

The Ronald Clark Story

Ronald Christopher Clark: Uses his rich spiritual experience and knowledge to impact families, individuals and young people for the Kingdom of God and the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ronald Clark hails from the Bluegrass state of Kentucky. He was born on February 24, 1969 and raised in the capital city of Frankfort and rural Muhlenberg County, which is located in the western part of the state. He learned many important things from his urban and rural roots that give him a unique perspective on life. He is the product of a single parent household, but had instilled in him and his younger brother, Shawn Clark, from a very early age, by his very strong mother Drucilla (Clark) Benton, the qualities of hard work and a respect for those around him. He uses those experiences as a platform to speak from concerning the plight that surrounds the African American male that has been primarily raised without a father. He was fortunate enough later on in his teenage years, to have had a step-father, John G. Benton, who came into his life around the age of 16 through the relationship and marriage to his mother. He has also contributed to his growth as a young person and as an adult and has helped fill the void for a father figure. Ron speaks passionately and with great conviction about his spiritual transformation and how God the Father through Jesus Christ became his father and led him to a commitment to Him and service toward others. He strives for excellence in his life because of the esteem God has placed in him. His love and compassion for people and their needs is evident in the work that God has allowed him to participate in on several different ministry areas throughout his life.

His mother moved him and his brother to Tennessee in the fall of 1984 to create a better quality of life for them. He resided in Lenoir City for about a year and a half and attended Lenoir City High School his freshman year and part of his sophomore year, and then moved to Oak Ridge upon his mother receiving a better job in the area. He then transferred to Oak Ridge High School, where he eventually graduated in 1987. He credits that institution for instilling in him a love for learning and exploration. One particular counselor, Brenda Simmons, who is now the Director of the Southeastern Consortium for Minorities in Engineering (SECME) in Atlanta, GA, really inspired and pushed him to succeed in his academic endeavors and community service. Upon arriving at the school, he was a nominal student not really pushing himself to achieve at a higher standard, which was depicted in his 2.7 GPA. But Mrs. Simmons challenged him through SECME that he could do much better. He responded by obtaining a 3.8 GPA his junior year and was elected by his high school peers Vice-President of SECME for two consecutive terms. He was also instrumental in starting a youth group through the Oak Ridge chapter of the NAACP called "Youth for Success", and became the group's first President. This group was responsible in creating alternatives for young people and a desire to serve their community.

Upon graduating from ORHS, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and served 6 years as an Avionics Technician primarily stationed in the Far East (Japan) and Europe (Germany). He obtained many ribbons and awards, including a Distinguished Graduate award while attending NCO Preparatory School. He credits his experience in the Air Force for instilling in him discipline, the ability to work with others, perseverance, and most importantly coming into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

He had a profound spiritual experience on May 28, 1989 while stationed at Yokota Air Force Base located about 30 miles from Tokyo, Japan. God called him while in a dark and depressed time in his life, when he had no sense of direction and purpose. He sensed a profound void that kept him in a lonely and seemingly lifeless condition. This condition began to affect his job performance and his relationships with those around him. He felt down all the time and unable to focus. The weather even matched his temperament and attitude during that time. For the first year of his time in Japan, the area was overtaken with violent storms that created incredible rainfall. It seemed like that wherever he turned, the pressures of life began to take its toll on him and he felt unbearable sadness and grief. Little did he know that God was placing him in these circumstances to turn his attention upon Him.

During this time, he wasn't going to church regularly and rarely touched his bible. He had went to church during most of his life growing up, especially during his formative years in Kentucky, where he was taught the simple principles of God from a very special Sunday school teacher, by the name of Mrs. Rutheen Robinson.

Mrs. Robinson was a widow and retired elementary school teacher that took a special interest in him at an early age. She was a very respected and disciplined older woman who was a pillar of the Browder Baptist Church, the church where he was raised and initially gave his life to Jesus Christ at the age of 13 years old.

She was a very influential person in his life and taught him many lessons that would continue with him to this day. She was his primary Sunday school teacher and initially taught him the books of the bible, the Ten Commandments and other teachings of the bible. She took a primary interest in him, because she saw his raw potential and his sincere love of reading, especially the reading of the bible. Ron, from a very early age, at the age of 4 to be exact, was reading books and not just reading them but understanding what was written. His reading became so voracious, that by the age of 6 he was reading encyclopedias and other large books, including the dictionary. He would sit for hours and read everything that he could get his hands on. But the book that was the most special to him was the bible. Because of his advanced reading skill, Mrs. Robinson really worked with him on how to read scripture and what to look for to get the most out of his reading. This training served him well. She was the first one to really see that God's hand was on Ron and that God was preparing him for ministry.

Armed with this truth, he realized that if he was going to make it through this dire time in his life, he would need to rely on God and not himself. Once recognizing that he needed to redirect his attention to the things of God and not the world, he had a chance meeting with an individual that would help lead him to the correct path and would be the person that would usher him into his call. This person's name was Russell Gonzalvez. Russell was not a minister, but just a sincere brother that radiated the love of God and helped Ron to focus on his true purpose for life. He introduced him to the church that would be his primary proving ground and place of encouragement and growth. The church was called Independent Church of Deliverance or ICOD for short. The church was mainly non-denominational in nature, but was filled with people who sincerely loved Jesus Christ and wasn't ashamed to share their faith and joy, especially ones who had strayed from the way. Ron was in desperate need of a place to call home and people that genuinely cared and loved him and he found it in this place. The physical church was an old converted Japanese jail house, located on the outskirts of the Air Force base where he worked and lived, which ended up becoming an oasis of spiritual illumination and restoration. He remembers his experience there as a time of great awakening to the pull and influence of the Holy Spirit and to the simple and profound teachings of Jesus Christ and God the Father. The church was under the leadership of his first real pastor, Daryl Cotton. Pastor Cotton poured into Ron like a father would a son and became his mentor, teacher and friend. He recognized God's call on his life and became the person that would be the difference in helping him not only with the decision to put his complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but helped become the model for him to show him how to really walk in the things of God.

From this point on it seemed as if the bible, the book that he had been reading since his youth, became alive and new and seemed as if the stories, people, places and things would jump off the page. He immersed himself in it like never before and started to truly hear the voice of God. He knew then that God had called him and what his true purpose was in life. For two years after his true spiritual conversion, he worked in every area of ministry provided by the church. He involved himself in every aspect of his local church. From driving people to the church from the base, to teaching children's church, youth ministry, singles ministry, intercessory prayer, opening and closing the church for a multitude of activities, and even cleaning the church and church maintenance. But his true love and call was for evangelism. He loved to find opportunities to share his faith with others and to affect the same kind of change that God had so done in him.

After leaving Japan in the summer of 1991, God placed him in one vineyard after the other, continuing to prove Himself to him and teaching him many important lessons along the way. His next step in his journey was to Frankfurt, Germany, Rein Main Air Force Base to be exact, where he became an integral part of the chapel service on the base. He continued to be fed and nurtured through the Lord by many fine and godly people, too many to name. After his time in Germany, where the Lord continued to show him His love and direction, he recognized that he needed to be trained even more in the things of God, so he decided to go to Bible school and to end his career in the Air Force. This is where things began to really take shape and where his faith would be tested and proved.

He decided to go to Rhema Bible Training Center in Broken Arrow, OK, in the fall of 1993. He didn't know how God was going to make it happen, but he just believed that God was going to show Himself faithful and make a way out of no way. Every step of the way, the Lord showed him how to truly walk by faith and taught him many important lessons from his time at the school. He met many excellent teachers and preachers, but one of the things that he really taught Ron was how to really separate the truth from error. By going to this particular school, the Holy Spirit began to really teach him to be aware of all the things that were going on around him, some things good and some things not so apparent to the natural eye. He began to understand the principle of comparing scripture with scripture, text in context and other valuable tools to learning the true principles of the Word and how the Word is practiced and applied. He met many wonderful and godly people and learned that the key to true ministry is relationship building and discipleship. He felt that God was only allowing him one year at the school and that the true test of his call would be in the training that comes with life's up's and down's.

After a year spent working, going to church and going to school and involving himself in different activities at the school, the Lord opened up an opportunity for him to go to Chicago and continue his biblical training and practical stewardship. He was invited by a fellow student to work at a Christian business and at a local church that was located on the south side of the city. He was formally introduced through this local body to the teachings and ways of the Church of God in Christ denomination. The pastor of the church took an immediate liking to Ron and allowed him opportunities to minister and share his faith, especially in the area of youth ministry. While there he also got a chance to really work in the area of evangelism by participating in street ministry and sharing his faith at the local train stations where many people would congregate. The Lord really began to strengthen and encourage his faith and he saw the Lord work in powerful demonstrations of His grace and mercy, just like He did back in Japan and Germany. While contemplating if he was going to go back to school, the pastor asked him if he would like to be their youth pastor. But for some reason, he felt the Lord did not compel him to continue his time there or to go back to school for a second year of training. At this time, Ron knew that the Lord was leading him, but didn't quite understand everything fully as to which direction he should go next. He knew practically that he needed to do something with his life but was unsure if that was ministry or continuing in a vocation. He was at a cross roads, so he went back home to Oak Ridge, where he was firmly welcomed by his parents, to figure out which way he needed to go. Little did Ron know that the Lord would allow him to make some missteps to teach him some valuable lessons about life and relationships, especially the most crucial one, marriage.

During this time, his prospects for employment were very few and he knew that he needed to go to school to extend his military training and to continue to sharpen his vocational life, which since high school and the Air Force was in the area of technology, mainly computers. So he decided to attend ITT Technical Institute to further continue his education in the computer and electronics fields, of which he would eventually graduate in March of 1998 at the top of his class. While making this decision, he continued to look for opportunities to continue his spiritual training and was led to attend a local body in Harriman, TN. He was invited by some friends of his parents to attend that church and once there he was right back to developing relationships and continuing to work, especially in the area of evangelism. He also recognized that he wanted to possibly share his life with someone and this is where his faith was ultimately tested. Ron, in his personal life from the time he was a youth knew the teaching about sexual purity and tried to keep a proper perspective with those of the opposite sex. It was taught to him very firmly, especially in the Baptist tradition of which he was raised, to maintain your sexual urges. Ron ever since he was aware of his attraction to women knew that this was going to be difficult, but trusted God to help him in this area. As all men, especially black men can attest, the pull of the flesh and the opportunity to indulge in these things were enormous. But Ron knew that if he gave himself to a woman, especially before marriage, that it would be his failure and would be his downfall. Throughout his life, he tried to remain pure, but it was a struggle. Up until the time he met, Rochelle Carter, who would ultimately be his first wife, he had not participated in physical intercourse. He had opportunities to involve himself, but fear would grip him and he couldn't go through with it. But upon meeting this young lady, he felt an attraction to her and her situation. This is where he let his guard down, and allowed his physical loneliness to get the best of him. He didn't really seek the Lord like he should have had at this time and involved himself with the young lady. Unfortunately, this young lady did not share the same level of faith and commitment to the things of God, and he had to learn the hard way that this relationship was destined to fail.

Not that he didn't try to make it work, but it seemed as if his relationship to her was always difficult and trying. Just like any relationship, things start out fine but once a line has been crossed, things change and Ron had to learn this lesson. The bright spot of this relationship was the birth of Ron's only biological child, Ronaye Grace-Ora Clark on February 13, 1998. Eventually, things became too difficult to continue, and Ron felt that he had to end it. His first marriage ended in the early spring of 1999, and he realized that he had to pick up the pieces of his failure and learn from it and try not to repeat it again.

While in the initial dating stage of his relationship with his first wife, Ron had heard about Community Evangelistic Church from a chance meeting with a high school friend that had been attending the church. From this friend, he heard of this dynamic preacher who seemed to be able to make the bible come alive and that had a special influence upon black men in particular. Ron was so convinced of the person's testimony, that he decided that he wanted to check it out for himself. And what he found was exactly as his high school friend had articulated. The preacher's name was Jarvis Ross and what Ron experienced the first time he set foot in the church was an electricity and excitement that reinvigorated and refreshed him. He knew immediately that this was the place for him and that he wanted to become more and better acquainted with this preacher and this particular church. After his initial experience, he ingratiated himself in the teachings and principles of this man, who everyone affectionately called Pastor Ross. Pastor Ross and the church were very unique in the fact that it was very afro-centric but very spiritual and completely bible based. This especially attracted Ron, who was looking for a place to continue to grow and find his place in ministry. Ron knew that God had called him there, because the church just welcomed him and Rochelle with open arms and a place to call home. Here he picked up where he left off and looked for ways to develop relationships, especially with the men of the church. This church became an oasis to Ron and he was gradually able to not only benefit from Pastor Ross's teachings, but other men that were highly anointed of God at the church. The church was rich with both men and women who really loved the Lord but had a desire to reach the community with a relevant gospel, especially an emphasis toward the black community in general. This church was about creating an environment where all people could find their ultimate destiny in Jesus Christ and flourish to be who they really are, whether Black, White, Hispanic or Asian and all the other races in between.

This tremendously affected Ron in ways he could have never imagined. But he knew that God was leading him and placing him there for a reason. Ron had the personal pleasure of getting to know Pastor Ross and all the leaders of the church and was allowed opportunity to share his faith and to participate in everything that the church had to offer. While at the church, the Lord continued to teach him valuable lessons about life that continues with him to this very day. Pastor Ross and especially the elders of the church became mentors and teachers for Ron and helped him to get through his first marriage and subsequent divorce and showed him tremendous love and sensitivity along the way. While involving himself in many activities at the church, too numerous to name, he was honored to become a deacon in the church, which was a very significant position within the hierarchy of the church. He was able to watch the church transition through each phase of the overall vision that the Lord gave to Pastor Ross, to see the church be a model church for racial reconciliation. He saw the church move from an independent church to an Evangelical Presbyterian church with all the privileges that come with a strong biblically based denomination. As the church was transitioning, God was doing the same kind of change in Ron. Especially after his divorce, which was difficult, the Lord picked Ron back up and showed him that regardless of the mistakes or sins that you make that you can always get back up, if you choose to look to Him. He can turn a seemingly bad situation and turn it into a positive. This can be seen throughout the bible, especially through the special relationship that God had established and continues with the children of Israel. These are the types of lessons that Pastor Ross continuously taught and demonstrated in his life. While in the nurturing environment of CEC, Ron continued to flourish and grow and develop sincere relationships with both men and woman. But the Lord also revealed to him that there was a special person that he wanted to have in his life that would sincerely walk with him and encourage him to walk in the destiny and purpose and plan of God for his life.

Once Ron squarely put his complete focus back on Him, he brought him his current wife and love, Jamesetta Yvette Campbell, into his life. He met her at the church, but only knew her from a distance initially. He didn't really become completely familiar with her, until he sufficiently allowed God to heal him of his pain and disappointment with the failure of his divorce.

He wasn't really looking to get involved with anyone and only wanted to stay true to his faith and witness to others of God's love and compassion. He was involving himself completely in his role as a deacon and especially in the area of evangelism. He was involved in other aspects of the ministry, especially the single's ministry. While helping and leading in this ministry and trying to develop alternatives for the single members to become involved in, he became acutely aware of her by happenstance. The single's ministry lends itself in creating healthy, wholesome environments where those that are single can transition to more fruitful relationships leading ultimately to marriage. And this is the environment where both Ron and Jamesetta were able to come together. They believed that God had destined for them to meet and that God had prepared them to go through the experiences of life to come together to become of force of God's love and compassion. They were married on August the 4th, 2001. God brought them together as a blended family. Jamesetta had a son, Jermaine Stevon Williams, from a previous relationship when she was a teenager.

By bringing these two together, with their children, God is continually proving his grace and tender mercy that he has for families. By the caring and love the Lord has shown Ron and Jamesetta, they try to exemplify that to their children. God has also favored them by bringing another child into their life, Jada Mostella, that they now call their God-daughter. Jamesetta is a caregiver by trade and has been involved in working with young children for several years, while running a day care center with her mother, Sylvia Parkey. Jada was one of the many children that they have had the pleasure of keeping over the years and who has shared a special relationship with Ronaye. She has become an integral part of the family. God continues to show his grace and love to Ron and his family as they continue together in working out the plan and purpose of God for their life.