

Articles and Sermons :: David Wilkerson - Short Bio

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Reverend David Wilkerson is perhaps best known for his early days of ministry to young drug addicts and gang members in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. His story is told in *The Cross and the Switchblade*, a book he co-authored which became a best-seller. The story has been read by over 15 million people in some thirty languages since 1963. In 1969, a motion picture of the same title was released.

Reverend Wilkerson served as pastor in small churches in Scottsdale and Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, until he saw a photograph in *Life* magazine of several New York City teenagers charged with murder. Moved with compassion he was drawn to the city in February 1959. It was then that he began his street ministry to what one writer called "desperate, bewildered, addicted, often violent youth."

That same year, Reverend Wilkerson founded Teen Challenge ministries in Brooklyn, New York, which has reached youth and adults with life-controlling problems worldwide through its 414 centers. The ministry's biblically based recovery program for drug addicts has been recognized as one of the most effective efforts of its kind.

In 1967 he began David Wilkerson Youth Crusades, an evangelistic ministry characterized by Reverend Wilkerson's 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. Through this ministry, CURE Corps (Collegiate Urban Renewal Effort) was founded, in an effort to harness the idealism and sacrificial zeal of many Christian young people who knew about the Peace Corps and Vista but wanted to give their lives to Christ-centered efforts.

In 1971, Reverend Wilkerson's ever-expanding ministry moved its headquarters to Texas, where he founded World Challenge, Inc. The ministry's mission is to promote and perpetuate the message of Christ through public teachings.

In 1986, while walking down 42nd Street in New York City at midnight, Reverend Wilkerson's heart broke yet again for God to raise up a ministry in Times Square. He cried out to God to do something, and at one o'clock that morning he sensed the Lord speaking to his heart, "You do something. You start a church. You know the city and you love it." At that moment, Times Square Church was birthed in Reverend Wilkerson's heart. The church opened its doors in October 1987, first in rented auditoriums in Times Square and eventually in the historic Mark Hellinger Theater, which the ministry purchased in 1989. Today, Times Square Church, with a missions-focused congregation, is a virtual microcosm of New York City. Nearly 8,000 people representing over 100 nationalities worship together under one roof.

For over four decades, Reverend Wilkerson's evangelistic ministry has included preaching, teaching and writing. Throughout that time a distinctive characteristic of his work has been his direct efforts to reach the neediest among us with help for both body and soul. He has authored over 30 books including, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, *The Vision*, *Revival on Broadway*, *Hungry For More of Jesus*, *Have You Felt Like Giving Up Lately?*, and *The New Covenant Unveiled*.

Now in his seventies, Rev. Wilkerson has been led by the Holy Spirit to exhort pastors and their spouses throughout the world to renew their passion for Christ. "I've been an evangelist for 50 years, but I didn't want to preach to pastors until I had gray hair, until I'd pastored. Now after 15 years of pastoring, sharing the hurts, pains, and difficulties of the ministry as a pastor, I felt the Lord finally release me, that I might have something to say."

Reverend Wilkerson and his wife Gwen live in New York City. They have four children and 11 grandchildren.