

Church Leaders Mourn David Wilkerson Loss

Our loss is heaven's gain. That's the general sentiment from Church leaders across denominations about David Wilkerson.

Wilkerson, founder of World Challenge Ministries, was killed last Wednesday in a car accident in Tyler, Texas. His family gathered for a private funeral there on Monday afternoon.

"The passion and purity modeled in Dave Wilkerson's life characterize the highest standards God's Word reveals for any Ephesians 4:11 role," Dr. Jack Hayford, president of The Kings University, told *Charisma News*. "His steadfastness in his marriage, teaching and humility before God constitute those things I especially treasure at this time 'remembering Dave'."

David Cerullo, Chairman and CEO of Inspiration Ministries, agrees that America, and the world, has suffered a great loss in the passing of Wilkerson.

"In every society, the Lord raises up men of character as a prophetic voice to their generation. David Wilkerson was such a voice. His life and ministry radiated the compassion of God without compromising the Word of God. And his resolve to complete his mission never wavered," Cerullo told *Charisma News*. "David Wilkerson was a pillar of the Christian faith, a lover of Jesus Christ and a man whose legacy will last into eternity. Barbara and I, and the entire Inspiration family join together to celebrate his life. Our prayers are with his wife, Gwen, and with the rest of the family, the Times Square Church community, World Challenge, and to all who grieve his passing."

Doug Stringer, founder of Somebody Cares America, a non-profit group that mobilizes Christians into evangelism to transform communities, agrees that the Church lost a great prophetic

voice with Wilkerson's passing. Stringer says Wilkerson impacted his life profoundly.

"I remember the time many years ago that he told me to always weep between the porch and the altar for the those we ministered seek just a sermon or message from the Bible to preach, but weep for those to whom you preach," Stringer recalls. "Lord, please restore us to the place you once called us. Lord, let not the volume of your authentic prophetic voices of years past only become a memory, but raise up voices of righteousness and truth in this generation."

Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and the Hispanic National Association of Evangelicals, says Wilkerson's life stood as an example of a man committed to biblical truth and righteousness.

"The Church lost a pastor and a prophet. His relationship with Nicky Cruz ignited outreach to the gang saturated segments of the Hispanic and urban communities," Rodriguez says. "As a result, the barrios of America received the transformative message of redemption through Christ. His life and ministry demonstrate that the prophetic is greater than the pathetic, the Cross is more powerful than the switchblade and the blood triumphs over addiction."

When reflecting on the legacies of Wilkerson and Osama Bin Laden, both of whom were killed around the same time, Paul Zink, pastor of New Life Christian Fellowship in Jacksonville, Fla., told *Charisma News* it seems ironic that one's legacy and mission was to restore lives, while the other's was to destroy them.

"When I was 11 years old living in Elkhart, Ind., my father was pastor of an Assembly of God church. He read the story of David Wilkinson going to New York City to involve himself in recapturing the streets from heroin addicts and gang violence by preaching the Gospel of life," Zink says.

Zink remembers how the first graduating class from the Teen Challenge Center in Brooklyn, N.Y., came to his father's church—the testimonies of the young male drug addicts changed his life forever. It was the first time he was ever moved upon by the Holy Spirit to give a sacrificial offering. He donated his bicycle and favorite jacket to the young men.

“David Wilkerson modeled the life of Jesus to our generation. I attribute, in part, his influence in my life to the call of God that I have followed for 45 years,” Zink says. “Now the baton is being passed to all those spiritual sons that he has touched for over half a century. Let his life be a beacon to lead us in the spreading of the Gospel. May God bless David Wilkinson's family and Time's Square Church as they carry on his legacy.”