

Marie Green Day

☒ Marie Green was an amazing woman. As the wife of a church-planting pastor and the mother of six ministry-minded children, her legacy continues to have a far-reaching impact.

In case you haven't heard about Marie Green (and I'm assuming that's probably the case), let me tell you a little bit about her.

Marie was a prayer warrior. She spent countless hours on her knees praying for people in her community, in her nation and in her world. Marie had an incredible passion for missions. Although she never left the country, she was indirectly responsible for evangelizing millions of people in places like China, the Ukraine and throughout Africa, South America and here in the United States.

Of Marie's six children (all named after men and women from the Bible), five went on to become pastors or the spouses of pastors. To this day, her son James has a church in Douglasville, Ga., and her daughter Lois is a pastor's wife in Oklahoma. Marie's son Joe is a former pastor and his two sons Jeff and Randy are big-hearted businessmen who have contributed greatly to ministry causes across the globe. Her daughter Esther is a former pastor's wife.

Perhaps Marie's most notable legacy is tied to her second youngest son David who is one of the wealthiest men in America. He is the only Green sibling not tied directly to traditional church ministry, but his hugely successful business (he started the national Hobby Lobby chain out of his garage and built it into a multi-billion dollar company) has allowed him to give millions of dollars to various ministries and efforts all over the world. David's primary goal is to put

appropriately-translated Bibles into as many people's hands as possible-including every single Chinese man, woman and child.

David's son Steve and daughter Darsee are intricately involved at Hobby Lobby while his other son Mart is the founder of a Christian bookstore chain. More recently, Mart has created multiple media companies including Every Tribe Entertainment and Ethnographic Media. He is responsible for the production of the film *End of the Spear* and the documentaries *Beyond the Gates of Splendor* and *Miss HIV*.

Over the past 18 months, Mart has been in the news for another reason. On behalf of the Green family, he donated \$70 million to the debt-riddled Oral Roberts University (ORU) and was named chairman of the board. Since that gift, ORU has found the solid footing it has sought for several years and is healthier than its ever been.

So on Saturday, May 2 at ORU's graduation ceremony, Marie Green will receive a lifetime achievement award from the university. Everywhere David and Mart speak, they inevitably mention their mother and grandmother, giving her credit as their personal inspirations to become generous givers and world-impacting men.

But the reason for my adoration is a little more personal. That's because Marie Green is my grandmother-the mother of my mom Betty Bonham. I didn't get much time with my grandmother. She passed away when I was only four years old. Yet somehow, I remember visiting her and my Grandpa Green in Midland, Texas, not long before her death. She was 72 years old at the time.

My mom was greatly influenced by my grandmother. By the age of 18, she was traveling the country with her sisters. They would sing and preach and lead people to Christ in powerful revival services. My mom later became a pastor for a few years at

various churches in central Oklahoma and continued to evangelize after that. My grandmother's legacy continued with my oldest sister Rhonda Dilldine who is the worship leader at Hope Church in Broken Arrow, Okla. My other sister Karla Partridge has been the children's pastor at Hope for over 20 years. Both have been rock solid pillars of leadership and amazing examples to everyone in our church.

I like to think I've turned out pretty good myself. And I owe it all to the legacy of my grandparents-grandparents Bonham and Green-and both of my parents-Stan and Betty. I have two sons of my own now-Lance Andrew and Cole Avery-and by God's grace I intend to see that legacy continue through them.

You see there was no way to tell back then what great things Marie Green's children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and now even one great-great grandchild (and another one the way) would go on to achieve. It's clear now that her legacy of constant prayer, sacrificial giving and unconditional love has been felt by more than even she could have ever imagined.

My grandmother's faithfulness was greatly blessed. She has an amazing Christian lineage in which every single one of her offspring have gone on to become followers of Jesus and servants of God. It reminds me of these Old Testament words:

"God, You have heard my vows; You have given a heritage to those who fear Your name" (Psalm 61:5, HCSB).

Although that verse was penned by King David, it could have been written by my grandmother who left a heritage that continues today and has spanned the globe reaching countless souls with the Gospel.

Perhaps William James said it best: "The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it."

That's really the message here. No matter where you are at in life or what you think you may or may not have to offer, it's never too late to start a legacy of faithful service to God.

Will your legacy look like Marie Green's? Probably not. But as long as your life is blanketed in prayer, service, love and a passionate pursuit of God, you and those you touch will be blessed for generations to come.

Chad Bonham is a freelance author, journalist and television and documentary producer from Broken Arrow, Okla. He has authored several books including a four-book FCA series (Regal Books) and is the coordinating producer on a forthcoming documentary called Choosing Life.