

35 Years Later, Keith Green Still Leads Us in Worship

Many Christians who were alive in 1982 remember where they were 35 years ago today. It was the day Christian music lost one of its pioneers and strongest voices of an uncompromised quest of faith. Keith Green, two of his children and nine others died in a small two-engine plane crash in East Texas. Green was only 28.

"I still remember exactly where I was when I heard this come on the news. Driving down the 405, I had to pull over to deal with it. It sent shock waves through my heart, that still sting today. A legendary saint, we need his message today," Mark Morrissey posted yesterday on Facebook.

"We heard it on the car radio on the way to get groceries. I called a friend from a phone booth and fell apart. We were baby Christians and this broke our hearts but it brought us to our knees," Adele Roblin likewise posted on Keith Green's Facebook page.

Dan Carroll, senior pastor of Water of Life Community Church in Fontana, California, remembers the day. Carroll was at a pivotal place in his life, on his knees praying about whether he should go forward in ministry. He had been reading his Bible and listening to a Keith Green album when he received a phone call from a friend who told him about the plane crash. Carroll went on to become a pastor and now leads a 7,000-member charismatic congregation. He often recounts that day when he tells his own story of faith—and it always brings him close to tears.

I also remember when I got the news. It was the next day, Thursday. A newspaper article gave only scant details, but I was numb as I read it. Though I didn't really know Keith

Green, he had previously been part of the church I attended—Kenn Gulliksen’s Vineyard Christian Fellowship. We had just prayed for and sent off John Smalley and his family to plant a new Vineyard church on the East Coast. En route, the family had stopped in Lindale, Texas to visit Green, his wife Melody and their Last Days Ministries. The Smalleys were in the plane with Green and also perished. Gulliksen and the entire Vineyard family were all tears at a memorial service for Green and the Smalleys some days later.

Though Christian music lost one of its most passionate and talented voices, the impact of Green’s music lives on to this day. Green’s surviving children have posted a tribute video on his Facebook page.

In 2015, *Relevant* magazine published an article that declared Green’s music had changed Christian worship forever. Indeed, his many songs—from “Your Love Broke Through” to “There Is a Redeemer” to “Make My Life a Prayer to You” have challenged, inspired and changed lives for 35 years—and show no signs of waning.