

## **Bio Dr. Mark Louis Johnson Sr.**

Dr. Mark Louis Johnson Sr., born in Anderson, Indiana, was licensed and ordained as a Baptist minister, making him the third generation in his family to enter the ministry. In 1994, he graduated from Washington and Jefferson College, becoming the first African American Senior Class Commencement Speaker in the college's 243-year history. Dr. Johnson now serves as a Trustee of Washington and Jefferson College, previously as Chairman of the Development and Alumni Relations Committee, and currently as Chairman of the Student Success Committee, as well as a member of the Enrollment and Admissions Committee and the Campaign Steering Committee.

After a professional basketball career in Europe and South America, Dr. Johnson pursued graduate studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, earning both a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology in Christian Education. While attending Princeton, he was named Executive Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at the 7,000-member Metropolitan Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey and in 2005 was honored by the state of New Jersey as one of the "100 Positive Men of New Jersey" for his impactful work with at-risk youth.

Dr. Johnson transitioned to the nonprofit sector as the National Best Men Program Director for the Best Friends Youth Foundation in Washington, DC. In this role, he played a pivotal part in shaping the character and leadership of the nation's youth by guiding national youth summits, teaching in schools, and presenting character-based curricula to U.S. representatives on Capitol Hill. His work focused on empowering young people through education and advocacy, ensuring their voices and needs were prioritized in shaping policies and programs for a brighter future.

In 2009, Dr. Johnson was elected the eighth Pastor of Liberty Hill Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, where he led significant church and community growth. Under his leadership, the church entered the Southern Baptist Convention, a historic transition that inspired his forthcoming book, *Black Church White Convention: A Pastor's Story of Hope*, set to be released in June 2025. The book chronicles the compelling story of his leadership in guiding an African American church into the Southern Baptist Convention, offering insights into shared hope, unity, and transformative faith.

Dr. Johnson also established national partnerships with churches, businesses, and organizations, including Hollywood's Paramount Pictures, and mobilized over 1,000 missionaries to revitalize Cleveland. His impactful work garnered the attention of Baseball Chapel, leading to his appointment as Chaplain for the then Cleveland Indians (now Guardians) in 2017, where he served alongside his wife to provide spiritual and family support for the organization.

Dr. Johnson earned a Doctor of Ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, with his project, *"Racial Reconciliation in the Southern Baptist Convention,"* focusing on repentance, reconciliation, and restoration. He also contributed to the book *Engage: Tools for Contemporary Evangelism*.

In 2018, Dr. Johnson relocated to New Orleans to pursue advanced academic study, enrolling in a Ph.D. program specializing in Evangelism, Pastoral Ministries, and Christian Leadership. During this time, he provided steady leadership as Senior Pastor of Edgewater Baptist Church, guiding the congregation through the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Johnson subsequently joined the faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he serves as Assistant Professor of Evangelism and Pastoral Ministries and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Division. In addition, he contributed to the broader faith community as Interim Pastor of First Baptist Church of Kenner, Louisiana, and extended his ministry to the professional sports arena, offering spiritual guidance to Major League Baseball, the National Football League, and the NCAA's Tulane University Men's Basketball Team.

Dr. Johnson has been married to his college sweetheart, Heather Williams Johnson, for 29 years. Together, they have four children: Mark Jr., Jonathan, Victoria, and Benjamin.