

Committed - A Tribute to the Life and Love of Barbara Wilkins

I wanted to thank everybody for the love and support that you have shown the Wilkins family today. When we heard the sudden news of Mom's passing. My wife posted the news and a tribute to her mother online. The outpouring of love and support was incredible to see how the life and love of Mom impacted thousands of lives. If you had the privilege to come in contact with her It was almost impossible to not have tasted one of Barb's famous pies. In fact if I asked for a show of hands I bet most people here would say they enjoyed one at some time or another.

It's amazing when you realize in life what is REALLY important. Unfortunately sometimes it can be the loss of a dear loved on that puts that all into perspective. We all have goals we all have dreams and aspirations and things we want to do in life. With all of that we can lose sight of what is really important. So today we remember what is REALLY important and we can see those things in the life of Barbara.

If I can think of one word that sums up Mom's life it would be **committed**.

I want to go over these different aspects in the order that I believe Mom would want them to be and as we look at them we can find a challenge in each one of them for our lives today..

I. Committed to God - always wanted to be at church

She was actually a part of building this church. Physically. How many of us can say we actually were part of the building of the church from the ground up?

She raised all of her children in this church and even buried one of her children in this church. All the while she remained a faithful life long member.

Whenever the doors of this church were opened. She was here. She loved to come and visit with the people. She loved to see the smiling faces of children excited about learning about Jesus that

she could love and be a grandmother to. She loved to sing in the choir and to sing the old fashioned hymns. My wife Sarah mentioned that every Sunday night she would pick hymn number 13- "Great is their Faithfulness"

Even when they would take their yearly excursion to Florida she found a church that she could call home and worship Jesus and love other people.

I remember my first meeting with her at this church and how happy and bright she was and how she was so excited to have me over so I could have one of her famous pies.

What is the true test of our commitment or faith? It's really easy to be faithful when everything is going our way, isn't it? The true test is when things are NOT going our way. The true test is when things get difficult or uncomfortable.

When life got bumpy or rough she didn't quit. There were a lot of things in life that happened that could drive people away from God or make them angry or resentful. In mom's case it just

made her commitment that much stronger

She went through one of the most difficult things that anybody could- burying a child and yet she still remained committed.

This is a challenge to me and a challenge that I believe Mom would want all of us to live up to.

ALWAYS be committed to God.

Committed to Marriage - Beautiful example of a wife committed to her husband

Gary and Barbara Wilkins were married on November 3, 1962.

I can remember the story she would tell of how she met Gary at Immanuel Baptist church in Ipswich at a church Christmas Choir party set up by a mutual friend Jack Tibbits who was an intern at the church and Gordon seminary.

Jack noticed a beautiful young girl singing in the choir with a brilliant smile and thought she would be the perfect girl for Gary Wilkins.

I remember her saying how he showed up at her house In Ipswich and when he came to the front door he said “ Are you Barbara Weagle? And she said “Are you Gary Wilkins?” She also mentioned how all the family at the house were peeping their heads out of the window trying to get a look at Barbs handsome mystery suitor.

Gary talks about how he stole his first kiss when he went to get something out of the glove box of the car on the way to a church function and the rest was history.

I can even remember how Dad would talk about how after they got married and went on their honeymoon to Florida. He said one day she said she was going to the hairdresser and she came back with all of her hair cut off!

She has been married to her dedicated husband Gary for 55 years

They say that behind every good man is a great wife. If it had not been for the love and support

of Barb, Gary's Farm Stand would not be what it is today.

My father in law is one of the hardest working people I know. His farm stand is famous around here. I am sure if you are here you have had the privilege of tasting Gary's Own Corn.

I remember seeing when he would come home from work how she would take care of him. When he was away she longed for him to come back

The love and affection she had was evident and a challenge to me to be committed to my marriage

They would always sit together and she would always hold his hand.
They were sweet hearts

3 years ago when Gary was struggling with a brain injury she remained faithful by his side.

We have been going through TONS of pictures and cards and memories over this last week. If

you have been to the house you have seen how pictures and cards and just placed on any available wall or flat surface.

But we came across this card from Barb to Gary on their 49th wedding anniversary. I believe this sums up their marriage perfectly.

“I cannot tell you how much that I have loved you in the last 49 years. We have been through the death of our son through trials with our kids and never gave up on God. He has brought us together in sickness and health, till death do us part. God has been so good to us in the last 49 years. He really knew what He was doing. God doesn’t make any mistakes. His way is perfect we just have to trust Him. I will always love you (even though you make me mad sometimes) I wouldn’t want anyone else for my husband. Happy 49th Love and Kisses. Me.”

The challenge she gives us today is to **ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS** make the choice everyday to love and commit ourselves to our spouse (even if they make us mad sometimes)

Gary recently said, even though the last six months were difficult, if I had to I would do them all over again.

Committed to Family

Children – She loved with an unconditional love no matter what. No matter what choices or decisions were made by her children they always knew they had a place to come home to. She always made sure to say I love you even if it was just running down the street or going to the fields to pick corn.

Her children never had any doubt if they were welcome for ANY reason.

The house was always a revolving door. Kids coming in and out. Kids stopping in for dinner. Kids coming over for holidays or maybe just a place to stay for the evening.

She always made it a point to remember your birthday and to celebrate it. She loved to send cards, letters or even just little notes here and there.

Christmas was always a HUGE celebration and I remember the MOUNTAINS of presents between the children and all the grandchildren.

She supported her children and helped them start son Dale's "Dales Farmers Market", son Gary's "Riverdale Garden Center", Chuck's "Gary's Farm Stand Too" and Greg's "Greg's Farm-stand"

Grandchildren - nothing could make her happier. She was OK with me marrying her only daughter as long as we would give her some grandchildren.

Going through all the different pictures we are able to see practically all the grandkids grow up through the picture albums. This is what was truly important to her. This is her legacy.

The love and commitment she gave to her children was extended to her grandchildren unconditionally.

Reading through the comments on Facebook it

is evident how Nannie taught them how to love continually and unconditionally.

I had the privilege of my four kids being able to have her for a Nannie

Even if your kids were not an immediate family member they would become an immediate grandchild to Nannie.

Wife - continuous love and generosity that shines through her everyday .

The challenge Mom gives us here to remember what is truly important and that is family. We may have disagreements, differences of opinion or even fights from time to time.

Love the person for who they are not necessarily their thoughts or opinions.

I remember her saying the key to a successful marriage was to “Never go to bed angry” of course she was referring to the passage in Ephesians which states “Never let the sun go down upon your wrath”

She always made it a point to give you a hug and kiss and say “ I love you” before she left or before she went off to bed.

She was committed to her family.

Committed to Her Savior-

When she passed suddenly on Thursday night we have no doubt that she was immediately ushered into the arms of Jesus.

She was immediately taken to the place where they will be no more suffering and eternal happiness.

I am reminded of a song based on Revelation 21:4 by Jeremy Camp that states

“There will be a day, with no more tears, no more pain, and no more fears. There will be a day when the burdens of this place will be no more, we’ll see Jesus face to face.”

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that to be

“Absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

She had the hope of salvation

She loved the late Evangelist Billy Graham. He once made a comforting statement

“Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God.”

The hope of salvation is not something that we just hope for when we die. It is something that permeates our entire life. When we look at her life this could not be more true.

Her life would not be complete without giving you the truth and the opportunity to have the hope of salvation.

We just celebrated Easter. One of her most special holidays. It is because of Easter and the resurrection that we can have the hope that we

will one day see Jesus and all over loved ones who have gone to be with him.

It is a gift that is freely available to all. All we have to do is accept the gift. A gift is not truly accepted until the other person reaches out and accepts it.

I believe she would want us to celebrate the life that she had. We miss her terribly but she would want us to be reminded not to be sad for her. This poem by Bob Jones is a reminder of the hope that we have in Jesus.

*Turn from sorrow, stay thy weeping For the
dear one in God's keeping; At his feet thy
burden flinging till he come thy loved one
bringing. Love Divine thy refuge making, From
His mercy comfort taking, Wake thy soul to joy
and singing; Christ shall come thy loved one
bringing. Doff thy mourning, cease from
sighing, on the Word of God relying; See o'er
gloom the rainbow springing- Christ shall come
thy loved one bringing. Grief at parting, joy at
meeting; Silence now, then voice of greeting;
Shout of praise and rapture ringing, When he*

*comes they loved one bringing. God has given,
Go has taken, But His saints are not forsaken.
To this hope for comfort clinging- Christ shall
come their loved ones bringing.*

Because heaven has been made a sweeter place we don't have to be afraid when God calls us home. We know that Nannie and Dale will be waiting there for us.

I told my children that Nannie can now see us wherever we are and she can remember everything.

My son Ethan said to my wife" It's like Nannie went to Heaven and left all of her love for us here."

She is talking to Dale and telling him about all her grandchildren and she can remember everything.

Today is a day of sorrow as we miss her terribly but today is also a time of celebration as we remember the good times we had with her and the glorious hope of her Savior.

