

Rich Wilkerson Jr. Urges Youth to Evangelize

The excitement of Louisville 2012 continued to build Thursday night as thousands of students and leaders gathered and the presence of the Holy Spirit filled the National Youth Convention service in the KFC Yum! Center.

Worth Dying For led the audience in another powerful time of worship encouraging the crowd to continue to stand for the love of Christ with songs like "Savior" and "Love Riot."

However, the challenging message from Rich Wilkerson Jr., young adult pastor at Trinity Church in Miami, stoked the fire already lit in the lives of the teens in attendance this week. Wilkerson is the son of Rich Wilkerson, evangelist David Wilkerson's cousin.

Delivering a message entitled "Gone Fishing," the younger Wilkerson spoke from the Gospel of Mark as he told the young people that God expects His followers to live a life of obedience.

"If I'm not fishing am I really following Jesus?" Wilkerson asked. "We're saved to bring as many people to Jesus as possible to heaven with us." Later, he told the crowd that God is looking for a generation that isn't looking for success but is faithful to His calling.

He reminded the students that God used many people in the Bible who faced extraordinary challenges. "God can use anybody," Wilkerson said. "He doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called."

Noting that the Assemblies of God has 500,000 students in the

national Fellowship, Wilkerson challenged students to win their peers to Christ in a year by having one student lead one student to Christ, which would increase that number to 1 million in one year.

Wilkerson called students to see the need, make the effort and know their source—Jesus. “Failure is not an option,” he said as he encouraged them to continue their relentless pursuit of Jesus. “Christians are not people of convenience but people of conviction.”

Wilkerson believes students need to step out in their faith. “We come up with so many excuses,” he noted. “We would love to see people come up with solutions. God’s grace is good when we take risks and step out. He empowers you do to things you never could think that you could do. It’s always that take a risk; take a step. Anybody can reach anybody for Jesus. All of us are called to do it.”

According to Wilkerson, reaching out to people can be simple. He encourages students to just love people.

“People get too complicated with it,” Wilkerson said. “Our real pursuit should be to love people. You know what I mean? People need to start building relationships with people. If Jesus lives on the inside of me, He shines through me.”

Wilkerson also spoke about the need for students to love and keep doors open to grow relationships.

“If we’re not careful we’re going to build a treadmill-focused generation. These people know the Bible verses; they know the songs. But God told us to run outside and reach people. We can’t reach people if we’re running on treadmills.”

Wilkerson encouraged students, explaining that as they step out in their faith walk that their evangelizing will grow.

Much like his illustration, students need to keep knocking on doors and not letting the doors shut. The more doors students knock on, the more people they try to reach, the easier the process will be to communicate the gospel.

“I think faith is like an analogy of working out,” he says. “The more we step out the more we grow. ... We grow in strength. We grow in grace. It gets easier as you do it. Until you step out, you never really know.”

The week's events culminated with the Celebration Service in the KFC Yum! Center Friday night as some of the Assemblies of God's most talented youth perform center stage.