

BEYOND SUCCESS

One Athlete's Outstanding Pursuit
of Goals, God, and Glory

International
Soccer Star and
Two-Time World
Cup Midfielder
for Brazil

Paulo
Silas
Pereira



BEYOND SUCCESS

Paulo Silas Pereira



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Beyond Success

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*To God, who has given me the strength, health, and courage
to face all the challenges I've encountered throughout my life.*



*To my wife, Eliane, who has cared for me these
more than 40 years and raised our three children
with commitment, sacrifice, and a lot of love.*



*To Nathan, Carole, and Caleb, our beloved children,
and a source of so much joy in our lives.*

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TIMELINE OF MAJOR LIFE EVENTS FOR PAULO SILAS

1965

- Silas is born on August 27

1970

- Silas's family moves into the Vila Teixeira house
- Eli Carlos starts his professional soccer career

1971

- Silas's mother, *dona* Geny, dies

1973

- Silas becomes a Christian and is baptized

1975

- Silas starts working to help support his family

1982

- Silas starts his youth career at São Paulo FC

1984

- Silas plays his first soccer game as a professional athlete
- Silas joins the group Athletes for Christ

1985

- Silas plays in the FIFA U-20 World Cup
- Silas's father, *seu* Alberto, dies

- Silas meets Eliane
- Silas signs his first professional contract with São Paulo FC

1986

- Silas plays for Brazil at the FIFA World Cup in Mexico

1987

- In February, Silas and Eliane get engaged
- In September, Silas and Eliane get married

1988

- Silas begins his professional international career at Sporting Clube de Portugal in Lisbon; he and Eliane move overseas

1990

- Silas wears the number 10 jersey for Brazil at the FIFA World Cup in Italy
- Silas's son Nathan is born

1992

- Silas plays for UC Sampdoria in Italy
- Silas and his family return to Brazil, where he plays for São Paulo FC again

1993

- Silas's daughter Carole is born

1994

- In April, Silas plays his first game for San Lorenzo de Almagro, in Buenos Aires, Argentina
- In July, Silas scores the most beautiful goal of his career

1997

- Silas's son Caleb is born
- Silas plays his last game for San Lorenzo
- He and his family return once again to Brazil, where Silas returns to São Paulo FC

1998

- Silas and his family move to Japan, where he plays for Kyoto Purple Sanga (now Kyoto Sanga FC)

2000

- Silas and his family return to Brazil

2003

- Silas plays his last game as a professional soccer player

2005

- Silas and partners open Silas Soccer Center

2006

- Silas begins his coaching career as an assistant coach to Zetti

2007

- Zetti leaves Fortaleza FC, and Silas transitions into the role of head coach for the North Brazilian team

2011

- Silas and his family move to Qatar, where Silas coaches for the teams Al-Arabi SC and Al-Gharafa SC

**2012**

- With Silas as their coach, Al-Gharafa wins the Emir of Qatar Cup

2019

- Silas starts his new role as a sportscaster at ESPN Brazil, where he continues to work today

2020

- Eli Carlos returns to the Lord

2024

- *Além Do Sucesso*, Silas's memoir, is published in Brazil

2026

- *Beyond Success*, the English translation of Silas's memoir, is published in the United States

PERSEVERANCE OF A DREAM



When I was a boy, I dreamed of becoming a professional soccer player. It was my dearest wish. I wanted nothing more than to follow in my brother Eli Carlos's footsteps. I longed to play in huge stadiums packed with cheering fans, to feel the adrenaline rush of stepping onto the field as a starting player, to put on the prestigious number 10 jersey reserved for the star midfielder, and to be referred to as "the best" in news headlines. Of course, I wasn't the only child in Brazil who dreamed this dream. Back then, millions of other Brazilian children also wanted to become professional soccer players—a dream that carries on in today's youth. Even as a starry-eyed young dreamer, I knew the odds of becoming a famous player were so small, they were practically nonexistent.

If you know me, though, you already know what became of my dream. I made it. I was an excellent soccer player, recognized in Brazil and abroad. I played alongside true legends of the sport and travelled the world over because of my involvement in the game. Watching

from a distance, my path to fame and fortune may have seemed easy, but nothing could be further from the truth. Behind my success there were hard, sweaty days filled with exhaustion, sadness, and loneliness. But through it all, I experienced the Lord's grace, supporting me amid the uncertainties and anxieties that are often part of the life of an athlete.

I'm known among my friends as a good storyteller. Let's step back in time together, and I will tell you how a skinny, sickly, humble boy like me was able to achieve the life he always dreamed of. My hope is that sharing my story will encourage those who feel lost, discouraged, or unable to make their own dreams come true. Your aspirations today are likely different than mine were in the 1960s. Perhaps your biggest dream is to go to a good college, to earn a respected position in your workplace, or to build a successful marriage and family. Whatever your goal may be, you need to know the foundational truths that will sustain you when problems arise and the temptation to give up feels irresistible. I persevered because the values and principles instilled in me as a child guided my steps and kept me on my feet. When challenges arose, I knew where to find refuge. Now, I want to show you how you can do this as well.

Looking back on my journey, you might think that I was born with off-the-charts talent, like a child prodigy who stood head and shoulders above his peers and drew immediate attention from coaches and soccer experts. This book will show you that nothing could be further from the truth. Throughout my lifelong career in the world of sports, I had to grow up quickly, develop a thick skin, learn how to navigate constant pressure and expectations, and ultimately figure out what truly mattered—beyond all the fame, money, and glory I would one day achieve. People who truly believed in my potential were few and far between. When opportunities did come my way, I had to fight hard to prove my worth. I learned we cannot attain anything in life without preparation, perseverance, and faith. Also, we

must exercise courage and persistence day after day, amid both successes and failures.

As you read on, you will come to know me not only as a soccer player, but as someone who has faced, and still faces, many of the same challenges you may encounter in your own life. You'll come to know me as a boy who once considered quitting, who battled homesickness, and who struggled with anxiety before matches. You'll learn about my struggles as a husband who relied on the support of his dear wife to withstand the relentless pressures of a public career, and as a father who couldn't always be there for his children. When I realized I needed to be more present with my family, I had to make difficult choices and realign my priorities.

This book is the story of a man who was given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and grabbed hold of it with both hands, confident that he was exactly where God wanted him to be. Like Joshua, I felt the Lord say to me, "Be strong and courageous...for the LORD your God is with you" (Joshua 1:9). And so, with my head held high, I ran the race set before me. It is a pleasure to walk with you through my memories—not only in the moments of success, but through the real experiences that shaped me. So, let's talk, like old friends reflecting on the game of life. An exciting game is about to begin.

CHAPTER 1

VILA TEIXEIRA



July 24, 1994. I was positioned near the center line, playing for San Lorenzo de Almagro Football Club¹—based out of Buenos Aires—just at the edge of the attacking half. Our team was facing off against River Plate FC in their home stadium, Monumental de Núñez, the largest soccer stadium in South America. Seventy thousand fans² were going crazy in the stands as the ball came to me near the centerline. I received and settled the ball and quickly surveyed the scene. Nearly the entire opposing team stood between me and the goal—eight players, plus the goalkeeper.

Both my heart and my steps quickened. With two touches, I dodged my first opponent and started heading for the center circle. With a slight shift, I moved in the offensive direction toward the attacking field. The River Plate midfielder followed me and was soon joined by a

1. Silas played soccer for the Argentine sports club San Lorenzo from 1994–1997.

2 San Lorenzo's most noteworthy fan during Silas's time on the team was the late Pope Francis (pope from 2013–2025), a passionate soccer fan and card-carrying member of one of San Lorenzo's popular fan clubs. Pope Francis (at the time still known as Jorge Mario Bergoglio, auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires) was moved by the beauty of Silas's goal and cheered passionately for San Lorenzo.

second player, then a third. They tried to create a wall of sorts in front of me, but I accelerated and passed them just before they closed in on me. My speed stunned them, but they didn't give up easily. A new pair of opponents approached me as I charged at full speed toward the goal. I slipped past them unscathed. One defender stretched his leg out as far as he could, but I noticed his move and lightly nudged the ball, causing it to slip behind his heel. Then came a towering left-back, six feet tall. In a desperate last attempt, he hurled himself at me, trying to knock me off my feet. I surged ahead like lightning.

For a fraction of a second, it seemed as if time had stopped. Nearing the top of the penalty box, I planted my left leg and launched my shot. The ball flew far, more than 20 yards, lighter and higher than the goalkeeper, who stretched his body, trying his best to stop the inevitable. The ball hit the right corner of the goal, and to this day I can still hear the leather ball rippling through the net, see the disbelief on the faces of our fans, and feel the stunned silence of the opposing crowd. It was the most beautiful goal I scored in my entire career.³

This amazing goal established me as one of the most important Brazilian soccer players to ever play in Argentina. It was a moment as sublime as it was unlikely, for a poor boy, born on the outskirts of the city of Campinas, in the interior of the state of São Paulo. One chance in a million. Like all the things in my life that have seemed impossible, I was able to accomplish this through the strength of my Lord, Jesus Christ.

MY NAME IS SILAS

Let me begin with an introduction. My name is Paulo Silas do Prado Pereira,⁴ born on August 27, 1965. I am the son of *dona*⁵ Geny Cizino,

3. You can watch the goal here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTDIALHS4nY>

4. In Brazil, children are given two surnames, reflecting both parents' paternal family names. The mother's surname comes first, followed by the father's. While the full name is used in formal contexts, it is common to only use one last name (usually the father's) during everyday life.

5. *Dona* is a term of respect given to married women, similar to *Missus* (Mrs.).

a loving and dedicated housewife, and *seu*⁶ Alberto Pereira, an exemplary railway worker. However, most people know me as Silas (See-las), one of the greats of the São Paulo Football Club (often shortened to São Paulo FC) in the mid-1980s, and heir to and wearer of the coveted number 10—the star midfielder’s jersey—of the Brazilian national football team during the FIFA⁷ World Cup tournaments in Mexico (1986) and Italy (1990).

When I was born, our house was already quite full—and small for the number of people living in it. We had only three bedrooms. One belonged to my father and mother, and the rest of us children divided the remaining space however we could. There were nine of us, with a 15-year age range between us: Raquel was the eldest, followed by Maria Luíza, Agar, Eli Carlos, Sara, Esther, Noemi, and lastly, my twin brother Paulo and me. I have six sisters and two brothers, and interestingly enough, both my oldest brother Eli Carlos and my twin brother Paulo would go on to become professional soccer players as well. When we were little, Paulo and I shared the same mattress on one of the bunk beds in our house.

My father was the head of our local railway station’s personnel department. Even with my father’s stable income, life was far from easy for a family as large as ours. Even though our family lived with financial limitations, we never went without. *Seu* Alberto was a man of unwavering faith and relentless work ethic. He passed down that work ethic to his children. Each of my siblings has remained dedicated in all that they have done. Money was tight, but *seu* Alberto approached our financial situation with the supernatural faith of a man walking on water, fully convinced that he would not sink.

For the first four years of my life, we lived in a rented house in a neighborhood called Jardim Guanabara. After saving for several years,

6. *Seu* is a term of respect given to older men, similar to *Mister* (Mr.).

7. The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), or in English, International Federation of Association Football, is the international governing body for the sport of soccer.

my father was able to buy our family a house of our own three miles away, in a neighborhood called Vila Teixeira. The house in Vila Teixeira holds most of my childhood memories. I remember our home as small and simple. It was semi-detached, so we shared a wall with our next-door neighbor. There were three bedrooms and only one bathroom. A narrow corridor on one side led to a backyard, where we later built a small addition that became Raquel's house.⁸ At the time, she was studying accounting and would soon begin working to help with household expenses; meanwhile, my older brother Eli Carlos was playing professional soccer for the Guarani Football Club in our city of Campinas, which he had joined in 1970, and he was also contributing financially to the family. The rest of us were still young and not working yet.

Our days at home were filled with joy. When we moved to the Vila Teixeira house, the excitement was palpable. The house had been chosen with love, in a neighborhood we cherished, and we were surrounded by kind neighbors. We lived on Cesar Ladeira Street, a narrow road that seemed endless to my young eyes. During the Brazilian national team's games, the neighbors decorated the street with pride.⁹ Establishing ourselves in Vila Teixeira was a milestone for our family—an achievement celebrated by all of us.

AN UNEXPECTED TRAGEDY

My parents were members of the Assembly of God church in Campinas, and we all attended services faithfully. My mother, Geny,¹⁰ was

8. After purchasing a property, it is common for Brazilian families to create a multi-generational family compound, building additional homes in the back of the main house for elderly parents or growing children, as was the case with Raquel.

9. Brazil won its third World Cup in 1970, under the leadership of the great Pelé. Each national team game, especially those during the World Cup, was celebrated with the patriotic fervor of an American Fourth of July celebration.

10. "Geny" is pronounced like the popular American name "Jenny."

a kind woman, loving, beautiful, and always attentive to the needs of others. She had a tough side as well, though, and with all the kids in the house, she sometimes had to be stern. I don't have many vivid memories of her, just a few scattered images stored in my mind. At this point in my life, only two memories of my mother remain truly clear.

In one, I was in the kitchen with her. She was making bread pudding from leftovers, determined not to let anything go to waste. Watching my mother work felt like witnessing magic happening in the kitchen. She transformed simple ingredients like leftover bread, milk, sugar, butter, eggs, and a bit of flour into something extraordinary. As a sweet aroma filled the house, us children gathered around, anxiously waiting for the pan to come out of the oven. I remember digging into the pudding before it cooled, then receiving an immediate scolding for my impatience and greediness.

In another memory, I was leaving the house and saw her watching me from the window. Her expression was serious, almost stern, as if she suspected I was up to no good. Maybe that is why I later carried the impression that she was an angry woman. But my oldest sister Raquel remembers her differently. Raquel tells me my mother was a calm woman, with a quiet soul shaped by her faith in Jesus, which she embraced from a very early age. My older siblings say my mother lived out her faith in the small, everyday moments, and that her spirituality left a mark on each one of us. We were a large, close-knit family, full of care and love for one another.

Then, the storm hit.

I was five years old on June 15, 1971, when a sudden heart attack took my mother's life at the age of 45. She showed no signs of illness before that day. One moment, she was in our home in Campinas; the next, she was gone—called to her eternal home in heaven. She left behind my father and all nine of us children.

As the oldest, Raquel took on a maternal role and cared for us all. At the age of 20, she had to mature quickly and be strong for

our family. My other sisters Maria Luísa and Esther were also very involved in maintaining our home and helped share this burden with Raquel. Paulo and I, along with Noemi, were all very young at the time. Eli Carlos was out of the house, lodging and training daily at Guarani Football Club headquarters.

Our family dynamic changed a lot after my mother's death. We left the Assembly of God church and became members at Central Nazarene Church of Campinas. For a time, Paulo and I moved off our shared mattress in one of the kids' bedrooms and began to sleep in the same bed with my father. We weren't told the reason behind this change, but I think having his young children close by soothed my father's aching soul after the loss of my mother. Today, as a Christian and father to my own children, I know well that when the heart hurts, our best comfort comes from the Holy Spirit. Our children are often the instruments that the Spirit uses to bring us encouragement and courage to carry on through pain.

Before my mother's passing, my father was already known as a man of prayer. After our loss, it became even more common to find him on his knees, interceding for each of us by name. With his hands resting on his Bible, he asked the Lord to protect us and shape us into true Christians—men and women of character, grounded in faith in Jesus. To him, that mattered far more than any professional success we might achieve.

MY COMMITMENT TO CHRIST AND EARLY SOCCER DREAMS

As we grew up, my father was concerned with our spiritual lives and encouraged us to have a personal relationship with Jesus and be committed to Him. At the age of 8, my twin brother Paulo and I made a public decision to accept Christ in our hearts. We were baptized in the water at the Church of the Nazarene, in the center of Campinas.

I was just beginning to understand my faith and build a relationship with God.

Our pastor was a man named Jaime Kratz, a US-born missionary, scholar, and lover of the Scriptures. He was beloved in our church and our community; he was also the man who mentored another key figure in my story, Pastor Aguiar, whose church I still attend today. Later, a prestigious school in Campinas was named after him, a place where part of my family studied and worked. Pastor Kratz was devoted to the Bible and Scripture memory, often memorizing entire chapters. He enjoyed daily walks and maintained a healthy body, but he was not a soccer fan.

In addition to serving as a professor at our local seminary, Pastor Kratz was dedicated to our church's children's ministry. Loving and creative, he used his electronic keyboard to make sound effects that accompanied the epic tales of biblical characters like little David and the giant, Goliath. Sometimes, he used a ventriloquist's doll he called Cicero to pass on his teachings. Paulo and I were mesmerized. We eagerly looked forward to days at church, where we enjoyed the stories and learned so much.

At the age of eight, the world was still unfolding before me. I didn't understand many things, but I found comfort in the loving arms of my God, inspired by my father's example. I was also deeply influenced by my oldest brother Eli Carlos, the professional soccer player. I believed that if I trained hard and held on to my faith, I, too, could become a great soccer player one day.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND MISCHIEF OF CHILDHOOD

Even with so many changes happening in my early life, there was still room to enjoy the experiences of a boy growing up in a house with eight siblings. There were plenty of simple, everyday moments, like

walking with Paulo to the *padaria*¹¹—our neighborhood bakery and convenience store—to pick up the grocery items on my father’s list. At that time, poor families kept a ledger of their expenses with the shop owner and would settle their balance at the end of the month when payday rolled around. The store owner would write down the cost of the day’s purchases, and we would carry the ledger back to my father, who would settle the balance once he received his salary for the month. We only bought the bare necessities, but once a week, on Sundays, my father allowed us to splurge on a special treat: a bottle of soda. Our Sunday lunch was the highlight of the week, and we could always count on having Coca-Cola and pasta with red sauce.

When the table was set, my siblings and I were eager to dig in, but we weren’t allowed to rush. In our house, we waited for our father to sit before opening anything—gifts at Christmas, birthday presents, and even our Sunday soda. My sister Esther had a magical way of making the soda stretch. She’d open the bottle, secretly pour herself a glass and drink it quickly, then dilute what was left with a little water to serve the rest of us. Yes, she added water to make it go further!

Sometimes, our father would allow us to get a candy bar along with the soda. “Just one, and for both of you to share!” he warned Paulo and me. Still, we were thrilled. Even though the *padaria* was a long walk from home, we ran the whole way there, happy just for the chance to get a special treat.

My father was strict and had rules we were expected to follow, rules I later came to appreciate. For example, he didn’t allow whistling in the house or sitting at the table without a shirt. Even now, I never go shirtless if there’s a guest in the house. Despite being kids who played all the time, we had responsibilities too. One of them was to act as “watchmen,” chaperoning our older sisters when boys

11. A Brazilian *padaria* is comparable to a bodega in New York City. It is a small neighborhood shop that sells fresh sweet and savory baked goods and snacks, but also functions as a café, coffee shop, grocery store, and community hub.

came calling. Our teenage sisters were beautiful and lively, and that attracted attention, much to our father's dismay.

Paulo and I were in charge of keeping an eye on the girls and their boyfriends, which irritated our sisters. We often found ways to work the boys' interest to our advantage. Sometimes we'd climb a tree in our backyard, fill a little bag with *coquinhos*—small yellow fruits popular in our region—and throw them at the boys' cars. We'd laugh as they got angry and drove off under a shower of *coquinhos* hitting their roofs.

Occasionally, the boys would call a truce and take us out for snacks or ice cream. It was their way of buying a little peace and time alone with our sisters. One of those boys, Dirceu, became a lifelong friend. He even took me to see Guarani play a match against a big São Paulo team, Palmeiras, in 1978—the very year our home team, Guarani, won the Brazilian championship. We went to the renowned Morumbi Stadium in the city of São Paulo for the first game of the finals. Guarani won 1–0, with a penalty kick scored by Zenon. Palmeiras' goalkeeper, Leão, was a legend—like an impenetrable wall. I was mesmerized.

Between ages 10 and 15, when Paulo and I weren't playing soccer with the neighborhood kids, we'd go swimming. The community center near our house had a pool, but we didn't have membership cards. So, we came up with a plan: We'd climb over the railing around the deep end and jump in, then swim quickly to the shallow side of the pool. Sometimes, the security guards looked the other way. It was our solution for cooling off during the hottest summer days.

Around that time, I also started working to earn money.¹² My

12. Brazil passed legislation in 1961 making school compulsory through eighth grade, but there was little enforcement of these regulations. Unlike schools in the US where students begin learning in the morning, eat lunch at school, and then conclude their studies in the mid-afternoon, Brazilian schools run multiple shifts to maximize their use of school buildings and staff. The first group of students meets in the morning from approximately 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., then a whole new group of students come to school in the afternoon, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. It was very common for children in the lower classes to work during the time they weren't in school, or to give up school entirely to focus on supporting themselves and their families.

first job was with my brother-in-law Ildo, a land surveyor who had married my sister Esther. I was about ten years old and carried a bag full of wooden stakes while Ildo and his father handled the measuring equipment. We surveyed all kinds of large properties around our city of Campinas.

Another way the kids in my family earned money was by selling plant arrangements and cheese door to door. We'd collect medicinal plants from the woods, buy pots and hanging chains from the market, and then create arrangements to sell. Meanwhile, a cheese merchant we worked with dropped off 14 rounds of cheese at our house every two weeks. One was ours to keep; the other 13 we sold. The cheese was delicious, and Paulo and I became little entrepreneurs, going house to house with our goods, similar to kids in the US, who make money by getting newspaper routes or setting up lemonade stands. Children walking alone on the streets of Campinas would be dangerous today. There were dangers then, too, but we knew who and what areas to avoid. We were always careful to flee from evil—a lesson we learned from Scripture both at home and at church on Sundays.

When I was 13, my sisters approached a neighbor across the street who was a director at DPaschoal Tire, a large automotive chain headquartered in Campinas. They asked if he could help one of their brothers get a job—and that's how I became an office boy at the company. At the office, I did a bit of everything: organizing files by date, fetching coffee, delivering documents, paying bills, whatever they needed. Perhaps I should say that I did *almost* everything they needed. On occasion, I was tasked with handing out flyers for their “bald tire” campaign, an effort to warn drivers about the risks of driving with worn-out tires. My job was to find cars with bald tires and leave the flyers on their windshields. But I was young, and the task quickly bored me. I ended up tossing most of the flyers in the trash and sneaking off to the arcade.

Because money was tight, I saved every penny I could from my

paycheck. Sometimes I walked long distances to avoid the bus fare or jumped out of the bus window to avoid paying my fare upon exiting, a trick I'd learned from some friends.¹³ I saw them do it, saw that it worked, and followed their lead. Once, I jumped out right in front of the company where I worked—just as my boss was arriving. She wasn't impressed and warned me not to keep doing this. Still, away from her eyes, and my father's, I often snuck out to explore the city. I'd slip through the back door, the front door, or even a window. But every time, I felt the weight of guilt. I knew it wasn't right to be sneaking around.

One day, after a youth soccer match, I decided to put my street skills into practice. The owner of the team I played for¹⁴ helped cover the cost of a soft drink at the game and bus fare there and back. To have enough money to also buy something to eat at the game, I decided I would catch a ride on the bus without paying my fare. When it was time to jump off, I landed safely—right in front of a police van! Panicked, I bolted across the street, only to lock eyes with my father waiting at the bus stop. He had seen everything. Without thinking, I turned and ran back toward the police. I would rather risk my safety with them than face my father's disappointment. When I returned home, my father didn't need to say a word. One look from *seu* Alberto had me trembling where I stood. His eyes weren't just stern—they were full of love, responsibility, and silent grief.

13. In Brazil, you enter the bus through one door, ride to your destination, and pay on your way out the other door when you are ready to disembark. Finding ways to save money by skipping out on the bus fare is not uncommon, and windows are always open because the busses do not have air conditioning. Children also “catch a ride” on the bus by hopping onto the back bumper and holding on to the paneling, or riding behind the bus on their bikes and hooking a foot under the bumper so the bus tows them along.

14. In Brazil, private, invitation-only club teams dominated all levels of soccer (and other sports) during Silas's childhood, and this remains the case (with minimal exceptions) today. The Brazilian education system does not include competitive sports like there exists in the United States, and there are no high school or even collegiate sports available. Any opportunities for competitive play happen through private clubs, like the one Silas mentions here.



SOLID FOUNDATION

My father had lost the woman he loved and raised a large family through hardship. He cared for each of us deeply. And when we strayed from God's path, he was diligent to pray for us with an unwavering faith that remained unshaken despite his personal tragedies. His strength came from Christ, and from mornings spent on his knees, quietly praying for each one of his children.

Psalm 144:12 says, "May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace." That was the psalmist's hope—and it was my parents' hope too. My mother, *dona* Geny, didn't have the chance to see much of what became of her children. In a sense, she was like Moses, faithfully leading his people to the promised land but never experiencing it for himself. Despite her early passing, she shaped our character and engraved her values on our hearts.

And as Psalm 127:3 reminds us, "Children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward." Every church service we participated in as children—whether in the small Assembly of God church where our faith began, or in the Church of the Nazarene, where we still worship today—strengthened our foundation. Even when we resisted, our parents' consistency rooted us in truth and guided us toward peace and victory in Jesus. We grew in grace and knowledge. We bore fruit over time. Like the farmer who plants and waters without always seeing the harvest, our parents trusted God to bring growth, just as Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:6).

My parents' legacy will never leave my heart. Their values are the foundation of my values. Sometimes I wish they were still here so I could say, "Look, Father. Look, Mother—it worked. What you planted in us took root. I held it close. And now, my children and grandchildren live in the shade of the tree you grew."