

A.W. Tozer:

Aiden Wilson Tozer was born April 21, 1897, on a small farm among the spiny ridges of Western Pennsylvania. Within a few short years, Tozer, as he preferred to be called, would earn the reputation and title of a "20th-century prophet."

Able to express his thoughts in a simple but forceful manner, Tozer combined the power of God and the power of words to nourish hungry souls, pierce human hearts, and draw earthbound minds toward God.

When he was 15 years old, Tozer's family moved to Akron, Ohio. One afternoon as he walked home from his job at Goodyear, he overheard a street preacher say, "If you don't know how to be saved . . . just call on God." When he got home, he climbed the narrow stairs to the attic where, heeding the preacher's advice, Tozer was launched into a lifelong pursuit of God.

In 1919, without formal education, Tozer was called to pastor a small storefront church in Nutter Fort, West Virginia. That humble beginning thrust him and his new wife Ada Cecelia Pfautz, into a 44-year ministry with The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Thirty-one of those years were spent at Chicago's Southside Alliance Church. The congregation, captivated by Tozer's preaching, grew from 80 to 800.

In 1950 Tozer was elected editor of the Alliance Weekly now called Alliance Life. The circulation doubled almost immediately. In the first editorial dated June 3, 1950, he set the tone: "It will cost something to walk slow in the parade of the ages while excited men of time rush about confusing motion with progress. But it will pay in the long run and the true Christian is not much interested in anything short of that."

Tozer's forte was his prayer life which often found him walking the aisles of a sanctuary or lying face down on the floor. He noted, "As a man prays, so is he." To him the worship of God was paramount in his life and ministry. "His preaching as well as his writings were but extensions of his prayer life," comments Tozer biographer James L. Snyder. An earlier biographer noted, "He spent more time on his knees than at his desk."

Tozer's love for words also pervaded his family life. He quizzed his children on what they read and made up bedtime stories for them. "The thing I remember most about my father," reflects his daughter Rebecca, "was those marvelous stories he would tell."

Son Wendell, one of six boys born before the arrival of Rebecca, remembers that, "We all would rather be treated to the lilac switch by our mother than to have a talking-to by our dad."

Tozer's final years of ministry were spent at Avenue Road Church in Toronto, Canada. On May 12, 1963, his earthly pursuit of God ended when he died of a heart attack at age 66. In a small cemetery in Akron, Ohio, his tombstone bears this simple epitaph: "A Man of God."

Some wonder why Tozer's writings are as fresh today as when he was alive. It is because, as one friend commented, "He left the superficial, the obvious and the trivial for others to toss around. . . . [His] books reach deep into the heart."

His humor, written and spoken, has been compared to that of Will Rogers--honest and homespun. Congregations could one moment be swept by gales of laughter and the next sit in a holy hush.

For almost 50 years, Tozer walked with God. Even though he is gone, he continues to speak, ministering to those who are eager to experience God. As someone put it, "This man makes you want to know and feel God."