



## Is It Time for a Reese-vival?

By Ron Barry

Let the “Reese-vival” begin.

After greeting more than a thousand well-wishers at a Wednesday night visitation in the Bill Emerson Memorial Gymnasium at the high school, and hundreds more prior to Thursday’s funeral service at First Baptist Church in Martin, a heartbroken but courageous Heather Barker – wife of CCHS coach David Barker, and mother of CCHS junior Reese Barker, who was killed in an auto accident the previous Saturday – stood to speak during the gathering.

Following a celebratory summary of the things that made Reese special to her family, her church, and her fellow students – more on that later – Heather suggested that she could see a “revival” possibly resulting from the comments she’d heard in the last few days.

“So many people have told me of the impact that Reese’s life has had on them,” Heather said, “and not just from Crockett County. I believe there’s a need in this world for the things she stood for, and I believe we will see her message continue to spread.”

Combined with FBC Senior Pastor Dr. Mike Sams’s reference to the “ripple effect” a lake or pond will show after a rock is tossed in and the initial splash is gone, the theme of the day was that the qualities Reese displayed – kindness, humor, compassion, love, and **service** – need to continue to be shared and passed person-to-person, community-to-community, and have far-reaching impact similar to those of a religious revival.

History tells us that religious revivals come and go. So, instead – and just to put a little more Crockett County personality to it – why not just make it a **Reese-vival?**

What better way to remember the outstanding FCCLA officer, softball player, football manager, dinosaur and pickle lover, church youth leader, and special needs volunteer and advocate than to dedicate ourselves to furthering the characteristics that defined Reese Barker to those who knew her?

All that spoke during Thursday’s funeral service in Martin highlighted the many facets and gifts of Reese’s personality and character. She was funny, kind, inclusive, loving, a natural-born leader, a role model for her peers, and – above all – a **servant**. In a world currently riddled with division, intolerance, despair, and selfishness, who wouldn’t benefit from a Reese-vival?

Thursday’s list of speakers began with CCHS Human Studies instructor Misty Garrett, flanked on each side by her FCCLA student leaders and her colleague Sara Phifer. Misty gave an eloquent remembrance of the young lady who was a state officer in FCCLA (Family, Career & Community Leaders of America), telling stories of her “Reese-isms,” which she delivered in her heavy southern drawl.

FBC children’s pastor Matt Brewer and youth pastor Greg Alderdice each related accounts of Reese’s faithfulness in her church body, providing service and leadership anytime it was needed there. As did Misty, both men detailed Reese’s facial expressions as being among her most effective communication tools. “She could give you that side-eye, that stare, or that raised eyebrow, and you knew immediately what she was trying to tell you,” they agreed.

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When Heather took the podium, the congregants were regaled with stories of Reese's love for her brother and sister and – often – for those that didn't always feel it from other sources.

One simple, isolated statement – “she sat with me at lunch when no one else did” – was a powerful example of the compassion expressed by Reese, according to her mother. “These were the kinds of things that so many students said to me in the receiving line,” Heather said.

But all the speakers were unanimous – in a point hammered home in the closing sermon by Sams – that the most important quality Reese displayed was her attempt to love people like Jesus does.

“We've been surrounded all day by the #LiveLikeReese slogan,” Sams said. “But we can only live like Reese because Reese lived like Jesus.”

Sams pointed out that the slogan will mean different things to different people.

“To some, live like Reese might mean to be **kind**,” he said. “To someone else, it might mean to be **loving**. To another, it might mean to be **passionate** – all in. To someone else, it might mean to be **compassionate**. Or it might mean to be a **servant**.”

Then Sams shifted his emphasis to accentuate the suddenness of Reese's death. “This tragedy teaches us that none of us is guaranteed another tomorrow,” he said. “So if we really want to live like Reese, the most important thing is to **be ready**. Reese was ready, because she had given her life to Jesus. And because of that, she's in his presence today.”

Sams's proclamation was remindful of what the famous evangelist D. L. Moody once wrote about his own demise: “Some day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now; I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal – a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body.”

Reese Barker packed a lot of powerful influence into her 16 years. But if Thursday's service taught us anything, it taught us what Reese knew in her heart – and wants us to know as well – is the most important thing.

We still have time to share it.

Let the **Reese-vival** begin. May it never fade.