

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

by Jeff Cuzzo

Graham Walton: Missionary to Skaters—England

So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

2 Chronicles 20:20

It was not an ordinary Sunday morning service at CC York, England. After tearful worship and an emotional message, Andrea Walton felt the Lord encouraging her to speak. This petite mother of two was drained, still in shock from her loss. Two nights earlier, God had taken home her 31-year-old husband and the father of their children. Skaters from the entire region crowded into the church. Her husband's special ministry had greatly impacted their lives.

Andrea challenged the whole congregation simply yet poignantly, "If you do not know Jesus this morning as your personal Lord and Savior, you need to!" Her message was especially focused on the youthful crowd of skaters. No one thought she would dare try to speak after enduring such a loss. She went on to explain that the greatest way to honor Graham was to take to heart the certainty he had about living in eternity with God—to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

"All you who loved Graham understood that his greatest wish for each of you was to give your life to Jesus," said Andrea. "Being born again in Christ means that we know, without a shadow of a doubt, that we will see Graham again and that he is in heaven right now." During the course of the morning, a skater got up and walked out—a youngster into whom Graham had poured much of his energy. A Bible college student was there to meet the young man in the hallway to

comfort him and help him comprehend what had happened and to assure him of the certainty of the Gospel.

Graham Walton enjoyed a unique calling. He was known as the Missionary to Skaters. Growing up in Bradford, England, he loved to skateboard but wasn't interested in spiritual matters. Later he became a partner in a skate shop. It wasn't until his mid-20s that he questioned his existence and became born again. Graham quickly developed a passion for God that far surpassed his zeal for skateboarding. Married at 26, Graham became involved with Calvary Chapel. He began to preach the Gospel throughout the skateboarding community. Many doors for ministry began to open, as Graham was the only person in the Calvary movement doing this kind of outreach throughout the UK. He worked full-time just so he could finance these outreach opportunities. As the result of his ministry, the Lord used Graham to impact many lives around the country. Graham had recently taken a step of faith and resigned from his secure job as an electrician to launch a skate clothing line called TEKOA that would have allowed Andrea and him to minister full-time.

When Graham spoke, he challenged his listeners, "If you were to die today, do you know where you would go? Life is so fragile, and we never know when our time might be up." He would encourage them, "Today is the day to be sure of your eternal destiny—salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone, and you need to receive His free gift offer of forgiveness for your sins, plain and simple." Graham didn't just preach to these kids—he lived it. Although many of these skaters would never step foot into a church, he brought Jesus to them. He was an example of Christ in word and deed.

Living a simple life, he exemplified for the skaters what it is to be a satisfied follower of Jesus Christ. One person recalled a time when Graham was walking through York's city center with one of these skaters. The



Graham Walton performs a skateboard trick before sharing the Gospel in Wales.



Graham tells Welsh skaters about Jesus Christ. The boys were deeply impacted by Graham's testimony.

young man had some badly worn skate shoes. Graham knew that this young man couldn't afford a new pair, so he brought him back to church and gave him a pair of his own.

Long-time friend Kenny Wood, a youth pastor at CC Costa Mesa, described "G" (as he was affectionately called) as "everyone's best friend. He loved a good curry, and he had a tremendous sense of humor." Kenny happened to be in England to attend his brother's wedding and was enjoying spending time with Graham. As they were having a laugh with friends at home, Graham grabbed his chest. Being a practical joker, everyone thought he was kidding. But very quickly everyone knew something was seriously wrong. Graham lost consciousness. The paramedics came to the house, but it was too late. Graham had already gone home to heaven. An autopsy revealed that he had died of a sudden cardiac arrest, yet there was nothing wrong with Graham's heart. As he had preached, it was simply his time to go home to be with the Lord.

On that Sunday morning at CC York, many came to grieve the loss of a dear friend. They heard the boldness of Andrea as she reiterated the same message her husband had spoken so often. The very one who had been encouraging them to be sure of their eternal life had gone into eternity. Many of those young men were deeply touched and made confessions of faith. Graham's desire was to witness the skate ministry grow into the full harvest desired by God.

The local newspaper article that reported the story of his death described Graham as a "worshiper" at Calvary Chapel. Now, he is worshiping before the throne of God—the place that he had always longed to be. ☺

Please pray for his wife Andrea and their two children: James, 8, and Maya, 4.

A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.

Psalms 68:5



A family photo—Andrea, Maya, Graham, and James.