

A Spiritual Legacy: Jack Hayford's timeless impact on the body of Christ

When Jack Hayford was 5 years old, he received his first allowance as payment for a chore—10 cents. Instead of giving him a dime, his father gave him a nickel and five pennies. Then he sat down with his son, showed him Scriptures on tithing and explained that one penny out of every 10 cents belongs to God. The boy took out one penny and gave his first tithe.

Years later, when Hayford and his wife, Anna, received a paycheck for more than \$1,000, he realized the tithe would be triple digits for the first time in his life. When he went to write the check, he paused for just a moment and thought, "Lord, this is a lot of money." The Lord spoke to him and said, "It's still only one penny on every dime." And from that point on, he tithed one penny on every dime he ever made.

That's just one of the amazing things about Hayford—his faithfulness, in the big and the small. Yet, there are so many other things about him that I admired and have influenced my life.

Hayford began influencing my life years before I ever met him. The first time I heard him speak was at a James Robison Bible Conference in the early 1980s. He spoke on the beauty of a spiritual language. As a young Baptist minister, I hadn't heard anything like it.

But Hayford had a very nonconfrontational way of humbly presenting Scripture. He didn't try to defend or argue a position; he simply presented his belief. He didn't say, "This is the *only* way. Either I'm right or you're wrong."

His presentation, mannerisms, Christlikeness and humility, not to mention his knowledge of Scripture and theological soundness, caused me to open up to this man with a Pentecostal background. He caused me to start thinking about Scripture differently, and I began reading his books and watching him on television.

‘Just Jack Hayford’

In 2001, a year after I began Gateway Church, I went to a small pastors’ gathering to hear Hayford speak about how we could help Messianic Jews. I met him in the parking lot and told him how much he ministered to me and how much I appreciated him. He was very kind and gracious. He took an interest in me and asked about the church. We only had 200 people attending Gateway at the time, yet he treated me like an equal.

In fact, he treated all pastors that way. He made a statement once that it takes as much character, time, and energy to prepare a message for 200 people as it does for 2,000. He never saw pastors at different levels or hierarchies. He saw us as shepherds of God’s sheep no matter how many we were pastoring. And I felt that from the first time I met him.

A couple of years later, I sent Hayford an invitation to come speak at our first pastors’ conference. He responded by saying he wanted to talk over the phone before he accepted. During our conversation, he asked who was coming and what our focus was so he could be a good steward of his time while he prepared.

It didn’t matter to him that we didn’t have many people coming—maybe a few hundred—he wanted to know how he could best help and serve the pastors. When he arrived, it was like being with family. As we spent time together and got to know one another better, I absolutely fell in love with his character and his fatherly nature, and he seemed to immediately fall in

love with me as a teachable son he could pour into. As our spiritual father-son relationship developed, we spent more and more time together.

Not long after that, I went to Hayford's weeklong School of Pastoral Nurture with about 40 other pastors. As he poured into us, I realized that in addition to his vast knowledge of theology, he had a practical pastoral wisdom I'd never heard before. That week, he shared why he preached series instead of just stand-alone messages, how he arranged his series, how he used his study times and how he spent his off times—so many practical subjects that Bible college didn't teach me. He helped prepare me for the everyday things I'd experience in ministry.

Watching how Hayford handled being a well-known author and pastor helped me understand how I should steward the influence God has given me. Accomplishments such as writing so many books and composing so many songs didn't change his personality. He never thought of himself as a celebrity. He didn't have "yes people" around him. He didn't have an entourage when he traveled. He didn't think more highly of himself than he should.

When he talked, there was no pride in him; there was just a recognition that God gave him influence in the body of Christ, and he wanted to steward that influence well. In fact, he spoke to me about times when a church or a pastor honored and received him in a special way. It was as though he were shocked. I would think, *Well, of course they honored you! You're Jack Hayford.*

But he never thought of himself that way. He was just Jack Hayford, and he always remained just Jack Hayford.

'An Apostle Paul for Our Generation'

Over the years, I've looked at the influence God has given me in the kingdom and thought, *Can I handle this? Can I be the*

good example God wants me to be? Can I be the pastor God wants me to be? But then I would look at Hayford and be encouraged, because he was an example of a normal person whom God used to do great, extraordinary, supernatural things for Him.

He was a very humble, transparent person who never put on airs. He never came across as prideful in what he did, yet he had a confidence that God was using him. It encouraged me to know I could walk with God and God could use me to part Red Seas, because He had done that with Hayford.

I've often joked that I have a WWJD bracelet: "What would *Jack* do?" Not to take anything away from "What would Jesus do?" because we want to be like Christ, but God gives us earthly examples too, and Hayford was one of those examples.

There were times when I was leading the church to embrace a new vision, and I thought to myself, *What would Jack do?* Or if I felt as though I needed to bring a corrective word, I thought, *How would Jack say this?* Or if I was trying to lead the elders in something I believed the Lord had spoken to me, I would ask them, "How would Jack have done it?"

However, it wasn't just about "What would Jack do?" when it came to ministry but also "What would Jack do?" when it came to marriage. Nine years ago, we had a celebration to honor Hayford's 80 years of ministry and nearly 60 years of marriage to his college sweetheart, Anna. The first time he saw her from across the gym, he decided he wanted to get to know her. He was the big man on campus, and all her friends had told her, "Just wait until you meet Jack Hayford!"

Later, she said her first thought when she met him was, *Oh, he's not such a big deal!* But obviously they fell in love and stayed deeply in love with each other until the day she died. The way he honored and loved Anna and the way she honored and loved him was an example to us all.

I've said many times that Hayford was an apostle Paul for our

generation. Paul was a man of the Spirit and a man who knew the power of God. At the same time, he was a man who knew Scripture. He was a brilliant man who could communicate to different people and different churches in many ways, which is represented by the letters he wrote. So when I think of the apostle Paul, I think of a man who had a diverse and rich background. A man who was an effective teacher of the Scriptures. A man who was of the Spirit, and a man of great intellect. A man who saw the power of God work within him. A man like Hayford.

Hayford was a man of the Spirit and a man of the Scripture. When I think of him, I'm often reminded of John 4:23–24, "Yet the hour is coming, and now is here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth."

Some people put more emphasis on the truth of Scripture, and others put more emphasis on life in the Spirit. Yet Hayford embodied the perfect blend and balance of both of these. He taught people how to worship God in the life of the Holy Spirit and in the truth of God's Word. He didn't try to put them at odds with each other, but instead emphasized both in wonderful balance.

Hayford helped all of us to unashamedly yield to the Holy Spirit. He came along as a soft-spoken, kind, humble, theologically sound pastor who was completely yielded to the Holy Spirit. He helped people understand that a person who is normal can fully believe in the work of the Holy Spirit, and modeled normalcy and being Spirit-yielded.

'Spiritual Father'

Hayford fully believed in the Holy Spirit, yet he was *normal*. When he was on TV, he never said things like, "If you send money to my ministry or if you pray for my ministry, I'm going

to pray for you, and your problem will be solved.” He never tried to draw people to himself. He *always* drew people to Christ. He was one of the first leaders I saw who influenced a large part of the body of Christ—those who believed doctrine the way he did *and* those who might not have shared the same views doctrinally but respected his academic accomplishments, his approach to the Word and his normalcy of life.

For years, there has been a division in the body of Christ between those who believe in the person and work of the Holy Spirit for today and those who don’t. Hayford bridged those gaps. Many people at the James Robison Bible Conference where I first heard him were from a Baptist background. Hayford presented the Word and didn’t try to force it down people’s throats that Robison invited him back to speak on the gift of tongues at the conference. That message became the basis for his bestselling book *The Beauty of Spiritual Language*.

It was amazing. In essence, he spoke about a very controversial gift in the body of Christ with such grace and humility that people who might not have had the same doctrinal view listened to him without a competitive or argumentative spirit. It’s because of his influence that the body of Christ is not as splintered as in the past and is in greater unity today—the greatest unity it’s ever experienced.

Hayford also had a tremendous influence in the area of worship—not only through the songs he wrote but also through his teachings on worship. The resurgence of worship in the church today is largely due to the seeds he sowed in the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s. His teachings on worship, along with his extravagant yet genuine expressions of worship, helped me as well as people of all faiths and in all nations learn to express their love to God. I can’t think of anyone who has had a greater influence in this area than Hayford.

I heard someone say once, “For years the church has been over-mothered and under-fathered.” Mothers nurture us. They’re the

ones we run to when we fall off our bikes and scrape our knees. It's not that fathers aren't nurturing, but they are responsible for calling out the destiny of God in our lives. A father will say, "Get over it! Get up! Let's do it again! I know you fell and scraped your knee, but get up. Let's go for it again!" We need more fathering in the church today. Hayford was a tremendous example of a father who was loving and nurturing, but also one who would encourage you and call out your destiny.

In 2 Kings 2:8-10, Elisha asked Elijah for a double portion of the spirit that was on him. And Elijah said, "If you see me when I am taken from you, it will happen to you." He was saying, "If you'll stay with me to the end."

We need to stay with our spiritual mothers and fathers until the end. They have something to contribute to the kingdom, and they have something to teach us. They have impartations and anointing for us. I, along with many other pastors, have experienced the benefit of this by spending time with Hayford until the end. The results of his influence are evident in my life and in churches all over the world.

Paul told the church at Corinth, "For if you were to have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers" (1 Cor. 4:15a). We have been blessed with many wonderful teachers and instructors, but just a few spiritual fathers and even fewer Jack Hayfords. Really there was just one, and he was great!

Robert Morris is the senior pastor of Gateway Church in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Since 2000, the church has grown to more than 100,000 attendees. His television program airs in over 190 countries, and his radio program, Worship & the Word with Pastor Robert, airs in over 2,800 radio markets. He serves as chancellor of The King's University and is the bestselling author of numerous books, including *The Blessed Life*, *Frequency*, *Beyond Blessed* and *Take the Day Off*. For more

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