



## Deacon Lawrence Graham: Lifelong Relationship with God

*By Auburn Mann*



For Deacon Lawrence Graham, it has always been about service. Raised in New York, the only boy of three in a single-parent household, he had to grow-up a little more quickly than most. “I started working at 10 years old,” Lawrence says, “so when a lot of my friends were playing basketball and other sports, I had to learn how to take care of my sisters and be a help to my mom.”

Graham grew up attending Second Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem. “My mom kept us in church every Sunday, so I had a strong foundation and a very good sense of responsibility from an early age.” It was here where he was introduced to and accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior.

“I didn’t have any brothers to protect me, I didn’t have anyone to look out for me, so at a very young age, I started counting on God to do that for me.” God became his Protector in the streets, Instructor when he had to learn new lessons and Advisor when making critical decisions. “We have a strong bond that took me from that very young age to this point in my life where I have my own family and my church family as well.”

This foundation not only aided in Graham’s physical survival, but the endurance of his faith and humility as he matriculated through college at Lincoln University and beyond. “God revealed Himself to me in many ways to show me that what I had been taught in church was paramount to my intellectual advancement and that I was never to try to get ahead of God or go beyond who He is, because He is bigger than everything. He showed me that he was a complement to my intellect, and that He would use my abilities to His glory and not simply my own edification.”

God continued to manifest Himself in Lawrence’s marriage and family, through the death of his wife, Shawn, and through his ascension to leadership in at People’s. God’s Word is central to everything Deacon Graham does. Having a particular affinity for Romans 12:2, he says, “The word of God constantly transforms us, as we understand it better, it illuminates us and it rises with us through every phase of our lives.” Deacon Graham has a saying that he lives by: “God is as small as we want him to be, or as big as we need him to be.”

In 1997, Lawrence, Shawn and their young daughter, Lauren, joined TPCBC because of its uplifting nature. He says, “I had never been to a church that empowered its members like People’s did. I was encouraged to use the gift that God had given me, to draw individuals to Christ through service, in a way that I had never experienced before.” His eagerness to become involved and serve within different ministries was infectious and could not be ignored. “Pastor Baltimore and some of the deacons at the time noticed my excitement and faithful work and asked that I begin the journey to become a deacon.”

In 2002, he was ordained a deacon in the Simeon Family. Over the years, he has been involved in youth ministry, Christian Education, and Men's Fellowship, and he has voiced church announcements and taught Bible Study. "A deacon's primary responsibility, as stated in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13, is to serve the people, and I take that very seriously."