

Tribute to Rev. David Wilkerson (A Christ-Honouring Legacy)

by David Wilkerson

David Wilkerson's 50-year ministry was marked by obedience, faithfulness, and a desire to be like Jesus, ultimately leading to the birth of the ministry 'Please Pass the Bread'.

Duration: 9:41

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5

Topics: "Christian Legacy", "Faithful Ministry"

Description

This sermon reflects on the 50-year ministry journey of David Wilkerson, which began with a pivotal act of obedience to God. It highlights his impactful work with Teen Challenge, the growth of his ministries worldwide, and his unwavering commitment to serving the disenfranchised. The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's face, desiring to be like Jesus, and being a reflection of His love and character.

Transcript

50 years of ministry began with one act of obedience. As a young pastor, David Wilkerson made the decision to turn off his television and give his time and attention completely to God. It was a decision that would have immeasurable impact on his life and ministry.

Born on May 19, 1931, in Hammond, Indiana, David Ray Wilkerson was the second child of Kenneth and Anne Wilkerson. David grew up with four other siblings, with the eldest being Juanita, a younger sister Ruth and two younger brothers, Jerry and Don. Through the godly influence of a long lineage of clergy, this child would one day find his calling behind the pulpit, but it would not end there.

Unbeknownst to him, the counsel of father and grandfather would serve as a poignant reminder as he would soon begin his journey through the unfamiliar streets of New York, the United States and the rest of the world. On June 14, 1952, he married the love of his life, Gwen Caruso. Later on he accepted a pastoral position in the small town of Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania.

Amidst the comfortable and satisfying life of a country preacher, there was a deep cry that could not be silenced. It wasn't until 1958, after reading a touching article in Life magazine, that the stirring of the Holy Spirit would change the course of his life in a way that was incomprehensible at that point in time. He

would go after those who were so lost it would take an act of God to reach them, the teenage gangs of New York City.

This trip changed his life forever. David Wilkerson's burden for the lost of the city increased and gave birth to Teen Challenge, a nationwide ministry to reach out to people with life-controlling habits. Teen Challenge became primarily a drug prevention program, an inpatient care center, and I had to set up the home in Brooklyn.

We set that up in 1960 and expanded from there simply to take care of those that we were preaching to that had no place to go, the hospitals couldn't handle them at the time, nobody was set up. Drug addiction then spread across the country, we just followed it. The ministry's Bible-based recovery program to troubled teens, gang members, drug addicts and alcoholics has been recognized as one of the most effective efforts of its kind.

Teen Challenge has grown to include 173 residential programs and numerous evangelism outreach centers in the United States, and 241 centers in 77 other countries. The program's cure rate of 86% has been recognized and substantiated by the U.S. government's National Institute on Drug Abuse. Today, many Teen Challenge graduates serve as ministers and missionaries throughout the world.

The story of David Wilkerson's first five years in New York is told in *The Cross and the Switchblade*, a book he co-authored in 1963. The book became a best-selling phenomenon and more than 15 million copies have been distributed in over 30 languages. Because of the success of the book, a motion picture was released in 1969.

It has been viewed by an estimated 50 million people in over 30 languages in 150 countries, according to the World Film Crusade. In 1967, he began David Wilkerson Youth Crusades, an evangelistic ministry characterized by efforts to reach teenagers he called goodniks, middle-class kids who were restless and bored, to prevent them from being seduced into a life of bondage to drugs, alcohol, violence, or lawlessness. Now hear me please, if we lose this generation, we're going to lose it in the hearts of God's own people.

If you feel the pull or tug of God's Spirit, don't move unless you feel that pulling at your heart. And you want that revolution in your life tonight. You want everything changed.

I want you to get right out of your seat. I just want you to come and stand around the front. Look this way, please.

I don't want people just to look at you like you're on show. Jesus, reach these hearts of two girls. Now, break this terrible habit, because Lord, it's a mind habit.

That's where it has to be broken. Break it in the mind. God, break it.

Jesus, break it in the mind. Soon after, together with his wife and four children, he moved the ministry's headquarters to Texas, where he founded World Challenge Incorporated in 1971. It serves as a corporate umbrella for the many ministries that have emerged over the years.

With a strong emphasis on bringing the Lord's love to the disenfranchised, World Challenge has served the poorest of the poor throughout the world and communicated the gospel in practical and effective means, be it through large outdoor crusades or through meeting the basic needs of a struggling widow. In

1986, David and Gwen came back to New York City for a street rally. Walking down 42nd Street one night, he began to see the extent of its depravity.

It was then and there he began to weep over this lost city. Through this travailing, a church was born in the heart of New York. Times Square Church has stood at the world's crossroads as a church that seeks out the lost, the addicted, and those seeking true fulfillment through the power of the risen Christ.

After many years of pastoring, God placed a burden in his heart for pastors and their spouses. To date, David Wilkerson and his son Gary have ministered in over 40 countries, holding conferences that bring about a renewed passion for Christ. Their messages have stirred, encouraged, and edified everyone from national church leaders to local lay ministers.

This is what the Lord has entrusted him with. This is the fruit of his obedience. Thank God for family.

Thank God for ministry. Thank God for 50 years of ministry. But folks, it's boiled down to one issue.

One desire. It's more than wanting to be loved and appreciated for the cheers and praises of man. It's more than being comfortable and knowing that you're secure in your old age.

You've got some retirement plan. That means nothing. It comes down to this one issue.

I want to be like Jesus. I want to see his face. And I want to be a reflection of who he is.

Lord, when you said, seek my face, my heart said unto you, thy face, Lord, will I seek? That's the answer. After 55 years of ministry in over 50 nations, David Wilkerson humbly reflected on the events of his life and asked the Lord this simple question. What might I do for you at this stage of my life? How might I best put to use all that you have given me? And God's response was as simple, as clear, and as tender as anything he had heard him speak in 78 years.

David, feed the poor. With this simple instruction as its foundation, Please Pass the Bread was born. A ministry which reaches into the darkest slums around the world to develop sustainable feeding programs and bring the gospel to those in most desperate need.

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