

Paul L Walker, PhD
Biography

Dr. Paul L. Walker is widely recognized as one of the Church of God's most influential and transformational leaders and preachers of his era. Many revere him as a giant of the Christian faith, a bold and charismatic leader, and a man of great stature and gentle grace. His intense dedication to his calling, compassion for people, and commitment to excellence have set the bar and continue to raise it for pastoral leaders worldwide.

EARLY MINISTRY

Born in Minot, North Dakota, Paul Walker was called to pastoral ministry in 1950, while a young English major at Lee College. The son of Dr. Paul H. and Margaret Walker, he grew up in the home of prominent Church of God ministers. Education was always a priority, and his ministerial education included degrees from Lee College, Presbyterian College, Emory University, and Georgia State University, where he ultimately earned a PhD in Psychology.

In 1953, he married Carmelita Howell, the daughter of Church of God ministers Gus and Eva Howell. In 1955, Paul and Carmelita moved to California after he was appointed by the Church of God to serve as State Sunday School and Youth Director. In 1960, they accepted the pastorate of the Hemphill Avenue Church of God in Atlanta, GA. When the congregation outgrew the Hemphill location in 1967, the church relocated and was renamed Mount Paran Church of God.

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Perhaps Dr. Walker is best known for his nearly 40-year tenure as Senior Pastor of the Mount Paran Church of God in Atlanta. Under his leadership from 1960 to 1997, Mount Paran became one of the largest, most prominent, and most progressive congregations in the city, the nation, and the world. When the congregation outgrew the expanded Mount Paran Road campus, Dr. Walker pioneered one of the first multi-campus outreaches in Atlanta and within the Church of God denomination. Four additional Mount Paran campuses were planted throughout the Metro-Atlanta area. Widely known as "one church in five locations," the ministry reached thousands of congregants every Sunday morning.

As a pastor, Dr. Walker had a deep love for people that matched his passionate preaching. A natural orator and inspirational communicator, he was known for his smooth, expertly crafted, and heartfelt sermons. His messages were always

punctuated and climaxed with passionately quoted Scripture passages, building up to his resounding “Amen, Amen, and Amen!” He delivered his sermons without using notes at the pulpit. Many believed he had a photographic memory. However, those closest to him knew the time and effort he invested in preparation. More importantly, his sermons always ministered the hope and healing of Jesus Christ. His pulpit was not a place of performance; it was a place where God’s presence was experienced, and as a result, countless lives were changed.

DENOMINATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In 1996, Dr. Walker was elected General Overseer, the Church of God's highest leadership position. In a nontraditional move, his ministerial colleagues elevated him to the executive position directly from the pastorate. When his tenure as General Overseer ended in 2000, he continued to serve the denomination in several leadership roles, including Chancellor of Education, Assistant General Overseer, Secretary General, and Director of Local Church Development.

Dr. Walker served on several Church of God committees and boards throughout his ministry. He was among the more prolific members of the International Executive Council. First elected in 1978, he served on the church’s governing body for 20 years, including his tenure on the Executive Committee. He also served 10 years on the Lee College Board of Directors and, globally, on the Church Growth International Board of Trustees, preaching at conferences and churches around the world.

Throughout his lifetime, he received numerous honors, both within the Church of God and across the Evangelical spectrum, including education awards from his alma mater. He also authored eight books.

FAMILY

Despite the demands of ministry, family was the top priority. Paul and Carmelita were married and served together in ministry for 68 years. They had two sons. Paul Dana had just been hired by the psychology department at Lee College when he was tragically killed in an auto accident in 1982. His name graces the Walker Athletic Arena at Lee University.

Their second son, Mark, followed in his father’s footsteps as a 4th-generation minister and pastor. Dr. Mark Walker and his wife, Udella, served as Senior Pastor at Mount Paran North for 25 years. In 2017, they left the pastorate to pursue a calling to invest in the next generation of ministers at Lee University. Since coming

to Lee, he has served as Vice President for Ministerial Development and, in 2020, was appointed Lee University's 17th President, serving a four-year term. He currently serves as Professor of Pastoral Studies, mentoring and teaching ministerial students.

Paul and Carmelita were the grandparents of Mark and Udella's two children. Dr. Justin Walker is a 5th-generation minister and serves as Dean of the School of Theology and Ministry at Lee University. He and his wife, Amanda, have three children: Kennedy, Judah, and Micah Paul. Ashten Walker Dick is a first-grade teacher in Birmingham, Alabama. She and her husband, Caleb, have two children: Levi and Reagan.

Dr. Walker also has two younger twin brothers, Dean and Don Walker. Dean had a long, successful career with J.C. Pennys. Dr. Don Walker is a well-respected leader in the Church of God. He has served in ministry for over 60 years and has been highly influential in the denomination, primarily as a State Overseer. He also served on the Council of Eighteen and the World Missions Board.

Paul Walker went home to be with the Lord in February 2021. His wife, Carmelita, joined him seven months later. Their legacy lives on through their family and countless others profoundly impacted by their ministry. Dr. Walker's intense dedication to his ministerial calling, compassion for people, and zeal for God will continue to lead and influence others for generations, bearing witness to the greatness and goodness of God. In the infamous words of Dr. Walker, "Amen, Amen, and Amen!"