

Wilkerson's Life and Legacy Honored at Texas Funeral

✖ A father to some, and a spiritual father to many more, David Wilkerson was buried on Monday afternoon in Tyler, Texas.

Funeral services were held for Wilkerson, who was killed in a head-on collision on April 27, at Rose Heights Church of God. About 800 people arrived from around the country to pay their last respects to Wilkerson. Nicky Cruz, David Shipley, Ron Luce, Robert Morris, and Jim Cymbala were among the many recognizable faces in the congregation.

"David was eulogized by family and friends as a great man," says Steve Strang, founder and publisher of *Charisma* magazine. "Both his sons, Gary and Greg, as well as several others, honored him." Strang attended the funeral and plans to publish a special report on Tuesday.

Gary revealed something prophetic his father told him just last week: Wilkerson thought Gwen, his wife, would outlive him.

Gwen was first diagnosed with cancer at age 32, according to the Assemblies of God (AG). Both of Wilkerson's daughters, Debbie and Bonnie, are also cancer survivors. The AG reports Gwen and her daughters went through 16 surgeries and nine cancers. Wilkerson was right. Gwen outlived him. Gary told the congregation that his mother is expected to recover from the car accident that took his father's life.

Carter Conlon, senior pastor of Times Square Church, the church Wilkerson founded in October 1987, said Wilkerson's was a life well lived. "It's hard to honor a great man," Conlon said, sharing that Wilkerson didn't see himself as a great man and was always shocked that God would use him.

Dallas Holm joined Wilkerson in his youth crusades in 1970. He traveled and ministered with Wilkerson for 10 years. He sang several songs at the service, including *In Your Presence*, *I'll Rise Again* and *Majesty*.

Wilkerson's younger brother, Don, who ran Teen Challenge for many years, told the church that he called Wilkerson "Brother Dave" like everyone else. He shared how people asked him over the years how he lived in his younger brother's shadow. His reply: "David cast no shadow." In other words, Wilkerson was humble and easy to work with.

Barry Meguiar, chairman of the board of World Challenge, the ministry Wilkerson founded in 1971, knew Wilkerson for 41 years. He called him the "most godly man he ever knew" and said he "walked closer to God than anyone I knew."

Cruz was at Rose Heights Church of God for one reason: to say goodbye to his spiritual father. He told people that without Wilkerson he would "be in the pit of hell right now." Cruz was one of the many gang members Wilkerson led to Christ during his ministry.

A burial followed the service. Wilkerson was buried in Lindale City Cemetery.

Strang contributed eye-witness accounts and quotes to this report.