

Honoring Our Brother Tunch Ilkin

This past week has been a hard one for many of us mourning the death of our brother Tunch. In fact it seems like the whole of Pittsburgh is mourning his loss. In many ways he was the face of the city as a legendary Steeler, broadcaster, family man and humanitarian. Like many who knew him I have been sharing a few thoughts about Tunch's life and friendship to connect with those who knew him and loved him. This of course is an impossible task because he meant so many things to so many people.

Tunch got his homecoming call from our Lord Jesus in the early morning hours Saturday 9/4 surrounded by his family and a few loved ones. He died of complications related to his battle with ALS. How our brother died was not the notable thing but rather the amazing life he lived— walking each day with his Lord Jesus. In the early chapters of Genesis in the dark days after the fall of Adam there was a man named Enoch in the Bible. It is recorded that

“Enoch walked with God, and he was not found for God took him.”

GENESIS 5:24

Tunch loved that amazing thought of a man of God who was so filled with love and worship for God, taken up escaping death. The example of Enoch physically walking and praying with God everyday captured his heart. So Tunch lived that literally; walking, praying and loving people...then God took him!

He was a friend of Jesus (John 15:5) who invited everyone into that friendship; repairmen, firefighters, teachers, youth coaches, policemen, athletes, business people, homeless people, NFL owners, NFL coaches, and those struggling with addiction. He had a special love for the broken hearted, the least, and the lost. Tunch made friends with everyone and pointed everyone in those friendships to Jesus. Tunch was one of our Lord's faithful servants and he was precious to Him.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants.”

PSALM 116:15 NIV

As a brother in Christ to so many of us and a friend of Jesus, our lives have been profoundly impacted for eternity by his godly life example including his disciple making commitment.

Tunch's life has been poured out, he held nothing back; he has fought the good fight; he has finished the race that the Lord marked out for him. He kept the faith. He has now received the crown of righteousness that awaited him. “Follow hard after Christ” he would often challenge us.



Thank you Tunch for showing us the way. He finished strong as a husband, father, grandfather, disciple maker and friend of Jesus. He squeezed every drop from life for Christ's glory and his mission. I am a better husband, father, grandfather, friend and son of God because of his friendship. He will be greatly missed by all. I can hear his voice in the Apostle Paul's words and it makes me pumped up by our brother's finish.

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8

If Tunch's life of service to others has inspired you to be a volunteer or to make a donation here are two of his favorite charities.

Light of Life Ministries at:
lightoflife.org

Adventures in Training
with a Purpose (ATP) at:
adventurestraining.org

Jon Kolb's Tribute to Tunch

Yesterday I was looking again at some of the recent pictures of Tunch and his band of brothers doing a prayer walk. Karen, Tunch's wife also shared of his love for the walks that they would take together. In Leo's tribute he talked about how Tunch was like Enoch, walking with God day by day. However, something began to stand out to me as I looked at all the pictures. It was Tunch's face. In every picture his face is set, his chin is prominent as if he were pulling on a tackle trap or working his famous “Tunch Punch” to protect his quarterback. To be effective on a tackle trap, your face has to be set on your target, the opponents hip, nothing else!

Luke 9:54 tells us that Tunch's life coach and God, Jesus, “resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem.” This was to finish his purpose of dying on the cross for our sins and conquering death in his resurrection. In Isaiah 50:7, the prophet states that he has “set his face like a flint.” Tunch has left the training manual, the playbook, for us to follow. Let us set our face toward Jesus, not looking to the left or to the right, keeping our eyes on the prize, and run the race set before us, finishing the course; until we hear Jesus words as he has ***“Well done my good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master.”***

Please continue to pray for Tunch's family: his wife Karen, Mother Ayten, his children Tanner, Natalie, Clay, and their children! They were Tunch's crown! Proverbs 17:6

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Locking Arms Men:

**BUILDING AUTHENTIC MEN WHO LOVE GOD,
LOVE ONE ANOTHER,
AND LOVE THEIR NEIGHBOR.**