

A Fallen Giant

Every enterprise and organization has its giants. Athletics have their giants, called All State, All Pro, Rookie of the Year, Most Valuable Player, etc. Military and other uniformed organizations have their giants, Officer of the Year, Purple Heart recipient, Navy Cross, etc. Enterprises have their giants I suppose, like Zuckerberg who is/was everybody's go-to guy because of Facebook, the Gates', etc. Politicians have their giants too, I guess, like the Kennedy's, the Bush's, etc. And even religious organizations have their giants as well, like the late Rev. Billy Graham, I don't know Judson, Billy Sunday, Peter, Paul, etc. You get the picture!

And every now and then you get to meet and be friends with real, living giants that nobody realizes are giants until they are gone. But once in a blue moon, a giant or two rises up in our midst and we recognize them for who they are, while they walk amongst us. Over my thirty-eight years of ministry, I have run into just a couple of these giants in the church. And no, they are rarely, if ever, the men whose names are always plastered on the Courier cover, the BP, or lead our various institution or conventions. The giants in the church I am talking about are pastors who have exceptional spiritual acumen and who are humble in their walk, exemplary in their deportment, sacrificial in their service, having integrity in their demeanor and faithfulness to their calling.

Two of the spiritual giants I have known over the years I have met while being the director of this association. One of those men was just laid to rest yesterday; he was Rev. Lloyd Wayne Wiggins, known to most of us as simply Wayne. He was a faithful servant of the Lord who was a loving husband and father and a friend to all who knew him.

I met Wayne when I came to this association, as he was serving as Interim Director of Missions for nearly two years as the Search Committee conducted their work and ultimately brought me here. From the get-go, Wayne became my friend and mentor. He was gentle and caring, wise and loving. Early on we found out we had some things in common, primarily we both enjoyed hunting.

One day not long after I began my duties here, Wayne called me up and asked if I had anywhere to hunt turkeys. Following a negative response, he offered to take me to some public game management land and show me his favorite spot. Now, if you know anything about hunters you know that 99.99999% of them never divulge their "favorite" spots, otherwise known as their "honey hole." But Wayne was willing to give his up and I was willing to oblige him that opportunity.

We met down on Bass Rd., between Greenwood and Abbeville, and began walking to his spot of choice. When all of a sudden, "WHAM", Wayne tripped over a root and hit the ground so hard I thought surely he had injured himself, after all, he was nearly 70 years old at that time. But immediately after his fall, he got up, brushed himself off and we marched on. All I could think was, "Now that is one tough old bird right there." After that, my respect and love for Wayne just grew and magnified itself with our every encounter. I grew to realize that

this was a spiritual giant walking amongst us. A Godly man, full of the Spirit of God, wise in his ways and gentle and loving in his conversation, and he stayed active at Abbeville First after he retired in 1998, serving in numerous positions in the ensuing years, as deacon, chairman of search committee, etc.

Well, on 17 March, Wayne suffered a terrible tragedy in his home. He fell down some stairs and hit his head, but this time this giant of a man, didn't get up. Airlifted to the hospital, he passed on to glory the following morning. Surprise and sadness loomed in churches around the association, when the news spread that this modern day spiritual giant of a man, would walk this earth no more, but was spending eternity with his Lord in Paradise. Wayne's loving wife, Joyce, a strong lady of grace in her own right, and his family, laid him to rest yesterday.

Now, three days earlier, while on the way home from Laurel Baptist where I was preaching, I received word from my daughter Emily, that it had been announced in church at Abbeville First that Wayne did not make it through the night. So I picked up my cell phone and called the other spiritual giant in our area, a friend of Wayne's, Rev. Reuel Westbrook. Reuel's wife Sylvia answered the phone and I shared the sad news. And yes, I consider Reuel a spiritual giant equal to Wayne.

Reuel pastored Callie Self Baptist Church for thirty years, faithfully serving there and in various capacities in the association, just like Wayne. Bro. Reuel has had more energy than anyone I know in ministry and has put that energy to good use. He has written more words, letters and post cards of encouragement than anyone I have ever known in my entire lifetime. Always befriending pastors, always quick to encourage, and always, just plain quick. Reuel is known for running into the office, having Sherrie copy something off for him that he is going to send out to pastors, and, lickety-split, gone in an instance.

The interesting thing about both of these spiritual giants is that they both continued to write or jot down sermon notes long after they were no longer physically able to preach. What's in the heart always comes out either in our words and/or our actions. And at heart, both of these men were pastors because they just couldn't put it down even when their bodies demanded such. Once called, preaching and pastoring became their lifetime passion.

One of the greatest privileges of life is to live among giants and know who they are and appreciate what they do and have done over their lifetime. Wayne and Reuel are giants among us....one already receiving his eternal reward and the other still continuously blessing all who know him. May we all have such a positive effect on people and the Kingdom as have these two men, as they lived out their calling in our midst. Thank God for spiritual giants like Wayne and Reuel, who challenge us all daily by setting an example of Godliness before us!

