

What Roy Harthern Taught Me About Life and Ministry

Whether you knew the former Calvary Assembly pastor or not, he impacted your life

Roy Harthern, who was pastor of Orlando's Calvary Assembly when *Charisma* magazine was birthed there, went to be with the Lord in July. He was a great man who greatly impacted my life and, indirectly, yours through *Charisma* magazine and our organization.

You may know Harthern as Benny Hinn's father-in-law. I've known his daughter, Benny's wife, Suzanne, since she was 14. My wife, Joy, knew Harthern most of her life since he preached services in the 1950s for her father, an Assemblies of God minister. When Joy and I first moved to Orlando, we visited Calvary Assembly and immediately joined the church.

You may not have personally known Roy Harthern, but he taught me many things. By sharing them here, I hope they may speak to your life.

1. **Be open.** Harthern taught me to be open to the entire body of Christ. When he came to Calvary Assembly in 1970, it was a typical small-to-medium Assemblies of God church. By the time Joy and I came in 1973, it had 600 members. Later, it grew to 6,000 members, one of the biggest in the nation at the time. Those were the early days of the charismatic movement, and Harthern welcomed people from other denominations. Only in this environment could a magazine that serves the entire body of Christ have been born.
2. **Innovation opens the door for growth.** When Joy and I came to Calvary, it already had a radio program. In the next few years, Harthern built a new auditorium and

began raising funds for the church's current 5,000-seat auditorium. Calvary started and hosted Jesus Festivals, drawing thousands of youth. Calvary sent Festival of Praise, led by prolific musical director Thurlow Spurr (whom we wrote about in *Charisma's* first issue), to hundreds of churches. It built a high rise for the elderly. Calvary founded Channel 52, a local TV station bought years later by TBN. And did I mention starting *Charisma* magazine? All of this and more happened in a span of only 10 years.

3. **Surround yourself with talent.** Roy Harthern attracted talent. When a young evangelist from Canada named Benny Hinn first came to America, he could have gone anywhere, but he was attracted to Harthern as a leader—before he fell in love with his daughter. Harthern took a chance on me. I was a young, newly married newspaper reporter with a heart to do great things for God but with no experience, no money and, frankly, not a lot of business ability. But when I asked the church leaders if they would like to publish a little church magazine, Harthern and the other leaders said yes. Little did they (or I) know that God would use it to spawn an international media ministry. I've said many times how much I appreciated Roy Harthern's belief in both me and the dream I had to publish *Charisma*.
4. **Vision is imperative.** Roy Harthern had a vision to build a great church. He was influenced by big thinkers such as Dr. Yonggi Cho of South Korea (he served on Cho's board), Derek Prince (with whom he was good friends) and other major ministers of the era. As a young man, I was first exposed to such leaders through Harthern. As I watched him up close, I slowly began to understand that God had given me a vision too.
5. **Faith and finances go hand in hand.** Harthern also taught me to walk in faith and to believe God for finances. When he developed a 10-week new believers' class, he asked me to teach two classes: one on faith and another

on finances. By teaching straight from his notes, the Scriptures and truths in those classes became part of my life. As a 20-something, I benefited from teaching it far more than my students likely did.

There are many more things I learned from Roy Harthern in the five years I was on his staff, including how to conduct meetings, interact with staff and solve problems. I also saw how he used his bold, outgoing and charming public persona to lead others. It's a side of my personality I've had to develop over time.

Roy Harthern was a great leader, but he wasn't perfect. After a difficult situation came to light (on which there is no need to elaborate), he submitted to correction, worked through the situation and held his family together. It was the darkest chapter of his life, yet I saw him deal with it with integrity. He did the right thing, and in the end he finished strong.

Despite his passing, Roy Harthern's life continues to be an example to me—as I hope it is to you.

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