

Prestigious Theologian Norman Geisler Dies at 86

Southern Evangelical Seminary (SES,) is mourning the death of one of its co-founders, Dr. Norman Geisler, who passed away today, July 1, at the age of 86.

Dr. Geisler and Dr. Ross Rhoads co-founded SES in 1992. Dr. Geisler's deep commitment to defend the historic Christian faith coupled with Dr. Rhoads' burden for global evangelism birthed the two-fold vision of the seminary to use apologetics, theology and philosophy to "evangelize the world and to defend the historic Christian faith."

Dr. Rhoads, who passed away in May 2017, served as the first president while Dr. Geisler was appointed as SES' first dean. Dr. Geisler became the seminary's second president in 1999.

A prolific author, veteran professor, speaker, lecturer, traveler, philosopher, apologist, evangelist and theologian, Geisler has been described as a cross between Thomas Aquinas and Billy Graham.

"Dr. Norman Geisler, our beloved co-founder and president emeritus, went home to be with his Lord and Savior this morning. Christendom has lost one of its greatest advocates and defenders," said SES President Dr. Richard Land. "While we mourn our loss, along with his family, we rejoice in the fact that our mentor, teacher, ministry partner and friend has entered into his heavenly rest, having heard, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!' And, as we mourn our loss, as Christians we can all take great comfort in the fact that we will be reunited with him in heaven at the feet of our Lord and Savior at some point in our future.

"All of us in the SES family are aware that a spiritual giant walked among us, and his reassuring presence and ministry in

our lives will be missed. We take comfort in the fact that the prodigious work product he left behind will continue to inform us and to equip us more ably to fulfill God's purposes in our ministries."

In June, Geisler had sent a statement to the SES family communicating his appreciation of the recent honors the seminary had bestowed upon him.

"When I announced my retirement last month, (my wife) Barbara and I were overwhelmed with the kind words so many of you wrote in response. It has been my honor to serve the Lord and to edify His church. To all those who wrote to me, a heartfelt thank you.

"It is my fervent prayer that I have left a legacy of right belief about God and stood firm on the inerrancy of Scripture. So many of the challenges we face in our world today are rooted in our inadequate view of God and His Holy Word.

"Barbara and I were both deeply touched last month when Southern Evangelical Seminary named me president emeritus and changed the name of their graduate school to the Norman L. Geisler Graduate School of Apologetics.

"To all of you who have stood with me through the decades, I thank you. My prayer is that you will continue supporting and perpetuating my life's work through the ministry of Southern Evangelical Seminary. Your financial support will ensure that future generations will be equipped to effectively evangelize a lost world and to defend the historic Christian faith both here and around the world."

Geisler was the author of more than 125 books and hundreds of articles. He taught theology, philosophy and apologetics at the college or graduate level for more than 50 years, and was an annual speaker at SES' National Conference on Christian Apologetics for many years. Geisler also served as a professor at some of the finest seminaries in the United States,

including Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, Veritas Evangelical Seminary and SES. He retired from his SES teaching duties in the summer of 2019.

The renowned apologist was educated at colleges, university and graduate schools around the nation, including William Tyndale College, the University of Detroit, the University of Detroit Graduate School, Wheaton College, Wheaton Graduate School, Wayne State University Graduate School, Northwestern University and Loyola University, amassing bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in philosophy and theology.

Several educational institutions were also privileged to welcome Dr. Geisler as a faculty member or administrator, including Wheaton College, Detroit Bible College, Trinity College, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Dallas Theological Seminary, the Liberty Center for Research and Scholarship and of course, Southern Evangelical Seminary.

In 2006, Geisler founded the International Society of Christian Apologetics, and in 2007, co-founded Veritas Evangelical Seminary, where he served as president from 2007 until his death.

Several churches and ministries were also honored to have Dr. Geisler either in leadership or servanthood: Northeast Suburban Youth for Christ (Detroit), Dayton Center Church (Silverwood, Michigan); River Grove Bible Church (River Grove, Illinois); Memorial Baptist Church (Warren, Michigan); alumni of Detroit Bible College; Quest for Truth radio ministry and Southern Evangelical Church; and Calvary Church (Charlotte, North Carolina). Geisler also served numerous interim pastorates in Michigan, Illinois and Texas, received numerous awards over his lifetime and was an internationally known speaker at churches, retreats, pastors conferences and universities, as well as on radio and television, since 1960.

Dr. Geisler was married for 64 years to Barbara Jean, who

survives. Six children, 15 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren complete the family.