer, Mickey Mangan sang it with me. But I wanted an old white Pentecostal like Vestal that had that guts, that chutzpah but that was just powerful.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CP:** She sang at John Osteen's funeral. He loved her. And I remember how the whole crowd was moved when she sang for him.

But anyway, whenever they came, Jesse Dixon was a good friend of mine. So I would always sing with him, and we in between the breaks, we'd hang out and talk. And then, of course, I went to his house, and we'd sit for hours and just listening to –

**JE:** To Bill's House?

**CP:** To Bill's house in Indiana.

**JE:** Mhm.

**CP:** Yeah. So I love the Gaithers to this day. We're very, very friends, and he's never rejected me and, or the message.

**JE:** Oh, that's right on the inclusion.

**CP:** Right.

**JE:** He could have.

**CP:** Yes. Third Church of God - Anderson, the non-Pentecostal, there's a Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee, they are Pentecostals. So I didn't know. But he's been around Pentecostals all his life and loves black singers and black – he has records, vinyl records, a treasure trove of them in his home of Doris Acres and Ethel Waters or anybody that sang gospel 50 to 100 years ago almost. He's collected all that stuff, and he knows all these people personally. Andrae Crouch, Lilly Knowles, she's 82 years old, she called me just last week she was on all his family reunion, the Gaither reunion tapes that she's the heavysset black girl with – that always wore a hat. I say girl, she's 82. Literally. In fact, I called her Mother Knowles on the phone. She said, "Don't you dare call me – I'm Lily Knowles," but delightful, delightful lady.

**JE:** Yeah. And so since the inclusion, he said you've had interaction with Bill and been to his house and then?

**CP:** Yeah, not since inclusion, but that was before inclusion. But he's been here two or three times since.

**JE:** And didn't treat you differently?

**CP:** Not at all.

**JE:** Welcomed you?

**CP:** Acknowledges me from the stage if I'm in the audience, and then during the breaks, I go back into his dressing room, and we talked and chatted and stuff like that.

**JE:** Yeah. Well, we've treasured many concerts by the Gaythers, that's for sure. Well, all this part came up as we were talking about our friend Steve Ripley.

**CP:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** So that was good.

**CP:** Yeah.

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## Chapter 19 – 10:21

### Could Carlton be Wrong?

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**John Erling (JE):** We've talked about it, of course, in our interview with you before, but it takes the crucifixion of Christ to make your inclusion work.

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** The gospel of the gospel of inclusion, the Christian doctrine of the gospel of inclusion is, yes, the finished work of the cross and of the Christ, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the blood that was spilled. Where there is no shedding of blood, there's no remission of sin. So doctrinally, the gospel of inclusion is a solid, in my opinion, the most solid Christian doctrine on the planet, and it was held and embraced by most of the church fathers the first 500 years of Christianity. From Theodosius, Coming of Alexander, Origin. They all were universalists. August – Augustine was slightly that as well, so.

**JE:** Okay, so let me ask you then, what if you're wrong? What if inclusion is not the right and correct theology? Are there consequences to that for people who followed you and all? Do you –?

**CP:** Yes.

**JE:** Do you think about that? And what are your thoughts about that? What if you're wrong? That's where people say you could be leading people astray.

**CP:** Well, of course, I thought it, John. How many times do you think? I've, I've been in this, I'm 66 years old. I've been a Christian ordained license or Pentecostal tongue-talking, pew devil, devil thumping, bible-quoting Christian for 50-something years. Don't you think I've asked this question a zillion times? I've played the devil's advocate, and that was the number one. “What if you're wrong, Carlton? Why don't you, why don't you vote on the, what is the better side of judgment and, and not run that risk?”

I would – That's a, that's a mental thought, but it is not a spiritual conviction. My spirit tells me that we got it wrong, that I got it wrong, that I misinterpreted the scriptures, that I put too much trust – that I've idolized the Bible. The Bible itself says, “Thou shalt have no graven image.” Well, the Bible is all graven image. It's I can take you to the Colossians zone. It says

that you shouldn't even have it. It's – that it was canceled at the cross. Jesus canceled the written, or handwritten, law. Which nobody – they would have been talking about the Old Testament. There was no New Testament then.

Listen, when Abraham it is, and Lot were at the city of Sodom and Gomorrah and – and these supposed men tried to rape the angels. It just says “ben” in Hebrew, which means son or daughter; had to be some women in that city because they wouldn't have had anybody there. It couldn't be all men in Sodom. Sodom, the word “sodomite” in Hebrew, is the word that – that means “ceremonial” or “morally clean,” “acceptable.” Sodomy is different. But, beautiful, it was evident it was in a volcano town, burnt. So those words need to be properly interpreted.

But when God says to Abraham, if you can find 50 righteous people in that city, I won't destroy it. Now, that's a little translation of your Bible and mine. I'll, I'll spare the city. So go find 50 righteous people. Now, this is Abraham. Righteous based on what? Talmud didn't exist. Torah didn't exist, no Bible, no temple, no Moses, no 10 commandments. What's he gonna base his righteousness on to judge that community? No one even asked that question.

How can you say Noah received favor? Because again, there was no law, there was no – that stuff came later. And when it did come, you know this God of the Bible after the Jews had not heard from God, Hebrew people had not heard from God and really knew little about God on about 400 years when they were enslaved in Egypt, which is northern Africa. Long before we Africans were held in slavery here for 400 years. We held Jews in slavery. What goes around comes around.

**JE:** Hm.

**CP:** But anyway, God shows up, hadn't been there in 400 years, throwing a major tantrum and turns the river into – Nile – into blood and then flies and lice. I mean, this is very sadistic and violent, and it scared the Hebrews, they really preferred the Egyptian's gods because they weren't that violent. The Hebrew God was violent. They trembled in the wilderness. You, on – by foot, it would be an 11 days journey from Egypt to the land of promise. It took them 40 years to make an 11 days journey because they kept stopping

and starting and they're afraid. And then when he gets on the mountain, the mountain's trembling, and they say, "Please, Moses, don't let God talk to us. You talk to us this God, we can't handle him. Just please, you talk to us." That's the way people still are. They don't really want to talk to God, they want to talk to the priest or the bishop or the pastor or the deacon. Some other mediator besides Jesus, and the scripture says Jesus is the mediator between God and man, but we don't even do Jesus no more. It's just somebody that represents him on earth.

So that's why we preachers tend to get worshiped, we or, or be beaten, you know, they put you on a pedestal and wait for you to fall off that pedestal. A lot of preachers will tell you the same thing. So the whole thing is convoluted. It's conflicting, it's complex, and I think we need to review it. That's all I'm asking people. The word repent means to rethink or, after you thought think again to reconsider, you go to the penitentiary to repent. That's what penitence is and penitentiary or penalty, or penetration, physical anatomy of the male body.

There's a, there's a pain, there's a, there's a pathos, there's a, then there's the brokenness, there's a peninsula and a pencil and, you know, so our, our English language is a Heinz 57 mutt language. But when you study the words and their etymology, things make a different kind of sense.

I'm not stupid, and I'm not so reckless that I would dare confront, quote-unquote, the living God, who already is known for killing folks. I mean, he has a, a pretty, pretty, sadistic anger, and throughout the scripture, he tells people to do horrible things; disembowel, disembody, burn up. When God says to Noah, you're the only one that I like. I'm gonna draw on every other living being on the planet. I don't care what race, what sex, what age, I don't care if she's pregnant. I don't care if it's an old woman. Everybody's drawing.

Now that's the Bible. So if you're going to be literal in your translation, and the Bible itself says the letter where we get the word literal in English, the literal kills spirit gives life. So to my detractors, if you are a literalist, you better hope I'm right because if I'm wrong, you're going to hell. I mean, there's no way you're gonna make it. You ain't good enough.



So it's gotta be Jesus' blood, and that's it. And the final thing about the gospel, this is important that you let this be heard. Short simplistic definition: the gospel is not about God except you accepting God or anybody accepting God or his Christ. It is about God accepting you because of Christ, period.

You need to accept Christ. You shifted the, the whole table, this whole thing, the scripture, John, who also said for God so loved the world, said "God is love." We love him because – can you finish that? He first loved us?

This love thing starts and stops with God, and Paul writes in Romans too, I think, what if some don't have faith? Does their unbelief nullify or make it not affect the faith of God? So it's important for people, and I could do a whole Bible study on this, and pretty much if you want to be persuaded or convinced that God is much bigger, broader, and better and not bitter as, as you've been taught, then you would leave here with a lot of people would be liberated from all this guilt and shame and, and I know some wonderful human beings, John, who are mentally suffering, they're psychotic over this whole self-loathing thing, not self-loving and it's not just somebody who's a closet alcoholic or closet gay or closet uh adulterer. It's priests, preachers, leaders who are human who want to cuss every once in a while or have a glass of wine or, or do notice beautiful women.

My dad said to me one time, said "Son," and I was single, "just because you get married that doesn't mean that all of a sudden all the other women on the planet get ugly." (chuckles) He said, "Sometimes they get prettier." He was trying – I was so straight-laced, and I was very condemnatory of my own father when he did things that I thought he shouldn't do or his brothers or his father, who was my grandfather, I saw it everywhere, and I was always fighting it and he said, "You're young. I know you mean well, son, but it's just not like that."

And as I get older, I used to preach about perfect marriage and the man's role in the marriage. It's like I got married, and I realize it's not that easy. It's hard work. I mean, you can read anybody's book and all that stuff. But when you, when you're standing there where the rubber meets the road, you have to shift some things around. It's almost like George Bush saying,

read my lips, no more, no more taxes. But you never know outside of the white house, of the Oval Office, what you know when you're in it.

**JE:** Mhm.

**CP:** So these guys can make all these claims when you get in there, and you look at the situation, you might have to bend a few things. You can't teach what you don't know, and you can't lead where you don't go."

## **Chapter 20 – 2:56**

### **How to be Remembered**

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**John Erling (JE):** How would you like to be remembered?

**Carlton Pearson (CP):** As a person with questions who was curious and who was exploratory and interested and interesting who helped people rethink.

**JE:** Yeah. Well, I wanna thank you for this time. You've been really open, and I think we've had a good time together.

**CP:** Well, I'm the heretic – they call me – and I enjoy that, wear that like a badge these days. (chuckles) So it's like a tattoo that I can't wash off, so, thanks, John, I enjoyed it.

**JE:** It'd be interesting, I can't do it, but for somebody to interview you when you're 85 to see what you're thinking then.

**CP:** I'm fascinated about that. That's just about 10 years or 20 years from now.

**JE:** So there'll be some evolving, something will change.

**CP:** You're right.

**JE:** There'll be, there'll be something there.

**CP:** You're so right.

**JE:** But anyway, we'll have to leave that for those of the future. Thank you.

**CP:** Oral was in– was interested. And so was Billy Graham. They both had conversations about universal salvation way back in days – in the days. I

know that from – from the former chaplain's son at ORU and from Ruth. Ruth said when he was younger, Carl, he was interested, and he's too old now.

They both were just starting out in 1948. And then in '65 when Billy Graham came here, but they – Oral was trying to build a university. To get sidetracked by what I'm talking about would ruin the whole thing. And Billy Graham's trying to get people saved. To say you're already saved was stupid.

But they, because they were in touch with the real world, I think Graham more than Oral, because Graham went to Russia and went to China, and he saw these human beings, and he loved them, and they loved and respected him.

I think this, the love thing was a real distraction to him from – from the hell thing. But he was actually she was more Presbyterian than him. But he was brought up in fundamentalist, typical beliefs in heaven and hell.

**JE:** Graham now you're talking about?

**CP:** Both of them Oral and Graham. Well, Graham yeah, about the Presbyterian Oral from – Oral was very rebellious as a kid. You know, he ran away from home and all that kind of stuff. He was chasing girls and drinking, and then he got tuberculosis and had to come. So he still had a streak of that in him. He understood it.

**JE:** What about Franklin Graham? Billy Graham's son today? What do you think? Thoughts on, on him.

**CP:** Franklin, I met him on TV. And I hosted him a couple of times. He's just nothing like his father. He sounds like him, in fact, when I first saw him, I got tears in my eyes, and I said, "folks," to the TV audience, "I think I just met the successor of Billy Graham. He's right here." But now he's gotten hardened and very arrogant and very distasteful and –

**JE:** All right. It's been good. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

**CP:** Thank you.

**JE:** It was fun.

**CP:** Well, you got to, you can, if I die before – if they kill me before – you do.  
Because I – I got to know that son of a bishop, that heretic – that heretical  
son of a bishop.

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