

A Veritable Feast

BY MICHELE BUCKINGHAM

Sometimes those who feed the flock day in and day out need to stop and take the time to be fed themselves.

I've just returned from the first "Increasing Your Fruitfulness" conference co-sponsored by Jack Hayford and *Ministries Today*. Held in late September at the beautifully appointed Founders Inn & Conference Center in Virginia Beach (adjacent to the Christian Broadcasting Network and Regent University), the conference drew over 800 pastors and church leaders from the East Coast and across the country.

In sessions spread over two days, Jack, the sole teacher, spoke directly and poignantly to the assembled leaders about two topics that he believes are crucial to spiritual breakthrough in the church: developing a worshipful, worshiping people, and building up men as strong leaders in Christ. Jack has written on these topics in *Ministries Today*. In the conference, however, he was able to pursue them in greater depth, appealing to his audience on the much more personal level that only eye contact—and extended time in a relaxed setting—can afford.

The response from the men and women who sat under Jack's teaching was tremendous. Many had sacrificed much, juggled busy schedules and travelled far to attend the conference. But everyone I spoke to agreed it had been worth it. The fellowship, the worship and the teaching were rich. Younger pastors in particular found it beneficial to learn from such a respected and sea-

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soned leader—whose heart, it was clear, was full of compassion and understanding for their unique role and calling in the body of Christ.

One aspect of the conference that many said they appreciated was the lack of hype. The sessions were opened with praise and worship led by Jack. Sue Dodge shared in song in several sessions but it was obvious to all that her objective was not entertainment but ministry. The sense that was communicated, I believe, was one of respect for the pastors in attendance—respect for the preciousness of their time, for the depth of their relationship with Christ as leaders in His body, and for the seriousness of their goals in making the trek to Virginia Beach.

For those who arrived at the Founders Inn hungry for the deeper things of God, desiring to increase their fruitfulness in ministry, the conference was a veritable feast. I'm excited for the impact I expect to see in churches across the country as these men and women return to their congregations well-fed, refreshed and affirmed in their calling.

Many have asked, "Will there be another conference?" I'm happy to announce that we will cosponsor three more regional leadership conferences with Jack next year. Hopefully those ministers who were unable to attend the East Coast conference will find it more convenient to attend at a location nearer to home. Watch for more information as we move into 1994.

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