

David Wilkerson Killed in Car Crash

David Wilkerson, founder of World Challenge Ministries, was killed Wednesday in a car accident in East Texas.

Charisma News spoke with Dr. Wayne Goodall, founder of WorldWide Family, who first verified the news. Goodall was with Wilkerson's son, Gary, when he was informed of the fatal accident.

By late Wednesday night, Times Square Church in New York City announced the death of its founding pastor in a statement from Senior Pastor Carter Conlon: "Pastor David Wilkerson's was a life fully given for the glory of God and souls of men. He was greatly loved and he will be greatly missed. Our prayers are with the family and we as a church body are committed to standing with them at this time of sorrow."

The Wilkerson family issued a statement after midnight on the World Challenge web site: "We appreciate your prayers and our hearts are sorrowful, yet we rejoice at the joy of knowing David Wilkerson spent his life well. More information will be coming soon. Thank you for your prayers," the statement said.

Additional unconfirmed sources are reporting that Wilkerson was killed in a head-on collision with a tractor trailer while traveling east on U.S. 175. His wife, Gwen, was also involved in the accident and reportedly remains in critical condition at East Texas Medical Center in Tyler, Texas.

"Today, the Kingdom of God has lost a giant of the faith. His life touched millions," says George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. "The Assemblies of God enjoyed a life-long relationship with David Wilkerson. He was godly, humble and represented everything that is best in a spiritual leader. Our heartfelt sympathy and prayer is

extended to his wife, Gwen, and family.”

World Challenge could not be reached for comment at the time of this report. Charisma News also reached out to other Wilkerson-run ministries, including World Challenge Missions, World Challenge Crusades and Mount Zion International School of Ministry. None of these organizations were immediately available for comment.

On February 9, 1958, David Wilkerson felt the Spirit prompting him to spend late evenings praying rather than watching the Late Show. Wilkerson obeyed. At the time he was pastoring a rural Assemblies of God in Pennsylvania.

“Two weeks and two days later, during his late night time of prayer, he felt prompted to pick up the February 24, 1958, edition of Life magazine,” Wood explains. “On pages 30-31, he wept as he looked at an ink sketching of seven members of the Dragon Gang on trial for killing 15-year-old polio victim, Michael Farmer. He felt the Spirit say to him, ‘Go and help those boys.’”

Although Wilkerson had never been to New York City, 350 miles away, Wilkerson found himself three days later in a courtroom where the gang members were on trial. As Wood recalls it, the judge tossed Wilkerson out of the courtroom, but photographers captured his photo and he was later recognized by gang members as he witnessed on the street.

“That late night time of prayer opened up the ministry David Wilkerson founded, Teen Challenge,” Wood says. “He obeyed the prompting of the Holy Spirit and every day approximately 24,000 men and women are experiencing the saving and delivering power of Jesus Christ from life-controlling issues in Teen Challenge Centers all around the world.”

Wilkerson founded Times Square Church in 1987. Since 1999, he traveled around the globe holding conferences for Christian ministers.

For over four decades, Wilkerson's evangelistic ministry included preaching, teaching and writing. He authored more than 30 books, including *The Cross and the Switchblade*, *The Vision*, *Revival on Broadway*, *Hungry for More of Jesus*, *Have You Felt Like Giving Up Lately?*, and *The New Covenant Unveiled*.

Wilkerson was 79 and lived with his wife in New York City. He had four children and 11 grandchildren.

Charisma News will continue investigating this developing story.