

Killer of Texas Pastor Executed, But Victims' Families Take a Different Path

As the world becomes ever more consumed with bitterness and retribution, the family of Rev. Clint Dobson and the survivors of a brutal church attack in Texas have chosen a different path—one of forgiveness and grace.

As reported by Fox News, Steven Lawayne Nelson, convicted of murdering Pastor Dobson in 2011 during a robbery at NorthPointe Baptist Church, was executed Feb. 5, in Huntsville, Texas. Nelson's crime was nothing short of horrific. He beat, strangled and suffocated Rev. Dobson with a plastic bag while the young pastor was in his office, preparing a sermon. Church secretary Judy Elliott was also viciously attacked but survived the ordeal. The sheer violence of the crime left the community reeling and the victims' families grappling with unimaginable pain.

Breaking News. Spirit-Filled Stories. Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!

Yet, amid this heartache, the families have chosen to embody the very teachings Rev. Dobson dedicated his life to—the Christian principles of forgiveness and love. In a statement released before Nelson's execution, Dobson's family wrote, "Steven Nelson forever changed our lives, but he has never occupied our minds." They focused not on the man who took their loved one's life, but on the joyful memories they shared with Clint—his laughter, his wit, his advice and his love.

Perhaps even more striking was the statement from Bradley Elliott, whose mother Judy survived the attack.

"I hope that today as Mr. Nelson took his last breath, he was greeted by the same loving and gracious Savior that has stood by us through all we have been a part of," he said, adding, "Mr. Nelson, we forgive you and hope to see you when we are called home from here."

Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up-to-date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!

This breathtaking expression of forgiveness speaks volumes about the transformative power of faith. It's easy to hold onto anger, to let grief fester into hatred. But the Bible teaches that forgiveness isn't just for the benefit of the wrongdoer—it's a path to healing for those who have been wronged. The Dobson and Elliott families have shown that even in the face of unspeakable evil, forgiveness can break the chains of bitterness and lead to peace.

Forgiveness doesn't mean excusing the crime. Nor does it bring back the loved ones lost. But it does mean choosing not to let that pain define the rest of one's life. The families' words remind us that while Steven Nelson took much from them, he could not steal their capacity for grace.

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

James Lasher is staff writer for Charisma Media.