

Gospel Gazette

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In Loving Memory of Our Beloved
Director of Development
Philip John Arena

March 29, 1956 – January 21, 2010



Philip with his family, his wife Gidget, Sons Joshua, Kacie, Daughters Sidney, and Laurel.

Our Beloved brother, friend and colleague, Philip Arena, went Home to be with the Lord on January 21, 2010. Philip J. Arena is survived by his loving wife and ministry partner Gidget, his sons Joshua and Kacie, his daughters Sidney and Laurel.

Death is swallowed up in Victory!

1 Corinthians 15:54b

This newsletter is in CELEBRATION of Philip Arena's life! Philip and his wife Gidget touched many lives in so many ways! Philip faithfully served as Director of Development and Ministry Spokesman here at the Salt Lake City Mission for the past eleven years. He was also the Assistant Director of the Mission and a Board of Trustee Member. He was blessed with two daughters Sidney and Laurel who were born while serving here in Utah.

We are reminded of the first time Phil and his family came to Salt Lake to meet with the staff of the Salt Lake City Mission. Many of the clients were drawn to them from the time they entered the building. Philip was still in prayer about making the decision to leave Michigan and move to Salt Lake. A decision that meant completely trusting that God would supply every need the Arena family had. As Phil and his wife Gidget, were ministering to some of the mission clients, Gidget leaned over and whispered in Phil's ear. "We know this is where the Lord wants us."

At the time, his two boys were still toddlers and Salt Lake City was a foreign place, with no family or friends to call on. It didn't appear, from a human perspective, that Salt Lake had much to offer this young family.

The Arena family did not come to Salt Lake in pursuit of riches, recognition or luxuries. Phil knew God had called him to minister to the down and out!

Philip, his wife Gidget and their two young boys, were called of the Lord to Salt Lake City after faithfully serving over 7 years on the Development Team in Grand Rapids, Michigan at Mel Trotter Ministries.

It was there at Mel Trotter Ministries where Philip met and married Gidget Hubbard his ministry partner and was blessed with his two sons. Philip had been selected as part of a team sent to Mel Trotter Ministries. He was sent to Mel Trotter from the Bowery Mission in New York City, New York. Where Philip served at the Bowery Mission for 4 years, and where the Lord touched him, revealed Himself and brought him into a personal relationship with Himself.

Philip, after finishing the program at the Bowery Mission, chose to continue into the Lord's ministry that had transformed his life. He attended Bible College while at the Bowery Mission and was hired on Staff as Chaplain and served faithfully at the Bowery Mission until he was called by the Lord to Mel Trotter Ministries.

Philip's Impact

Sometimes it's beyond conversation to put down in words the impact someone has on so many other's lives. Every so often, someone comes into your life that is so extraordinary, so genuine, that they change the way you look at life. Their optimism encourages everyone around them just by being in their presence. There are individuals who are so genuine and sincere that their integrity refreshes your soul. They seem to have a humble confidence that few people possess. Especially in a world that can be so superficial and shallow that it is difficult to trust anyone. We have been blessed to have known such a person who holds all of these qualities.

Phil is one of those men of God whose steadfastness was unmovable. In the Salt Lake City Mission's early years Phil helped set the standard for integrity, not only for the mission staff, the mentors, men on program, but also in the media, by showing the character of Jesus Christ. Phil always had time for anybody around him with any type of problem. The loving kindness for everybody was evident always whether it be an encouraging word to someone to keep on following Jesus and not give up and to be that living example of faith that rubbed off on countless people. From a crack addict to a Minister, Phil showed it is possible for everybody to put their faith in Jesus and have a changed life forever.

Only God knows how many people that He used Philip to encourage and help them find Jesus in their lives. In the everyday activities of the Mission, which can be hectic and fast paced, Phil in his quiet demeanor showed everyone to walk by faith and keep a calm spirit. Phil was a doer of the Word of God and not a bunch of empty talk.

Always the epitome of encouragement, Phil's spirit will always live on in the memory of everybody in the mission, people he touched every day, and especially his family who he adored greatly. Everyone who knew Phil can honestly say he enhanced their lives because of the Spirit of God in him. Phil will be missed greatly for his gentle personality, his humor, his music, and his capability of showing the love of Christ within himself.

We all know he's with Jesus now and we celebrate his walk with Christ. We are forever grateful to have had the privilege to know Philip and serve the Lord with him. He fought the good fight of faith even through a very intrusive battle with cancer where he never wavered. He ran the race to the finish line. All of us here at the mission honor Philip Arena for his gifts, talents and his faithful legacy which will live on forever.

Philip Arena's Testimony

Phil's life prior to mission work was one of addiction beginning in his early 20's. By the age of 24 he had opened 3 Pizzeria's earning ¼ million dollars a year for approximately 3 years, however the drug's had taken a toll on his life. He said, his life was good and he didn't see anything wrong with what he was doing until later on when he learned that "sin has its day in that we'll always have to pay... you don't realize what the ramifications of what you're doing along with the unrepentive actions - what it does to you; your mind, and your spirit mostly".

At one point he got his hands on a large sum of money and spent the majority of it on crack cocaine. Philip in turn purchased heroin to come down from the high. He said, "I thought I was having a heart attack", he ended up being dumped off in an alley to die. He remembered his mother saying he was going to end up in the gutter if he didn't change his ways, and, "there I was in the gutter." He said he was in utter darkness, not only spiritually but literally. He said, "I just want to die, I hate drugs, I hate this lifestyle, I want out."

Phil said, "this is what God was waiting for, for me to come to the end of myself".

That is when repentance comes in. Because you don't want to go back. He said in the middle of wanting to die, he decided he wanted to live and reached toward God. There were two cops and one saw his hand raised up. That is when he ended up at the Bowery Mission and that is when he recognized the will of God to serve in the mission field.

