

THE LEGACY EDITION

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Passing the Baton

01
Tim Dilena

All relay races are won and lost at the baton pass. A runner runs his leg of the race with all his strength, but he is not successful unless he places the baton into the hands of the next runner for their segment of their race. One must let go, and one must grab on. It is when both hands are on the baton that the race is the most critical.

Because the church has longevity it must be a relay race. There must be runners, plural. And, because the race is not an individual event, there must be a baton to pass. No one can run alone far. I am reminded of the old Zimbabwean proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, run together." The church is about distance not speed.

Times Square Church started its race in 1987 and David Wilkerson ran the first leg of the race. The baton was successfully passed to Carter Conlon in 2001. And then in 2020, I became the third Senior Pastor of Times Square Church.

Based on the race and the runners, the batons may get heavier and heavier as is in my case. What Times Square Church stands for and the pastors that preceded me have a great legacy. Times Square Church has always been a lighthouse to the nations. David Wilkerson and Carter Conlon have been watchmen for their generation. That is why the baton is heavy. These men are part of a grandstand of spiritual giants.

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The Church is about distance, not speed.
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The writer of Hebrews tells us about a race that is in front of us and a large cloud of witnesses cheering us on.

Hebrews 12:1 (GNT)

“As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us.”

I firmly believe that the large cloud of witnesses that the writer speaks about comes from the preceding chapter. Hebrews 11 is many times referred to as the “Hall of Faith”. It takes us through the Old Testament giants and tells of their hurdles and also of their uncommon faith in God to overcome.

You read about giant bodies of water blocking God's people from their promise. You read about age restrictions that seem to make childbirth out of the question. But, faith in God opens up Red Seas and opens up wombs of 90-year-old women. And we are told over and over again that it is “by faith” that these things were even possible. Always keeping in mind, that faith is only as powerful as Who you put your faith in.

“Your words have kept men on their feet.”

PASSING THE BATON

TIM DILENA

Biblical faith always depends upon its object. You can have little faith in thick ice and still survive; you can have great faith in thin ice and drown; it's the object that is the issue. The Bible never says believe only, but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It never says "Have faith" but "have faith in God." (Mark 11:22).

Hebrews 12:1 tells us how to run that successful race. We first remember who ran before us and honor their sacrifice. I am part of the Times Square Church race because of two men. George Adams said: "There is no such thing as a self-made man. We are made up of thousands of others. Everyone who has ever done a kind deed for us or spoken one word of encouragement to us has entered into the makeup of our character as well as our successes." My life has been greatly influenced by David Wilkerson and Carter Conlon and their investment in me personally.

To run a successful race, there must be a constant assessment of all things that would impede our running. This is so important and so neglected. I believe every time we are given a chance to run a different segment of a race, we must examine ourselves like David's prayer in Psalm 139.

Psalms 139:23–24 (NLT)

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

24 Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Carter Conlon has passed another baton to me. The Times Square Church newsletter. I recognize its weight. For many decades it has been an anticipated source of comfort and encouragement for people all over the world. The inspirational writings of David Wilkerson and Carter Conlon have kept many a Christian in their race. It is said of Job that "your words have kept men on their feet" (Job 4:4). That is a great description of the Times Square Church newsletter.

I pray that in the years to come, I may follow in these men's footsteps by doing the same. And in the years to come, may I learn to pass the baton when my leg of the race is done. Finally, may I finish well and be counted with these two great men to be part of the cloud of witnesses.

Interview with Nicky Cruz 02

How has the legacy of Times Square Church affected you personally?

I've known Dave [Wilkerson] all my life. We started Teen Challenge together. After 6 months, we experienced so quickly the strong anointing of God, and Teen Challenge was a Holy Ghost hospital. I thought David Wilkerson would stay there forever, but he was never tied down to anything but the direction of the Holy Spirit. He called one time that he felt a huge burden to go back to NYC and felt strongly the need in times square—sodom and gommorah.

In the heart of corruption, he wanted to build up Times Square Church. People thought he was nuts but It takes craziness to do crazy things. He felt the same burden as the first time he came and reached me. And for 30 years I have known it and spoke so many times at the pulpit.

What do you hope your lasting legacy will be?

The greatest miracle that happened was my born again experience with Jesus Christ and the calling for me to be in the ministry. I have

already spoken to 52 million but I have no idea how many came to Christ, only the Holy Ghost knows. There are four ways that I believe I could have left a legacy. The souls that have responded to altar calls over these past 60 plus years, the pastors who we have met and ministered to who went on to plant and pastor churches, the thousands who have been encouraged to personally evangelize in their communities and the seventeen books I have authored to glorify the work of Christ in my life.

How do you envision the future of Nicky Cruz Ministries and the other organizations that you have founded?

I learned a lesson from Dave: though we built so many centers that became very strong, not to be tied down to things like that. You have to be careful about priority in life. Jesus Christ is first priority and then family and then ministry. Until I die, I am an evangelist. I love people, and I give my life for them. I still have my family, friends, children, and grandchildren. My ministry is going to go until Jesus Christ says it's time for me to take a break.

Your life has already affected numerous individuals. Is there a particular individual whose story has deeply touched you?

There's so many but not too long ago I was in Minnesota, and I made an altar call. When I was done, my eyes went to a young man. He was a very strong, built guy with tattoos all over his face and was crying so hard. I called him to the stage and he cried and wet my shirt with his tears.

“ **I think that is going to be the next Nicky Cruz.** ”

He said, “Today I gave my heart to Jesus in front of you and I confess Him as my Lord and Saviour. I know this is dangerous, and I don't know if I'll live after this.” He was the war lord of a strong gang. He was totally broken. The following Sunday afternoon he was baptized. He came to see me last week in CA and he was so happy. I think that is going to be the next Nicky Cruz. This experience happened about a month ago. It reminded me of David Wilkerson and myself.



Summit's Legacy

03

A CONVERSATION WITH CARTER CONLON, GENERAL OVERSEER OF TSC AND TERESA CONLON, PRESIDENT OF SUMMIT

“ **It wasn't just about getting a diploma; it was about changing the world around you.** ”

What is the legacy of Summit? How did it all begin?

TC: Summit has a rich legacy founded in 1994 by David Wilkerson. From that time until today, our program has continued to evolve, officially becoming Summit International School of Ministry in 2012.

Dr. Conlon, how were you first introduced to Summit?

TC: In the mid 90's, I was invited to teach the book of Hebrews. I would drive from NJ to PA every week to teach. (As a fun sidenote, Pastor Tim Williams and Pastor William Carrol were in my class!) I found myself brimming with ideas and getting more and more

excited about the school. There is something about biblical teaching that really resonated with me.

What, if anything, did David Wilkerson share with you guys about his heart for the Bible school?

CC: Well, David Wilkerson was a man whose life and ministry had worldwide impact. He had learned from a young age that if you learn to pray and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, the miraculous can happen. That was the hallmark of his life and ministry. The purpose of the school was not just more education, as good as that is, it was to raise up a generation that could walk in cooperation with the Spirit of God. He was always a big picture person. It wasn't just about getting a diploma; it was about changing the world around you.

What are you most excited about in this next season at Summit?

TC: About a month ago the Lord gave me a scripture, Isaiah 8:18, “Behold I, and the children the Lord has given me, are for signs and

for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts..." (KJV). I really feel the Lord is going to show up for these incoming students and they are going to understand what this scripture means. The darker the times become, I believe He will show Himself strong on our behalf as the God of miracles. I'm excited, going forward, I really feel there is coming an outpouring of His power among young people; He will break through bondage, and we will see miracles in peoples' families. What distinguishes truth from words and theories? There is a promise that when God's words are spoken, they are miraculous.

What do you hope Summit's lasting legacy will be?

TC: In a word, transformation. That people who come to Summit will live transformed lives that will be lasting. That they would love God all the days of their lives, that they would be useable in His hands. My hope is that students don't just attend the school, but they would have a transformative experience with Christ that is lifelong.

CC: Pastor Tim Dilena has spoken several times now about believing God for an extensive worldwide coming to Christ in our time. I believe there is a generation of young people who will be world changers.

To read the full interview, visit summitpa.org

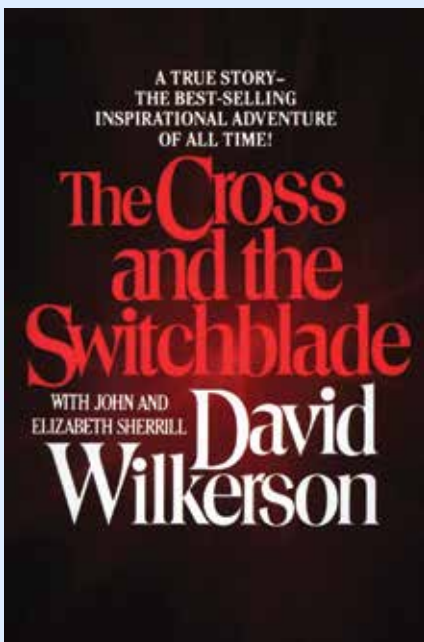


Book Review

04
Tim Dilena

The Cross and the Switchblade

By David Wilkerson



For a book to make the New York Times Best Seller list is a great honor but it is greater when a book goes beyond sales and reviews and changes lives.

A Christian classic, *The Cross and the Switchblade* recounts the daring faith of a Pennsylvania preacher, David Wilkerson, who is profoundly moved when he sees a LIFE magazine cover of seven teen gang members on trial in NYC for the brutal murder of a polio-stricken boy named Michael Farmer. He leaves rural Pennsylvania for the streets of NYC, when he feels he heard God say "Go to New York, and help those boys." He thought he was going for seven teenagers in 1958 when in fact, David was going to NYC for tens of thousands of teenagers for decades to come.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that changed lives trumps good reviews every time. 2 Corinthians 3:1-2 (TLB) "Are we beginning to be like those false teachers of yours who must tell you all about themselves and bring long letters of recommendation with them? I think you hardly need someone's letter to tell you about us, do you? And we don't need a

recommendation from you, either! The only letter I need is you yourselves! By looking at the good change in your hearts, everyone can see that we have done good work among you."

David Wilkerson taking that step of faith to come to NYC, would be the beginning of a Christian drug rehabilitation program that would go around the world, Teen Challenge. Teen Challenge would be established in 80 nations and help tens of thousands of young people over 50 years later. David Wilkerson coming to NYC would see the changed life of Nicky Cruz, the notorious warlord, who would preach around the world seeing millions come to faith.

The Cross and the Switchblade is timeless because lives are still being changed today. I am one of those lives. Times Square Church exists today because of this story. I believe every Christian needs to read The Cross and the Switchblade. You will be inspired to obey when God speaks. And you will be inspired to know that when you obey, it is always bigger than you can imagine.