

From Sudden Death to Sudden Glory: Remembering David Wilkerson

The news of Pastor David Wilkerson's passing shocked me. I was immediately struck with sadness when I read the headline, "Pastor David Wilkerson Dies in Car Crash." While we know that his devotion to Jesus Christ and mankind has surely ushered him from this life into heavenly glory, I could sense the great loss that many felt due to losing a faithful servant of the gospel.

People, worldwide, posted status updates on Facebook that showed their admiration of Wilkerson and gave countless testimonies of how his ministry had played a role in their life. Numerous YouTube videos of some of his most popular messages, such as, "A Call to Anguish," "The Second Coming," "On Hell," among many others, were being uploaded to social networking sites.

It is said that after Wilkerson read a story in *Life Magazine*, in 1958, about a boy who was murdered by teenage gang members in New York City, he felt led by the Holy Spirit to go there and reach gang members with compassion and the gospel.

His

faithfulness to his ministry led to many advances, such as “Teen Challenge” (an evangelical drug rehabilitation program) and “World Challenge” (an international ministry that helps addicts worldwide), as well as the launching and pastoring of Times Square Church in New York City.

Wilkerson’s

“The Cross and the Switchblade” became a best-seller, with over 50 million copies in over 30 languages, and is included in

Christianity Today’s “Top 50 Books That Have Shaped Evangelicals.” Wilkerson also started “Please Pass the Bread,” a global effort to feed starving children worldwide.

“Today, Please

Pass the Bread is saving the lives of thousands of children, through

56 outreaches in eight countries,” said Pastor Wilkerson’s son,

Gary Wilkerson, in an article he wrote for the World Challenge website, titled “Remembering David Wilkerson.”

Through

his life’s work, Wilkerson has not only helped thousands upon thousands of people come clean from drug addiction, but he also lead

them to Christ through the love he bestowed upon them.

Pastor

Sonny Arguinizoni, a former drug addict and gang member, who was

approached by Wilkerson in the height of his addiction, was offered

the opportunity to go home with him so that Wilkerson could help him

kick the habit. Not many people would offer a stranger the

opportunity to stay in their home, let alone a drug-addicted gang member.

Through Victory Outreach, a worldwide ministry Arguinzoni later founded, my father, Jimmy Pinto, was witnessed to. Upon accepting Jesus into his heart, he was then placed into their drug rehabilitation program, where his life was totally transformed from once being a hardcore drug addict to helping others find freedom from sin and addiction in Christ.

My father then went on to run a drug rehabilitation program that helped many come off drugs, and later he became an evangelist that traveled throughout the United States, also offering hope and help to others.

Through his ministry, which was a constant reminder of what the Lord has done for us, my brother and I became born again Christians. Today, my brother, James Pinto, is also a pastor and is dedicated to proclaiming the gospel and has a heart of compassion for those bound to sin.

Can you see how the dedication of one man could impact so many others?

The trickling effect from Wilkerson spread to another, which then reached another and another ...

Our family is just one story, but through Pastor Wilkerson's commitment to lead people to Christ, he has impacted so many lives and numerous families.

Wilkerson's ministry not only changed the life of gang members and those bound to addiction, but he touched the hearts of those who felt they had it all together and weren't in need of a savior. He proclaimed that the sacrifice Jesus made on Calvary wasn't only for the destitute and outcasts of society, but it was for everyone. With truth and boldness, he let others know that no one is exempt from sin; without Jesus, we are all damned to Hell.

Wilkerson also challenged Christians to continue in their faith, to remain in prayer and church attendance, to stay far away from sin and to keep their eyes focused on Jesus. Through his teachings, one can surely say that Wilkerson was not a man of compromise.

Having accepted the truth of the gospel with his whole heart, he also preached it with his whole heart, despite the fact that some may have

ridiculed him for what seemed like strict discipline when it really was an awakening for the church, as a whole, to please God entirely.

On the morning of the fatal accident that claimed Wilkerson's life, he wrote in his blog, "Beloved, God has never failed to act but in goodness and love. When all means fail—His love prevails. Hold fast to your faith. Stand fast in His Word. There is no other hope in this world."

The last sentence reminded me of why Wilkerson originally went to New York City—to bring a message of hope that would help people and let them know that without Jesus there is no hope.

If you have not accepted Jesus Christ into your heart, may you come to know the power of His saving grace that tells you to "come as you are..." As Reverend Billy Graham once said, "Come as you are and be changed. Don't worry about changing yourself first; in fact, you can't change yourself. You are unable to save yourself."

That is why we need Jesus Christ as our Savior. When we accept Him into our hearts by confessing that He died for our sins and asking for

forgiveness because we are in need of a Savior, it is God who begins to do the work. It is Him who changes us in areas we may or may not have realized we needed to be changed.

As we remember the life that Pastor Wilkerson lived, let us not forget to continue to spread the gospel and extend a hand to the hurting, to those in need of hope.

Paula

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