The news of his death traveled swiftly, and just as swiftly came the outpouring of public praise and statements of grief from so many of those who knew him. "Ed Prince was a gifted and developed individual who never took his eyes off the good of honoring Jesus Christ in his life," said his pastor, the Rev. R.O. Broekhuizen, "His epitaph could well read, 'Here was a Christian man.'"

He was a man of genuine integrity, with so many extraordinary talents. His keen mind enabled him to see things as they were and to visualize them as they could be. Ed demonstrated a passion for excellence both in his personal life and through his business, but everything he did was driven by his deep desire to see God's greater purpose accomplished in the world.

To share something about the achievements of Ed Prince is to share something about the mission of the Family Research Council. It is also to share something about the vision for this nation that FRC holds, a vision that detractors see as being narrow or wildly impractical, but that Ed saw as essential. Ed wanted others to have what he had, a wonderful family life, a marriage to his life partner, Elsa, of over 40 years, happily married children, a growing brood of grandchildren, success in business, and a philanthropic spirit that supported the work of charitable organizations. It isn't just the what that Ed epitomized, it is the how and, above all, the why. Ed Prince was not an empire builder. He was a Kingdom builder. For him, personal success took a backseat to spreading the Gospel and fighting for the moral restoration of our society.

In 1965, he left a secure job as chief engineer at a successful business in the Midwest to found his own company. Like most entrepreneurs, he took on incredible risk. For nearly a decade he labored 16 to 18 hours a day trying to make his company prosper, with limited success. That pace took its toll, and in the early 1970s he suffered a serious heart attack. It was then, while he lay in a hospital bed reflecting on what all his labor had won for him, that he committed himself anew to his faith in Jesus Christ. Ed turned his future and the future of his business over to God. From that point forward, the Prince Corporation was blessed with unprecedented growth and financial success. Twenty years later, at the time of Ed's death, his companies serve nearly every major automaker and employ some 4,500 workers.

This was a boom built on Biblical principles. Under Ed's guidance, the Prince Corporation wrote the book on corporate teamwork and production efficiency. Prince Corporation facilities have never operated on Sundays and company salesmen on the road have been brought home at night, at company expense, to be with their families. The heart of the corporate complex in Holland, Michigan, is the Prince People Center, a beautiful health and fitness facility where Prince employees can focus on their personal well-being.

The Prince Corporation quickly became Holland's largest employer, but the cup of its prosperity constantly overflowed, through Ed and Elsa's generosity, to the wider community. They provided generous support to hundreds of charitable organizations and to a host of community projects. Concerned about the deterioration that was plaguing downtown Holland, Ed and Elsa helped fund a redevelopment plan that put dozens of new businesses on their feet and restored the aging city center. Ed's way was not to dictate outcomes, but to "come alongside" people, enabling them to meet their immediate needs while helping them to find longterm solutions to their problems. His philosophy was, "You give a man a fish, he eats for today. You teach him how to fish, he eats for a lifetime!"

Ed's vision for his family, his companies and the community at large was fueled by the light of his personal faith in God. So, too, was his vision for the families of our nation. That same vision inspired his commitment to the work of Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council and so many others. Alarmed by America's flight from the values of hearth and home, and its growing disregard for the sanctity of human life, Ed committed himself to "preserve justice, and do righteousness" (Isaiah 56:1). With his can-do attitude and his characteristic humility, he waded into national affairs. I cannot adequately describe here how much I have depended on his wisdom and counsel over the years.

Ed was no sunshine soldier or summer patriot. Like me, he was elated at the successes FRC has often enjoyed, and the incredible growth we have experienced in recent years. But Ed was at his best and was most valuable to FRC during the dark and difficult times -- during the confirmation battle over Clarence Thomas, following the bitter disappointment of the Supreme Court's unexpected pro-abortion ruling in Planned Parenthood v. Casey, through the anti-family shift in the Congress in 1992, and in recent months with the wave of efforts by some to redefine the traditional family and undermine marriage.

I owe Ed and his family so much for the wisdom, encouragement and support they have provided to me personally and to the Family Research Council. Ed's business acumen, judgment of character, and personal generosity has helped FRC accomplish so much, including the establishment of the FRC Service Center in Holland, Michigan. Today that office handles tens of thousands of requests for FRC publications and resource materials, by drawing on an incredible pool of talented and Christ-centered men and women -- the kind of people that bound Ed Prince so closely to his place of birth.

Let me close this tribute to Ed by quoting a Prince employee who had not yet had the opportunity to meet him. On the day after his death, The Holland Sentinel quoted a young female engineer at the Prince Corporation, who said, "You felt in a way like you were part of his family. When I heard he died, I cried, and I didn't even know him. I felt like I knew him though." I believe her words capture the feeling of so many people whose lives were touched by Ed Prince. Even though they never had the opportunity to meet him, they felt they knew him well.

Erik Prince, Ed and Elsa's only son, and one of FRC's first college interns, certainly did know him well. He and his wife, Joan, have a new baby, Sophia. Erik last saw his father at Sophia's baptism. "He loved her," Erik said. "My biggest regret is that my kids will never get to know him as I have. I wanted them to be able to talk to him, to learn from him." The cycle of life continues. A few days after Ed's passing, another grandchild, Anna Emilie, was born to Ed and Elsa's daughter Emilie and her husband Craig.

For little Sophia and Anna, and for their cousins and for the entire Prince family, I pledge to be one who will remember Ed and joyfully share memories of this great Christian man. I hope, too, that each of us can learn valuable lessons from his example.

Anytime I talked with Ed I learned from him. My regret for the FRC board of directors and for the FRC staff, is that we will not have that opportunity again. Even so, we can and will have the opportunity to imitate Ed's example, and to exhibit the harvest of the Holy Spirit that was his. May we all strive to reflect love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control.