

Mike Mayer: Leading Bible studies in the oilfield business

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Mike Mayer, a member of First Baptist Church in Midland since 1999, is in the oilfield service business with companies ranging from electrical savings, directional drilling, equipment rental, artificial lift, sanitation and hot shot trucking. He has been involved in these companies since as early as 2007.

From deep in the heart of one Texan, Mayer shares his background and thoughts on being a follower of Christ in the marketplace. To suggest a Texas Baptist leader in the marketplace to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

What other businesses have you been in, and what were your positions there?

Once I graduated from college, I worked for an oilfield services company later bought by Schlumberger, working there for 22 years. I had positions from junior engineer in Houma, La., to business manager in Paris, France.

I left to join a family-owned business as general manager in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in the West Indies. From there, I met a man who sold me his business in Monahans, Texas, in early 1999. That business was sold in 2007, but I was asked to stay on as an adviser, eventually leaving in 2010.

Where did you grow up?

I was born near Houston but raised for the most part in Jackson, Miss. My

dad worked for Gulf Oil Corporation and was transferred to Jackson, then left Gulf because he liked Jackson and the fellowship of the members of our church there. Jackson and our church proved great places to grow up physically and spiritually.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

When I was 7, I began understanding from my mother and father that there was more available for me in Christ, but I didn't understand enough to please my pastor until I was 9. At that point, I was able to give my life to Christ publicly and be baptized in Christ at Woodland Hills Baptist Church in Jackson.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

I received a Bachelor of Science degree in business at Mississippi State University.

Life in the marketplace

Why do you feel called into the marketplace?

As bad as I wanted to do something else, I followed my dad's footsteps into the oil field. After working 24 years for others, God allowed me to have my own business and later to partner with others. It was then I knew I had to set the example for others.

That led to starting Bible studies and feeling free to share my faith. I had taken Evangelism Explosion and Experiencing God to learn how others did it, but I finally realized my story and explanation were unique to me, and they worked fine—especially with the folks I deal with daily.

How does being a Christian influence your decisions in the marketplace?

I try to let each decision be surrounded by prayer and the “is this the right thing to do” filter, as well as the “how does this affect the others involved” filter. I can’t say all decisions have been made that way, but I know I will be held responsible for my decisions.

What is your favorite aspect of the marketplace? Why?

The people you meet along the way. In our business, we meet all kinds of people who are in different situations. Our business depends on how we treat those we meet.

For the same reason, we as Christians must differentiate ourselves from nonbelievers by showing God’s love to others as we work and meet people in the marketplace.

One of my favorite sayings is, “Is there enough evidence to prove you guilty of being a Christian?” If not, why not?

What one aspect of the marketplace gives you the greatest joy?

To watch people grow in many different ways: workwise, financially, spiritually, etc.

We are blessed to offer three Bible studies at the company: each Tuesday—mainly company; Thursday—company and outsiders; and Tuesday at lunch—women only. People get to know that God in our marketplace is a good thing. It gives me joy that we are able to offer these Bible studies at our offices.

Most of our businesses have 24/7 schedules, so there are times when we cannot make it to a church at a regular hour. To be able to provide an

avenue for study, learning and fellowship is important. My preference would be that we were able to show ourselves as worthy representatives for Christ in our marketplace.

What one aspect of the marketplace would you like to change?

I would like to see more openness in the oilfield services business. As the oilfield, in general, shrinks due to mergers and buyouts, the reward for differentiating the company for doing good work goes away. The “local” people are replaced by administrators whose job depends on “differentiation” of another kind—price only. The ability to interact and show God’s love is somehow lost. If there was a way to slow that trend, that would be my change.

Relationships are as important in business as they are in sharing the love of Jesus to others.

How do you expect the marketplace to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

I think relationships will always be important, but it is my belief that their importance will take a backseat to price and bidding. As the oilfield service business moves into the “process engineering” mode, the ability to share our love for Christ may become more difficult. By the same token, I believe more and more companies are allowing Bible studies and devotionals, thereby advancing the Christian discussion in the workplace.

What do you wish more people knew about the marketplace?

The marketplace is on its way to being an auxiliary “church.” It seems many companies are allowing Bible studies to take place at work, and it is my belief the marketplace is less threatening than having to go to a church.

Our studies have allowed people to grow in their faith, and we've seen many of our employees go on to start their own studies. It has become an easy way to talk about Jesus in a nonthreatening environment and has allowed some great discussions. Some have overcome their fear of speaking and praying in front of others.

About Baptists

What would you change about the Baptist denomination—state, nation or local?

If I were “king,” I would have Baptists heal their differences. Baptists talk every Sunday about the significance of forgiving others. What has happened to our leaders? I understand we don't have a pope or king who must approve or disapprove of each decision or who must rule on each difference.

We as Baptists—and Christians—only have one mission in life, and that is stated in Matthew 28:19-20: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even until the very end of the age.” That is our job, plain and simple.

I would have our leaders find a way to reunite and work together for Christ and him alone.

About Mike

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they

influence you?

My dad, who taught me to do what is right and how to persevere. It came in handy when I was trying to get a loan to purchase the business. I went to 13 banks before a bank would give me a chance.

Bobby Shows, my youth pastor, who showed me as long as you have joy, you can be happy in any situation you have to face, and if you are following God's plan for your life, you will always find joy along the way.

What is the impact of the marketplace on your family?

I'm blessed to have had one of my daughters working with me for several years. During that time, we all grew due to the Bible studies. At one point, she was leading the ladies' study, even providing the notes for them.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

These verses remind me my salvation is not about me or anything I did or will do. It is all about him, and for that, I am grateful.

It is strange how many people we encounter who still believe salvation is all about works.

Who is your favorite Bible character, other than Jesus? Why?

Peter. I've never tried to cut anyone's ear off, nor have I heard the cock crow, but I have made some very quick decisions that I've regretted almost immediately and had to seek forgiveness. The good news is we have a loving God who forgives our mistakes. Unfortunately, the consequences

remain and have to be dealt with in a manner pleasing to him.