

Theodore Cottingham

Background, Education, and Experience

October 2018

I was raised a devout Christian by loving kind gentle parents who loved my sister and me deeply. My Dad pastored several churches, all of them small, and spent great amounts of time in prayer and ministering to the needs of members. I went with him often when he would go visit folks. I remember well going into homes of affluent people as well as run-down houses in sections that some folk wouldn't even drive through. I've written a number of times honoring my Mom and Dad. You can find some of them in the Notes section of my personal facebook page.

My first year of college I attended the Baptist College at Charleston, in Charleston, South Carolina. I left after one year to join the U.S. Air Force Reserve where I became an Aircraft Maintenance Specialist on C-141's. When I was released from active duty I moved to Columbia, South Carolina and attended the University of South Carolina, graduating in 1974 with a degree in Finance. I then lived at home for a year with my folks in Charleston and helped them with their music business that they had begun. Then in August 1975 I entered Oral Roberts University in Tulsa and graduated with an MBA degree in 1977. Oral Roberts University offered me the job of Assistant Business Manager and I accepted. A year later I transferred to Oral Roberts Ministries and traveled for them a year representing the University. I then became the Business Manager of the ORU Family Practice Center.

In late 1980 I left the Oral Roberts organization and became an internal auditor for The Williams Companies in Tulsa. In 1983 I resigned and began my own one man accounting, tax, and consulting business. It changed over time to be less accounting and more consulting, sometimes working as a part-time business manager for several companies a day a week. I did this until summer of 2005.

In 2003 I began to study leadership at Regent University of Virginia Beach, Virginia, and graduated with a Doctorate in Strategic Leadership (a DSL Degree) in December 2005.

I then became focused full time on starting a school. I held several seminars and over the next few years held 21 week long conferences that I called WeekWorks. Attendance ranged from 3 to 18, with folks coming from several states, England and Australia. I wrote courses and offered online courses, but the school never materialized.

My path diverged greatly from my past between 2005 and 2010, departing more and more from the Orthodox Christian message, and in 2010 my wife, Barbi, who I had met at Oral Roberts University and was married to for 32 years, and I divorced; and giving her everything, I declared bankruptcy.

I then moved into my parent's music business, still trying to start a school, but never made it. My belief system, my heart, continued to depart from Orthodoxy. I was no longer a Christian, but began to see Jesus as a pattern, not a Savior. I began to see Jesus as a most common person that learned to learn from his own inner voice, that he was not gifted or special, he was educated. His education was from within. All of his power came from within, for he had become his word. So now I was way outside the box of orthodox Christianity, and still am.

My Dad passed away in 1984. My Mom passed in late 2011 at age 89. I drove my Mom from her house to her music business each day for about three years. In 2012 Barbi was diagnosed with a rare form of

cancer and died in 2013. During her last year we were often together, as she soon could not drive, and I became her wheels to get back and forth to many doctor and hospital appointments. She had wanted her short stories of her life and our family in a book for years, and she suddenly got serious about it. She wrote her stories by hand and I typed them into the computer, and she self published her book titled "Footprints in the Snow" before she died in 2013

In 2016 I began dressing as a woman, and did so for about seven months. It was part of my spiritual path, for being taught from my inner voice I learned that I was woman as much as a man, I just happened to be in a man's flesh-suit, and came up that way in this society. I increasingly valued the feminine. I valued and learned about The Divine Feminine. I changed my legal name to Grace Cottingham. I still value that time. It was hard. It was euphoric. It was then; and it was for a season. March 1st of 2017 I started dressing as a man again and began to grow my beard, and changed my legal name back to my birth name of Theodore Cottingham. Romance, was not on my radar.

Later in March of 2017 I received a facebook friend request from Nancy Brooks. A few days later I sent her a text and asked if I could phone her. She replied yes. I phoned and our relationship blossomed. I soon came to see her in Eureka Springs and moved here to be together. Nancy is a brilliant and beautiful woman, a retired chemical engineer. She introduced me to Eureka in a way that I had not known as a tourist. I met and loved people everywhere I went. What a special place.

Even with the love and joys Nancy and I shared, in 2018 we began to unravel. We decided to separate, but we wanted to do it "right", we wanted to honor each other. We decided to have a "New Beginnings Party" and invite friends, and even have a "ceremony". We asked Rabbi Rob Lennick to lead the ceremony and he did. We asked several friends over and had a special most meaningful evening. I still honor Nancy Brooks and always will.

I am in frequent touch with the two children Barbi and I had together; Amy, 38, a consummate pianist living in New Zealand, and Christopher, 36, a mechanical engineer by training, lives in Pennsylvania does computer work. They are awesome people. No one's going to box them in.

I very much value my parents, how I was raised, my education, and my business experience. It has all combined to help make me who I am, forged with my own decisions to form my own values, thinking for myself and being responsible to me, for me. I am thankful to be me at this time, this place, and serving you.

Theodore Cottingham
October 8, 2018