

# THE SIX WORDS

*After teaching teenagers about God for nearly four decades, Ken Wilson's final lesson was a labor of love that proved to his daughter that God knows what He's doing.*

by Kelley Lorencin

**I**n April, I sat at my father's side and watched him take his last breath.

Eighteen months earlier, he had been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as ALS or Lou Gherig's disease. Several weeks after his diagnosis, I was sitting on my parents' kitchen counter one afternoon watching him make a sandwich. As I watched him spreading the mustard on his bread, it occurred to me that it might not be very long before he could no longer hold a knife...or stand in the kitchen...or eat a sandwich.

"Dad, are you scared?" I blurted out. Almost as soon as the words were out, I wished I could take them back. "That was a dumb question!" I thought, silently chastising myself. But without missing a beat, he looked up at me with confident determination and spoke six words that changed my life:

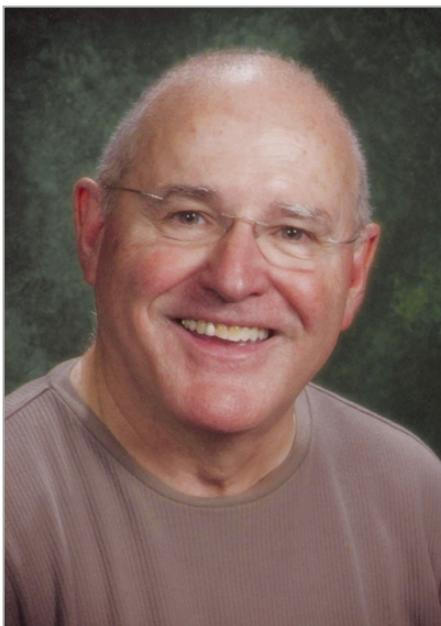
"Kelley, God knows what He's doing."

I have no idea what I said after that. My memory of that afternoon in the kitchen ends with his words. I'm not even sure I completely understood what he was saying that day, but the following twelve months brought the message home to me.

After his diagnosis in the fall of 2007, we urged my father to retire from teaching immediately. We knew it was likely that he would lose a great deal of his mobility within six months. And who, upon receiving a fatal diagnosis, wouldn't want to take their remaining time to relax and enjoy life? But he was adamant. He only wanted to finish what he knew then would be his final year of teaching.

Teaching had always been my father's passion. As a high school boy, he had planned a career in engineering. But then, in his senior year, he felt a strong call to become a high school Bible teacher. So, in the fall of 1961, he arrived at Andrews University to get a teaching degree.

Over the course of his nine years at Andrews University, he earned three degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in religion, a Master of Divinity, and a Master of New Testament studies. In those years, he developed a deep love for God and a deep love for studying Scripture which, added to his gift of teaching, became the foundation of his 37-year career. In the classroom and in the



Ken Wilson

living room (with his home Bible study group), he spent the rest of his life teaching about God.

Thirty years after my father graduated from Andrews, I also became an Andrews alum. In 2000, I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English. I immediately left for a two-year missionary internship position with Adventist World Radio in England. During those two years, I committed myself to being a missionary and told God that I was willing to go anywhere in the world He chose. I was shocked and quite upset, then, when He led me back to Battle Creek (my hometown) in the fall of 2002.

I didn't understand why God brought me back to Michigan until five years later, as I began to help my mother care for my father. Through a two-year series of events, God had weaned me away from full-time employment, and in early 2008, I found myself in a part-time job with the most flexible schedule known to mankind.

So, I was in a perfect position to help my father finish his last year of teaching; as his motor skills decreased, the time we spent together greatly increased. I picked him up from school every day. Together, we ate lunch at home. (Often, I fed him so he could conserve energy.) Then, we spent the rest of the afternoon grading papers.

During the last part of the school year, as we were cleaning up his classroom (37 years of Bible notes!), I said, "Dad, you ought to write a book about God." After all, he had lived and breathed God for nearly four decades. My father shook his head and laughed. Teaching was his thing, not writing.

But somehow, the idea took root. And when a reporter from the local newspaper interviewed him at graduation that year, he said he was going to write a book about God with his daughter. That article was reprinted in the *Lake Union Herald*...and then people started asking about "the book."

A few weeks later, while we were home together one afternoon, he told me to get a piece of paper and a pencil. I did, and to my astonishment, he dictated a book outline to me right then and there. After he was done, I asked him when he wanted to get started on the details. He shrugged and smiled.

Not long after, he was rushed to the hospital with a raging MRSA infection. We thought he might not recover. Looking back

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on it now, I believe Satan tried to kill my father with the MRSA before he could write his book. I believe that because, after he did recover from the infection, he “lost his tongue” almost overnight. Suddenly, he was not able to swallow, and he was barely able to talk.

Still, in that condition, he somehow began to dictate notes for the book. He had planned that each chapter of his book would highlight a different characteristic of God. So, each day, he would meditate for a period of time on one of the themes. When he was ready, he would simply say, “Okay, I’m ready.” And then he would dictate all the material (Scripture, cross-references, Ellen White quotations) for the chapter right out of his head—from memory! It was an arduous process, as his speech was extremely slurred and very hard to understand. But eventually,

he produced a thick stack of notes for his book.

Last fall, I took his notes and began writing. It was as if we were sewing a dress together. He gave me the fabric, and I stitched it up. When I was finished with a chapter, we placed it on his special reading stand (since he could no longer use his hands), and he would read it, grinning. Then, we worked together on revisions. Sometimes his speech was so slurred that we would have to go through the alphabet, spelling one letter at a time to understand what he was trying to say, or he would use his special, laser-driven computer to type words. And little by little, he wrote his book. Those were some of the best weeks of my life.

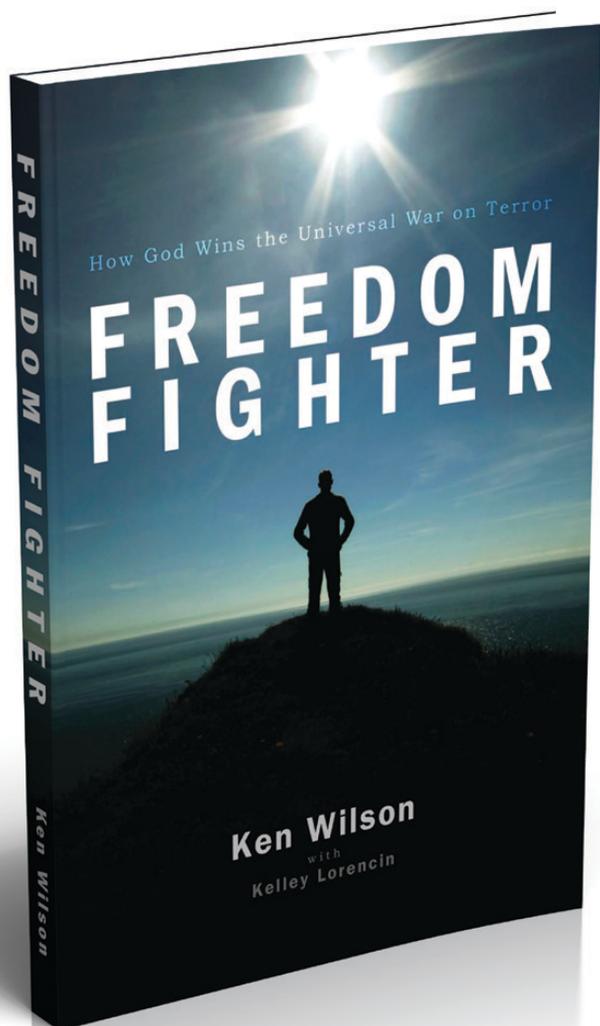
*Freedom Fighter: How God Wins the Universal War on Terror* was my father’s parting gift—a final tribute to his best Friend, the God he loved and served all his life. The experience of writing this book with him proved to me that what he had said about God in the kitchen that day was absolutely true.

God knew what He was doing when He gave my father the gift of teaching. God knew what He was doing when He gave me the gift of writing. And God knew what He was doing when He brought reluctant me back to Battle Creek. And in so doing, He turned what could have been one of life’s most devastating and discouraging circumstances into one of the most beautiful and inspiring experiences of my life.

My father died the day *Freedom Fighter* went to the publisher. I miss him so dearly, as he is one of the greatest men I’ve ever known. But since he’s been gone, whenever I am tempted to feel angry or sad, I hear him once again saying so clearly to me, “Kelley, God knows what He’s doing.” And I know he’s right.



Kelley (Wilson) Lorencin



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