

## My Teaching Philosophy

Teaching is a calling and a calling to me, both personal and professional. It is not simply passing on information; it is about motivating change, cultivating self-esteem, and creating meaning in my students. My teaching style, which is rooted in my experience of teaching Board of Ordained Ministry students in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and teaching grief counseling classes, has shown me how education can prepare individuals for leadership and service.

Education can change lives, not through knowledge but through critical thinking, empathy, and resilience. When working with AME students in the Board of Ordained Ministry, I try to bridge theological thought with practical ministry challenges. I am trying to encourage students to see themselves as community changemakers. For example, in one course on congregational health, I asked students to devise pastoral care programs for hypothetical damaged congregations. As a certified grief loss and transitions instructor, I teach students to be culturally sensitive to serve the needs of bereaved families. I believe meaningful teaching begins with relationships. My own journey has been enriched because of the teachers and mentors who believed in me.

I do my best to ensure students are seen, heard, and valued. For my years of academic preparation, I have been helped in life and in business by people who have mentored me. I think that is the best way to get students to where they want to be in life. Ken Bain's book, *What the Best College Teachers Do*, hints that great teachers provide a trusting environment in which intellectual risks can be taken by their students echoes my own practice. My teaching philosophy

is based on my research on disenfranchised grief, and on my desire to use the womanist lens to engage with African American women's personal experiences.

I stress the integration of theory and practice in my own teaching philosophy. Whether through simulations of pastoral care or the development of models of grief in marginalized settings, I challenge students to apply what they have learned in practical ways. I want to encourage students to learn for the rest of their lives. I encourage them to think of learning as a constant act of inquiry, development, and engagement. Critical thinking and self-reflection, which I include in all my courses, support students to relate their learning to their values and goals. Additionally, I want my students to walk out of my classes not just informed but refreshed, feeling like they have something to offer and a desire to have influence in the world.

As I continue to pursue higher education myself as a teacher, I hope my teaching philosophy will always continue to be about exploring, growing, and building a better future in faith, learning, and giving of myself. I would like to encourage students to think of learning as a life-long ever-ending journey of growth and self-efficacy. My philosophy about teaching and my experiences have always been connected to Soren Kierkegaard's philosophy who says life is meant to be lived looking forward and understood looking backwards. As I look back and reflect on the things that have shaped me as a teacher, educator, pastor, and student I am a lifelong student, I see myself as a lifelong learner committed to exploring, growing, and building a better future in faith, scholarship, and service..