

EXCLUSIVE: Matthew Hagee Shares Lessons From Dad

✖ Matthew Hagee will never forget some of the life lessons his dad taught him. The son of global evangelist John Hagee, he serves as the executive pastor of the 20,000-member Cornerstone Church his father founded in San Antonio.

The elder Hagee launched the church more than three decades ago, growing it into one of the most influential and charismatic Christian communities in the nation. The companion TV ministry now reaches almost 100 million homes in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia, Africa and New Zealand.

At 32 years old, Hagee is the heir-apparent to the church and TV ministry. Now, he's offering insights into a lifetime of parenting, self-reliance and affecting societal change—lessons he learned from his father—in a new Charisma House book called *Response Able: What my father taught me about life and making a difference*.

"One of the most valuable lessons my father taught me was to focus on what I can do, rather than what I cannot," says Hagee. "If your life is on a course that you would indeed like to change, you can change it. No matter what."

Charisma News caught up with Hagee to talk about his relationship with his father, his relationship with his children, and how believers everywhere can make a difference for Christ.

Charisma News: Your dad has such an inspirational ministry. Is it hard to follow in the footsteps of such a great man of God? How do you deal with being the son of Pastor John Hagee?

Hagee: I have always truly been blessed in the relationship that I have with my father because he put his role as a father

before anything else. He was a father before he was a pastor. He was a father before he was a businessman. He was a father before he was a leader in the community. At any moment in our lives that we needed him, whatever else he was doing became an immediate secondary issue and we became his primary focus.

Even to this day, if my children walk into his office and he has the president of a bank or a representative of the community sitting in front of him, he immediately puts them on hold and does everything he can to allow my children to feel that they are the most important people in the room.

As a son, I can say that I have been blessed beyond measure with a wonderful example of a father to follow. I'm probably more challenged to be as good of a father as he was than I am to be as good of a pastor. My role as a pastor is one that I have always believed God called me to. If God didn't call me to the ministry, I would have a challenge to filling my dad's shoes, as it's been stated many times. But because God called me to it, that's God's responsibility.

God said, "I want you to be a pastor." I said, "Yes I will be a pastor." So it's God's responsibility to keep His promise and enable me to minister. It's my obligation to be a father figure the equivalent to what my father was. To fulfill his model as father is probably a greater challenge to me than to fill his pulpit.

Charisma News: Tell us a little bit more about your 707 campaign. What is the inspiration for that?

Hagee: A lot of parents believe that they are so busy they don't have time to spend with their children. I have as difficult a schedule as I would dare say is in the world today. But I make it a point that there are hours of the day that I dedicate my whole attention to my family.

When I get home from work until the time my children go to bed, I am with them. We sit down and eat together. We discuss

what happened during the day. When they are getting ready for bed I am doing their baths, I am brushing their teeth, I am reading them stories, I am laying down with them singing lullabies. The reason I do that is not because of the mandate to so, but to invest some of me into them. The benefits of that bond are the most sacred and special things in life.

I believe there are a lot of parents in the country and around the world who need to be challenged to recognize that the most precious and top priority relationship that they have is inside the four walls of their own home with their spouse and with their children. While they may think that business or deadlines at the office or the next major event that they are planning for is paramount, if they let the precious moments of life pass them by they will regret it in the long run.

707 is simply a challenge to parents to spend 70 minutes a day with their kids seven days a week. It doesn't have to be contiguous. If it's 30 minutes in the morning and 40 minutes at night, I know that's probably tenfold what some are doing. But it's those moments of investment in that relationship where you lay the foundation that enables a parent and child to come together and know that no matter what happens in life they'll be there for each other.

It was what my father did for me in my young life that gives me such a joy in being there for him at this point in my life. My children are young. I am putting myself into them so that in the future they'll put themselves back into me. I can't do that just by one day in their teenage years introducing myself. I've got to do that right now because there is no time like the present for that relationship.

Charisma News: What do you want people to take away your new book, *Response Able*?

Hagee: The overall application of this book is for people to consider where they can impact real change—not just talk about

it, but actually carry out the concept that's been floating around in their mind.

I think a lot of people have a fear factor when it comes to implementing ideas. With this particular book I want to motivate people to try something that they always thought would work but never had the courage to carry out, and in doing so enable change.



Matthew Hagee's parents, John and Diana

Charisma News: Are there things in your life you might not have done if your dad didn't teach you this principle?

Hagee: There are a lot of things regarding ministry that I would not have attempted as early as I did had I not had someone to say "This is why God gave you gifts, and gave you talents, and gave you opportunities. Take advantage of it."

A lot of folks sit down and consider "some day" and some day connects to decades of wishing instead of actually acquiring what it is you want. I know that I meet a lot of young people who are in the same stage of life that I am and they often ask, "How did you get to 32 with three kids and all the things that are coming your direction?" It's because I took advantage of opportunities given to me instead of just considering them to be ironies.