



Steve Largent

*Pro Football Hall of Fame Induction Address*



Delivered 31 May 1995

**AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED:** Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Thank you. This is a very special moment, and it's made more special by each of you participating here this morning. And I want to thank you -- especially my family and friends who have made it very special for me.

But I also want to thank the former enshrinees seated to my right, and want you guys to know that from my heart that -- my career, players of my era, the players that play today -- we stood on your shoulders, and we thank you for what you've done in creating the greatest football game -- the greatest sport in the world. Thank you.

Thank each of you for the honor of this moment.

I want to share this honor equally with my wife, my best friend. Words could not possibly express, or adequately express, or time allow, to say "Thank you" to my wife, Terry. Thank you. You really have made every good thing possible in my life.

I also want to thank my children: Kyle and Casie and Kelly and Kramer -- that you guys are my most treasured possession, most valuable trophies in my life. Thank each of you.

You know, my most significant accomplishments have always come in the context of a team. And I also want to thank my teammates in victory and defeat, especially Jim Zorn and Dave Krieg, who are both here this afternoon.



But I also want to share with you, briefly this afternoon, the message of my life. My story, like so many others, is a story of mentors -- of people who challenged me when I questioned myself, of people who believed in me against all the evidence: my mother who never missed a game and never missed a practice -- in fact, she talked me out of quitting football when I was a sophomore in high school; my grandfather, who stepped into the gap when my folks were divorced; my coaches, Jerry Rhome, who rescued me off of the waiver wire in 1976; Steve Moore and Chuck Knox; Jerry Potter, my high school coach, who had the wisdom to demote me to wide receiver. They've taught me the game of football and the meaning of leadership. When I close my eyes, I can still hear their voices, hear their whistles. They still shape my character and my life.

I was one of those players, as you know, who was labeled early as "too small" and "too slow." I came to depend on people who saw me actually as bigger and faster than I really was. We all need people who believe in us. They expand the boundaries we place on our own lives. In my case, their influence did more than improve my performance in this great game; it filled a hollowness in my own life I could not explain, or even understand.

When a child grows up today without a father, there's an empty place where someone must stand, providing an example of character and confidence. If no one takes that place, a child can live in a shadow all their lives. Their emptiness is often filled by despair, by anger, or even violence. This commonplace tragedy has become the central problem of our society; it has caused an epidemic of secret suffering.

But if someone takes that place, a child can escape the shadows. He can find confidence and courage and conscience -- and perhaps even find his way to the football Hall of Fame.

I have the extraordinary respect for men and women who accept that responsibility and play that role in young lives today. They leave an influence more lasting than any law. The really heroic people are not those who break records. The really heroic people are those who can mend a broken spirit. My accomplishment today is a tribute to those people in my life who were willing to do that for me.

Finally, I want to say that whatever favor I have gained is ultimately due to the God I serve. God's grace is particularly clear in life's great challenges and in life's great moments. This is one of those moments for me, and I owe a debt of gratitude that is hopeless to repay.

My faith is not a system of belief, not a code of honor, but a relationship with Jesus Christ, who provided his love in a lonely death. I could explore God's grace to me forever and never reach its depth and never find its limits. His blessing is the ultimate explanation for whatever is praiseworthy in my career and in my life. In football, I found temporary achievements and lasting relationships. It tested and shaped my character.

I've seen the glory of this game. To be here in this place, at this moment, for this reason, is an honor beyond all my expectations. I owe you my deepest thanks.

Thank you.