



Willie Lawrence Nelson Sr.

August 24, 1944 - June 28, 2024

To view the Service via Youtube use the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0Hdgy4F0m8>

To view the Service via Facebook use the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/ZandersFuneralLIVE/>

Willie Lawrence Nelson, Sr. was born August 24th, 1944 in Saint Francisville, Louisiana to Lawrence and Octavia Nelson. He was the oldest brother of Bradford and Arthur Nelson. At the tender age of five years old, young Willie went to a church altar call and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal savior.

A few years later, he contracted tuberculosis and was in a coma for an extended period of time. Willie wasn't expected to live but his Mother, Octavia, was determined and she and Willie's Aunt Bessie went on a fast and prayed that he would live and he soon recovered and was able to walk again.

Willie later attended Capitol Senior High School and thereafter joined the U.S. Navy. After discharge, he attended auto mechanic school and became a Mechanical Instructor at St. Martinville Technical School. Willie was a cool-clean Cadillac-driving ladies man. He loved racing, the thrill of speed, and later rebuilt a "Henry J" race car.

Willie was wild and wreck-less, the talk of the town and a classic rebel. Willie rode motorcycles, partied, drank excessively and even smoked marijuana.

Soon after, Willie met the love of his life who he proudly stated was the prettiest woman in all of St. Martinville, Louisiana: Miss Theresa Marie Robertson. They dated and later married on Thanksgiving Day, November 22nd, 1973.

Although both Willie and Theresa were raised in church as Methodists and Catholics, they received supernatural deliverance prayer from Zena Robertson, wife of Roland Robertson-Theresa's brother, who was the only person that they had ever heard pray in tongues. She prayed for their salvation and for their marriage to stay together. Willie said that during this prayer, he saw his whole life flash before his eyes and he heard the Lord say to him clearly that, "This is your last chance." Shortly after that word from the Lord and the deliverance prayer, Willie said that he was completely set free from all drug and alcohol addictions. He then answered the call to ministry. He began street ministry and had a megaphone that he used in order to be like John the Baptist, a voice crying out in the wilderness.

'An avid lover of music, Willie sang, played piano, organ, accordion, and guitar. His love for music and worship soon led to his appointment as the Worship Leader of the Christian Teaching Center Church in Lafayette, Louisiana under the leadership of Pastor Elbert Willis. Elbert Willis greatly influenced and inspired Willie's faith in the supernatural power of God through healing. It was through this very faith that he followed his lead with home births and relying on faith in God's word and not medicine alone. Because of this great faith, Willie delivered all three of his daughters (Sarah Joy, Martha Joy and Naomi Joy) naturally in their home without the care of any medicine or midwives. These miracle births were a signature to both his and Theresa's

total abandonment to follow God's leading wholeheartedly.

After successfully completing his ministry study under the leadership of Reverend Elbert Willis at The Christian Bible College of Lafayette, Louisiana from January 1982-March 13th, 1987, Willie received his Certificate of Ordination on May 17th, 1985.

Inspired by national evangelists such as Reverend A.A. Allen and R.W. Schambach, Willie fasted and prayed for God to give him a tent and was soon blessed with a \$7,000 400 foot tent where he began ministering both worship music and the gospel to all in attendance to his tent revivals in addition to the Sunday morning services at the Christian Teaching Center.

Willie encouraged all of his children (Ricky, Sarah, Martha, Naomi, and Willie Jr.) to sing on stage and participate in ministry as this was his heart's desire to see all of his children living a life in service to God. His faithfulness to ministry didn't go without reward. Willie had an opportunity to play for Evangelist R.W. Schambach as well as T.L. Osborne. These were cherished experiences for him that highlighted his ministry career.

After a few years of leading worship at the Christian Teaching Center and many nights of tent revivals, Willie heard the Lord say to him to move his family to Orlando, Florida. He had heard of Benny Hinn and moved his family to this new city. Willie and Theresa joined the ministry, started serving and soon after had a wedding ceremony on the church grounds for their oldest son, Travis Robertson.

Willie was a man of many trades and worked as a skilled mechanic, carpenter, painter, musician and singer. He was a certified Mears Transportation driver, owned his own lawn business, painting business, and tried to use his talents

to bring glory to GOD. He wore a hat that read “Jesus is my Boss!” and he was proud to share his faith. Willie was a no-nonsense, tell-it-like it is, straight shooter (and he loved his guns!). He would make you laugh without trying and listen and talk with you for hours.

Willie loved his children and family and he especially loved to pray for people and to lead them into salvation. After a few years of evangelical tent ministry in Orlando, FL, Willie transitioned to ministry in his home with his family and thereafter retired from evangelical work.

Willie loved a good meal and it had to be “seasoned” really good! He enjoyed fishing, boating, shopping at Goodwill, Walmart and pawnshops. He owned boats, trailers, rv's and a bus in his lifetime. He enjoyed tinkering with the engines and fixing everything when it was broken. He loved his pet fish and his pet dogs. He enjoyed wearing gold jewelry, big gold rings, and had a keen sense of style.

Although retired from ministry, Willie tried to be a continual source of encouragement, prayer and support to anyone in need. During his final years, Willie believed in God for healing and his last wish was to set up a tent on the Central Florida Fairgrounds and minister to the lost. He wanted to save more souls for the Kingdom of God and continue to live out his dream and favorite scripture: Matthew 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Willie always said, whatever you do, “Give God all the Glory. He don't share his glory with nobody!” He also strongly admonished others, “Be quick to repent.” If you called on Willie for help he would respond loud and firmly, “What you want?” but compassion would soon overtake him and he would try

to be of some help to everyone except doctors, nurses, and the police, all of which he was very suspicious of. Willie came into this world with style, lived loudly and left out with a thunderous bang. We believe that heaven is rejoicing to have one of their toughest soldiers come home.

Willie Lawrence Nelson, Sr. is preceded in death by: his father, Lawrence Nelson; mother, Octavia Nelson; aunt, Beatrice Anderson; uncle, Willard, Sr.; first cousins, Willard, Jr., Emmett, and Herbert Anderson, Sr.; brother, Bradford Nelson and youngest brother, Arthur Nelson; sister, Muriel Nelson; and grandson, Sherman Matthews.

Willie is survived by:

Children: his son, Travis Robertson, Leatrice Matthews, Ricky Nelson, daughter-in-law, Tammi Nelson, son-in-law, Bernard Brown, daughters, Sarah Joy Brown, Dr. Martha Joy Hightower, son-in-law, Richard Hightower, daughter, Naomi Joy Nelson, and his youngest son, Willie Lawrence Nelson, Jr.; Grandchildren: Dominic Matthews, Monterrio Matthews, Destiny Matthews, Lyndsey Miller, Lauryn Ross, Lyla Nelson, Lexis Robertson, Travis Robertson, Jr., Devin Neil, Faith Nelson, Grace Nelson, Joshua Peterson, Cailyn Anderson, Elijah Nelson, Jayda Peterson, Jeremiah Peterson, Jasmine Brown, Bernard Brown, Jr., and Roman Hightower;

Great-Grandchildren: A'jaiden Matthews, Skyler Matthews, Axavier Matthews, Leilani Robertson, and Adeline Nelson.

Sister: Muriel Nelson

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL 13. 2:30 PM (ET)

Zanders Memorial Chapel
232 W. Michael Gladden Blvd.
Apopka, FL 32703
(407) 886-3388