

Megachurch Founders' 28-Year-Old Son Taking Reins at Victory

Next month Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, one of the city's largest churches, will raise up a new leader. Paul Daugherty—who will turn 29 three days after he becomes the church's senior pastor—is the youngest child of founding pastors Sharon and the late Billy Joe Daugherty.

The ministry hosts 7,600 worshippers each week, runs an international Bible school network of 1,542 schools in nearly 100 nations, and operates a major Christian school and the Tulsa Dream Center.

Paul Daugherty's parents were about his age when they founded the ministry 33 years ago—before he was born. He grew up going to the church and attended Victory Christian School from kindergarten through 12th grade. He graduated from Oral Roberts University in 2008 with a major in theology and a minor in business.

Daugherty's fall 2009 wedding was postponed one day so that his late father, who was battling cancer, could finish a chemotherapy series and officiate. It was Billy Joe Daugherty's last public service before he died five weeks later. Sharon Daugherty has been pastoring the church since then.

Paul said in an interview with *Tulsa World* last week that the first time the thought occurred to him he might one day pastor Victory was at his father's bedside at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

"The night my dad passed away, I was holding his hand ... and just, crying, 'God, please let my dad live.' And I just had

this moment, where God was like: 'He's with me now, and he's happy. Serve your mom and serve the church, and get ready because you're going to step into this role one day.' That scared me, because I had never thought about being the pastor of Victory.

"I was the youngest sibling. ... I didn't say anything. But I took it to heart, and started serving my mom wholeheartedly."

His mother confirmed this a year and a half later when she told him: "I think you should know that your dad had spoken that you would one day step into the role as pastor, but that you needed time to develop."

Around that time is when Paul Daugherty began preaching regularly at Saturday night services and taking on more responsibilities at Victory, where he was the youth and young adult pastor.

"I'm young. I don't have all the answers," he said. "And I am nervous about taking on this role. But I do think that with the help of the Holy Spirit and with the help of the solid, strong, smart people around me ... that our church can continue moving forward."

Daugherty sees himself a team leader, not the face of the ministry.

"I think the day of the one-man show in ministry is over," he explained. "It's unhealthy for one person to try to do everything."

"Victory has always been a church of love, acceptance and forgiveness, and a church that loves to reach out. And we'll continue doing that."

Daugherty is not the first sibling to become senior pastor of a church. His two older sisters and their husbands are pastoring churches they started—Ruthie and Adam Sanders in

Frisco, Texas, and Sarah and Caleb Wehrli in Orlando, Florida. He said he has the support of his older brother, John, who has said he does not feel called to be a pastor.