

Wiccan-Turned-Bible Teacher Eric Pryor Dies

✖ Eric J. Pryor, a former Wiccan high priest who came to Christ after opposing a highly publicized spiritual warfare event in San Francisco, died June 7 after being hit by a truck while crossing the street on foot. He was 49.

A funeral service is to be held this week in New York, where Pryor will be buried.

Pryor came to prominence in 1990 when he opposed a “Prayer Breakthrough” event evangelist Larry Lea led in San Francisco around Halloween. After being told that Christians would be attacking homosexuals and pagans, Pryor led 30 Wiccans in cursing Lea and others involved in the prayer service.

The confrontation became the focus of national media attention and made headlines as far as Europe and South Korea. “It was a huge, huge news event,” said Jubilee Christian Center pastor Dick Bernal, who participated in the prayer event. “They called it the ‘Holy Wars in San Francisco.’”

After attending the Prayer Breakthrough service and befriending Bernal and his wife, Carla, Pryor accepted Christ and publicly endorsed a subsequent prayer meeting Lea hosted.

In 1991, journalist Diane Sawyer brought his conversion and discipleship into question during a *PrimeTime Live* special that targeted Lea’s ministry.

The segment claimed Pryor was “wined and dined and given money because of his conversion” and that Lea’s ministry purchased a car and golf course condo for Pryor in exchange for his support.

Bernal, who discipled Pryor after his conversion, said the

program's claims were false. He said Pryor had been receiving death threats from pagans, so he helped move him into an apartment that cost roughly \$500 a month and purchased a used car for him.

Bernal said the media scrutiny nearly caused Pryor to abandon his newfound faith, but he remained at Jubilee and attended its ministry school. He later began teaching on spiritual warfare, releasing a video with Bernal titled *Pagan to Pentecost* with Bernal and starting Christian Gladiator Ministry at the church.

"Eric's passion was to convert the Wiccan people and people that are spiritual but going down the wrong path," said Bernal, who remained Pryor's friend and mentor.

"He used to say, 'Pastor Dick, I need to get my friends out of darkness.' That was his passion—not really preaching to the choir or preaching to saved people. His passion was to ... persuade people who were following false religions, even demonic, satanic beliefs. That was his desire."

In the late 1990s, Pryor became less prominent, eventually moving to Carson City, Nev., with his wife, Renée. Although the couple led a ministry called Peculiar Nation, Pryor worked as an artist at the time of his death and ministered only occasionally at churches and Christian events.

"He hadn't gotten any ministry engagements for a number of years, but he was always ministering," Renée Pryor said. "Eric had such a generous spirit. He would give the last dime in his pocket. If [someone was] cold, he would give them the jacket off his back so they would be warm."

Pryor is survived by his wife, Renée; two sons; a daughter; a stepdaughter; a stepson; his parents; a brother; a sister and a stepbrother. A memorial service will be held next week at Jubilee Christian Center.