

Anne Graham Lotz Offers Touching Tribute to Maranatha Pastor Ray Bentley

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25-26, BSB).

Yes, Lord. I believe that Ray has never been more alive than at the moment on Jan. 4 when his faith became sight, and he saw You face to face. Yet I remember that at the tomb of Lazarus You, too, believed, and yet You wept. While I've read many of the well-deserved tributes to Ray given by Christian leaders worldwide, all I have been able to do is weep.

Yet I, too, want to give tribute:

Ray was saved as a child through my father's ministry, which made him in a unique way my spiritual brother. I first met him when his wife, Vicki, was the office manager for our "Just Give Me Jesus/San Diego" revival in 2000. Since that day, he and Vicki have become two of my very dearest friends. Ray accepted me for the person that I am and supported me fully in the ministry to which God has called me. At least once a year, he invited me to preach at Maranatha. In the last conversation I had with him, he extended once again an invitation to preach at Maranatha in the new year.

Ray helped me lead my Prayer and Prophecy Tour of Israel in 2018. The 200 people on tour fell in love with him for his wisdom, insight into Scripture, encouraging words and passionate love for God's people and God's land.

During my cancer journey, he and Vicki tracked closely and carried me on their knees. Since I was restricted to the home,

I began joining the Sunday morning service at Maranatha Chapel online. I was so blessed that I asked him if he would accept me into membership. After prayer, he agreed. I met with his leadership team, shared my testimony and was taken into full membership. Ray Bentley was my pastor in every sense of the word. I told him that not since I was a young girl had I been shepherded by a pastor as he shepherded me.

Every two weeks or so he would call just to check in, then pray over me. He reached out to each of my three children, and they reached out to him for his prayers and wisdom. In the last four years, his loving reach has extended to my grandchildren. He gave them his cell number so they could text him their prayer needs and concerns. Which they did. He has ministered to them, prayed for them, counseled them and encouraged them.

And now ... Ray is with Jesus. While I truly rejoice for him, knowing that there is no place he would rather be, the emptiness inside that I feel is reverberating through my family. Who will pray for us? Encourage us? Love and accept us as Ray did? If my sense of loss is severe, I can hardly bear to think of the devastating grief breaking the hearts of beloved Vicki and their own family.

So, this is my humble request. Would you please pray for Vicki and Ray's family? For Maranatha Chapel in San Diego? And for me and my family? Pray for God's comfort, of course, but also for a strong sense of purpose. God has left us here because He has more "fruitful labor" for us (Phil. 1:22). Pray that each of us will make each day count, bear much eternal fruit and finish strong—for the glory of God—and as living tributes to Ray Bentley.

Maranatha! Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Editor's Note: Watch the video of Pastor Ray Bentley's memorial service above or at [this link](#). Anne Graham Lotz's

tribute begins at 13:08. {eoa}

This article originally appeared at .

*Called “the best preacher in the family” by her father, Billy Graham, **Anne Graham Lotz** speaks around the globe with the wisdom and authority of years spent studying God’s Word. The New York Times named Anne one of the five most influential evangelists of her generation. She’s been profiled on 60 Minutes and has appeared on TV programs such as Larry King Live, Today and Hannity Live. Her Just Give Me Jesus revivals have been held in more than 30 cities in 12 different countries to hundreds of thousands of attendees. She is also a best-selling and award-winning author. Her most recent releases are The Light of His Presence, Jesus in Me, The Daniel Prayer, Wounded by God’s People, Fixing My Eyes on Jesus, Expecting to See Jesus and her first children’s book, Heaven: God’s Promise for Me.*