

# A Marriage Made for Ministry

by Jack Hayford

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*A strong marriage is the foundation for effective ministry, and prioritizing one's relationship with their spouse is key to unity and strength in ministry.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 13:4, Ephesians 5:2, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 3:19, 1 Peter 3:7

**Topics:** "Marriage Ministry", "Sacrificial Love"

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## Description

Jack Hayford preaches on the importance of husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the church, emphasizing the commitment to serve one another and grow through all circumstances. Through their 50-year marriage, Jack and Anna Hayford have exemplified sacrificial love, nurturing each other to fulfill their potential in the Lord and extending that love to impact countless lives through their ministry. By prioritizing their marriage and learning to die to self, Jack and Anna have discovered the key to effective ministry and unity, inspiring others to build lasting relationships and ministries on a foundation of true love.

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## Transcript

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. (Ephesians 5:24)

Achieving the strength and beauty of a marriage that lasts 50 years takes two people who are committed to two things: first, to serve one another and second, to grow through every circumstance of life. While faithfully loving and serving their Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, Jack and Anna Hayford have also spent a half-century learning to love and serve one another. In addition to the fruitfulness of raising a family, their marriage has produced the foundation for an influential ministry that has transformed countless lives, raising people up to the fullness of God's purpose in them. The extraordinary working of God's grace in and through Jack and Anna Hayford's marriage has equipped others to extend the servant life of Jesus to a lost world. But learning to love and serve like Jesus came at the substantial cost of learning to die to self and to be shaped into His likeness.

Early in his marriage to Anna, God invited Jack Hayford to see that the greatest way to love and serve Christ's Bride, the Church, was to learn first to love his own bride. It was in understanding the essential relationship between serving his wife as a loving husband and serving a world he wanted to reach as a pastor that the course of this marriage made for ministry began to truly flourish.

For Jack Hayford, learning the lessons of loving Anna like Christ loved the Church began with more than a willingness to die in her defense. However noble the role of her protector against physical harm may have been, Jack realized that Jesus was calling him to a sacrificial death of his convenience, his self-interest and his rights as head of their household. God brought new insight to Jack of his redemptive role as Anna's husband, learning to graciously nurture his wife to the fullest realization of her potential in the Lord. At the same time, he learned to truly listen to her heart, to understand her feelings and to give her his undivided attention.

Over the years, Pastor Jack learned God's heart and His way of loving His Bride, the Church. As he also grew in loving his own bride, Anna, he saw an expanded effectiveness and increased influence in his pastoral ministry. In his book, *Pastors of Promise*, Jack Hayford writes, "Pastoral ministry to Christ's Bride ultimately only goes as deep as the pastor's ministry to his own bride. Any spiritual values I teach will finally only be as credible as the value I am perceived to place on my wife--and the mutual value toward me that my leadership begets in her response."

As Jack began relating to Anna according to the value of her true worth, Anna responded by pouring her love into Jack. While together with Jack at a camp, Anna received a "word from the Lord" through a speaker at the camp who was praying for her: "You are like a candle--let your light shine brighter, but you are not to shine for anyone else except Jack. He is your ministry." This "word" encouraged Anna, because she believed the Lord had prepared her from the time she was a child to be Jack's wife. Growing up the seventh of nine children on a small farm in Nebraska during the Depression, Anna learned self-reliance early, making her ready to support and care for her husband and family. Besides serving Jack in the practical concerns of everyday life with her unselfish love, Anna has always faithfully supported her husband in prayer.

One day, early in their marriage, while Anna prayed for the Lord to guide Jack in his decisions for their lives, she heard the Lord speak to her heart: "No, I want to show you what you're supposed to do." Anna understood this to mean that she was to enter into a true partnership with Jack. As well as supporting her husband, Anna established her own walk with God. By partnering together to seek God's will, Jack and Anna received a clear sense of direction for their lives and ministry that produced a singleness of purpose in their union.

Both Jack and Anna knew from a young age that they were called to ministry. There was never a question mark over what to do with their lives. They knew that the purpose of their life together was to give their lives away. "We partner in absolute agreement in what God calls us to do," says Jack. "If you know the Lord has given you something to do, it doesn't matter how tough the trial. You can navigate it because God knew it would be there, and He's going to take you through."

Discovering the richness of their relationship required their commitment to stay married for as long as they lived. Recognizing that there is no such thing as a problem that can't be solved, Anna says, "Divorce is not a word in our vocabulary. God is the center of our union. Our marriage is worth fighting for, settling arguments and tenaciously handling together all the circumstances of life." Moving together in true unity didn't happen for them overnight. Although Jack and Anna have faced difficulties in their 50 years of marriage, the blessings (and laughter) have always outweighed the trials. God has blessed them with a wonderful family that they thoroughly enjoy--four children, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild on the way.

The reward of watching the Lord impact those they touch, and sensing the pleasure of God as they serve His purpose for His glory, brings great joy to Jack and Anna. Ministering together to other couples in ministry who attend The Jack W. Hayford School of Pastoral Nurture, Pastor Jack and Anna share transparently about the challenges they've faced together and the lessons they've learned that have strengthened their sense of unity. Many husbands and wives have learned from them how to build a lasting ministry on the foundation of a marriage nourished by true love.

Jack and Anna Hayford continue to cultivate their relationship according to God's divine order and design for marriage, and it is from this resource that they draw their strength for ministry. "Even when Anna is not there," says Jack, "the strength of knowing she is with me in heart--the real sense of Anna's presence--is the grace and gift of God, it's knowing God's hand is on me."

After 50 years of God's amazing grace upon their marriage and their ministry, Jack and Anna Hayford look forward to continuing to celebrate the milestones of their life together, just as they continue to be shaped by the Master's hand. Together, they steward the grace of God, two functioning as one, as they use the gifts entrusted to them by the Lord for building up the Bride of Christ.

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