



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on April 29, 2011

called Teen Challenge, which today includes hundreds of centers around the world that use biblical principles to help people of all ages with substance addictions and other life issues.

In 1987, after nearly 30 years of ministry on the streets of New York, Wilkerson founded the non-denominational [Times Square Church](#) “in an area of Manhattan that was then riddled with X-rated movie houses, strip clubs, prostitution, and drugs,” reported the Associated Press.

[National Review](#) columnist Nancy French recalled that when she was in New York she attended the church, whose congregation is composed of an assortment of down-and-outers, students, families, and professional people — who all come to worship God. “One Sunday you might sit between an investment banker who graduated from Princeton on the right and an unemployed garbage collector on the left,” she noted.

French wrote that the first time she attended a service at Times Square Church, Wilkerson announced to the congregation: “Ladies, when we stand to sing, please don’t leave your pocketbooks on the ground. Some thieves are here in the sanctuary, so keep an eye out on your belongings.”

Then, French recalled, Wilkerson added: “And for those of you who came here expressly to steal ... we welcome you. You came here thinking you’d leave with a few bucks, but you’ll leave knowing the life-changing love of God. Stay as long as you’d like.”

While millions knew David Wilkerson as “Pastor” through the monthly newsletter he had mailed to ministry partners and supporters for over 30 years, perhaps no one knew him better than his son, Gary Wilkerson, who followed his father into fulltime ministry. Looking back on his father’s life, the son said that David Wilkerson would be remembered for his unlimited faith. “He believed God could change the lives of gang members and transform the most desperate drug addicts,” recalled the younger Wilkerson. “He believed that a dynamic church could be launched in the heart of Times Square, New York City. He believed he could be a man who loved his wife and children well. And he did.”

Reflecting on the tragic death, Wilkerson said, “I don’t think my father would have retired well. I don’t think he was one to sit in a rocking chair and reminisce about times past. I believe that Jesus, knowing this, graciously called him home.”

Gary Wilkerson noted that his father’s “last mission on earth was to be an advocate for the poorest of the poor — to provide relief and support for hungry children and widows and orphans. After founding Teen Challenge, World Challenge and Times Square Church, he sought to feed starving children in the most impoverished countries in the world. Today, [Please Pass the Bread](#) is saving the lives of thousands of children, through 56 outreaches in 8 countries.”

On the final day of his life David Wilkerson, who published a [daily devotional](#) that was e-mailed to hundreds of thousands of subscribers, wrote an encouraging word to “those going through the valley and shadow of death,” telling them: “Weeping will last through some dark, awful nights, and in that darkness you will soon hear the Father whisper, ‘I am with you.’ Beloved, God has never failed to act but in goodness and love. When all means fail — his love prevails. Hold fast to your faith. Stand fast in his Word. There is no other hope in this world.”



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