

Pearson's Gospel of Inclusion' Stirs Controversy

Carlton Pearson may have lost his bid for a shot at the mayor's office in Tulsa, Okla., because of his belief in a controversial theology known as the "gospel of inclusion," which states that everyone is saved—they just don't know it.

Pearson is a conservative Republican and founder of the 4,500-member, multiracial Higher Dimensions Family Church in Tulsa. He claims he failed to win the primary in February due to his belief in "inclusion" theology, which also questions the existence of a literal hell.

"The Christian turnout is usually 15 percent," Pearson, 48, said of local elections in Tulsa. "But some of them just didn't vote at all because they weren't sure that they should risk putting somebody like me in office."

Protestant theology teaches that man is separated from God by sin and destined for hell, unless he believes in Jesus' redemptive work. Pearson said he first started thinking about the inclusive doctrine after reading E.W. Kenyon's writings more than 25 years ago. Pearson has been preaching the controversial view for three years.

"A careful study of what I have taught will reveal that it is entirely scriptural, logical and theologically sound," Pearson told Charisma. The Tulsa Beacon reported that Pearson has been confronted over his teaching by televangelists John Hagee, Marilyn Hickey and his mentor, Oral Roberts. Roberts, Hagee

and Hickey declined to comment about the matter.

However, Pearson claimed that fellow black preachers, including Dallas pastor T.D. Jakes, are familiar to some extent with inclusionism. "These are my friends," Pearson said. "They discern my heart, even though they may not discern my head. They're not bothered by this."

Jakes, however, told Charisma that he repudiates Pearson's views as heresy. "While I do consider Carlton Pearson to be a friend, I believe his theology is wrong, false, misleading and an incorrect interpretation of the Bible," Jakes said in a statement. " characterizes me as not being 'bothered' by this. I am both bothered and troubled by this teaching and with any implication that I support or in any way agree with it."

Jakes added: "While I certainly agree that Christ died for everyone, I do not believe that we are automatically saved, but that we must be 'born again' by believing in and personally accepting Jesus Christ."

But Pearson said he is not picking a fight. "I am open to counsel from those I feel accountable to in the body of Christ," he said.

Eric Tiansay