

God's Enduring Faith: Damon Cabbagestalk

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Rev. Damon Cabbagestalk is a second-year student in the D. Min. program at UTS

BARRYTOWN - We often hear of the enduring faith and love a mother has for her child. A faith and love so strong that it resonates far beyond what we would ordinarily believe possible. We don't always equate that same faith and love with the source from which it flows, from its origin, from the Creator.

For Damon Cabbagestalk, a second-year student in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), however, it is precisely because of God's enduring faith and love that he finds himself

where he is today. And with a dream of where he will be tomorrow.

Dreams aren't always easy to hold onto when you are born poor and black, and when you lack the guidance, strength and stability a father can provide. It's easy to be tempted by the allure of easy money elicited by committing petit larceny and selling drugs. Eventually, however, karmic forces must right all wrongs and divine reckonings must will out.

It wasn't long, then, before Damon found himself, at the tender age of 18, doing a prison sentence on Long Island. A short time later, still unable to find his footing or a direction in life, Damon was back in prison for another five-year stretch.

During his time in prison, however, he had a deeply moving spiritual experience, yet not something completely unknown to him. Since as early as nine years of age, when he was still living in South Carolina, his birthplace, he had had "visions" and "out of body" experiences.



Rev. Cabbagestalk with his wife, Cherise

This time, God spoke to him directly.

"I started reading books while I was there (in prison)," said Damon, "and one day I picked up this green, Gideon Bible. They had religious programs and I went there, and one night I made a commitment to God that I would never come back here again.

"He said to me, 'before you can go any further you are going to have to take everything out of your mind that you have learned and start all over'".

The road from divine intervention to divine realization is often a long and arduous one, and rarely in a straight line. Along the way, however, God sprinkled Damon's life with

enough family and friends to keep him headed in the right direction.

One of those was Haywood Miles, his uncle and a former military man.

"He really showed me how to be a gentleman," said Damon, "and he always smelled good. He worked for Greyhound bus, he was a bus driver. They called him 'Johnny Dollar,' and he always called me 'D.'"

"I would tell him about how people treated me and he would say to me, 'D', don't worry about how people treat you... leave it to God, God will take care of you. And it still sticks with me, when people do something wrong to me I still 'leave it to God.'"

Another person who played an important role in his life was his aunt, Barbara Miles. She likened life to a choo-choo train, one that children often recall from their childhood, "the little train that could."

"She said one thing to me that was very important, I'll never forget it," said Damon, "and I thank her every time I see her. She said to me, 'when you see that little red choo choo train stopping you get right

back on it.' It gave me the vision of that choo choo train that never stops as long as it's working properly."

Finally on the 'right track,' Damon went back to school and graduated from the College of New Rochelle in 2005 with a degree in Social Science and was working as a security officer at the Tiffany Building in New York City.

"After that," said Damon, "after college I knew I was on my way."

Not long after he was approached by Juanita Pierre-Louis (now a classmate of Damon's in the current D. Min. program), and Ted Igarashi. "Ted said to me, 'how would you like to go to school,' said Damon, "and immediately he brought me an application that was for a scholarship program at UTS. At the same time Juanita asked me about coming to a gathering they were having at 43rd St.

"So, I went there to learn what the organization was truly about. I became quite impressed with what they were doing. I was impressed with the way they treated each other; I was impressed with the love I saw. I thought, 'this is truly the kingdom here.' I knew right then there was something I needed to do.

"And, that's how I ended up in school. I put the application in and soon after I was accepted into the program. From there I just decided to continue forward on the journey with passion and conviction, and here I am."

With his class work now finished, he plans to finish his dissertation next year. Following his graduation from the D. Min. program, Damon hopes to continue his studies and eventually earn a Ph.D.

In the meantime, he hopes he can continue doing God's Will as it has been revealed to him.

"God works in time," explained Damon, "and we have to be still enough to let God speak to us, and it will give us intuition and spiritual connections as to where He wants us to go. If we do it according to his Will and His Purpose, then we can succeed."