

The Weight of a Word

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BY JEFFREY E. HANSEN, PhD.

[And a response by my Pastor Earl](#)

I came home tonight from the Holdfast and AnchorPoint Christmas party with a mix of gratitude and something harder to name.

Tim Hayden did a remarkable job. Truly. I have known Tim Hayden for three years now. He recruited me out of my hospital role, took a chance on me, and trusted me to help shape something meaningful. AnchorPoint exists because of his vision, and I do not forget that. Whatever comes next, that truth stands.

Seth was there as well, our new president. Barely thirty-five, sharp, energetic, decisive. A good and competent man with a clear vision for running organizations like ours. He is moving fast, hiring staff at a pace I can no longer keep up with. The organization will be in capable hands. I believe that sincerely.

And then there was me.

Standing in that room, I realized I was the oldest man there. Seventy-one years old. Ten years active-duty Army. Another ten years with the Department of Defense. I am not a war hero, and I am not borrowing valor that does not belong to me. But the culture of the military shaped me

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in ways that never quite leave you. One of those ways is a deep and almost instinctive understanding of respect.

Not ego. Not entitlement. Respect for judgment earned over time. Respect for experience paid for with long nights, hard decisions, and the burden of responsibility when consequences truly mattered. Respect not as sentiment, but as a lived practice.

I have been valued here. I know that. I have been appreciated for teaching, speaking, writing, publishing, and offering vision and frameworks. I have been respected for mentoring and for helping shape clinical thinking. For all of that, I am grateful.

And yet, when it came to clinical judgment, to discernment forged over decades, something often overrode it. Concerns I raised. Things I tried to call early. Directions I felt uneasy about. Over time, my voice seemed to carry less weight than the experience behind it might have warranted.

As I watched how quickly my replacement stepped into place, how seamlessly the organization continued forward, I felt a quiet recognition arise. Not anger. Not resentment. Just the awareness that I may no longer quite fit in the way I once did.

It is not that Tim Hayden or Seth do not understand respect. They do. They simply see it differently than I do. Their understanding of respect is more optical, more functional, and more oriented toward momentum and outcomes. Mine runs deeper and slower. It was shaped in a culture where words mattered because lives sometimes depended on them. Where commitments were not symbolic. Where follow through was not optional.

I do not believe they do not care. I believe they genuinely want to do the right thing. But there is a difference between caring and seeing. A difference between intention and attunement. And that difference has become increasingly difficult for me to ignore.

Respect, as I understand it, shows up in the small, unglamorous places. It is returning phone calls. It is responding to emails, especially when concerns are raised. It is listening when someone brings forward something that needs attention, even if it slows the machine. It is not scheduling a meeting and then letting it quietly disappear. It is not leaving someone wondering whether what they said mattered.

More recently, that gap became harder to sit with. When I raised a concern with staff around an issue I believed was important, I was later spoken to and chastised in a way that felt dismissive, as though my experience and judgment carried little value. That landed heavily. Not because feedback or disagreement is unwelcome, but because it reflected a fundamental misunderstanding of both my intent and my history. After decades of clinical work, leadership,

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and service, to be addressed in that manner revealed not malice, but a lack of attunement, and it stung.

Then there was a meeting that finally went well. It was honest, respectful, and clarifying. I was told a contract would be ready the next day. I took that at face value, because I am a man of my word, and I assume the same of others. When I later learned it had not been completed and was now being pushed out, something in me quietly took note.

On the surface, it was not a major issue. Contracts get delayed. Schedules change. I understand all of that. But underneath, it represented something deeper. If the respect ran deep, someone would have made the call. Someone would have said this matters to him. Someone would have recognized that honoring a word is not a technicality but a value. If circumstances changed, communication would have been enough.

That is the old school in me. When I say I am going to do something, I do it. If I cannot, I communicate. That is respect.

And when I am honest with myself, the hourglass matters. The years ahead of me are far fewer than the years behind me. That reality clarifies what deserves my energy and what no longer does. I have little interest now in fighting to be understood at the deepest level of who I am. I am tired of circling conversations and explaining why certain things matter. Not because they are unimportant, but because they have already been lived.

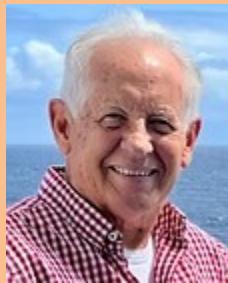
I am not saying I am leaving. I am saying I am listening more carefully than I used to. Paying attention to what feels aligned and what does not. At this stage of life, I am less interested in pushing or persuading, and more interested in honesty, mutual regard, and work that does not require me to set aside myself in order to belong.

I still care deeply about the people and the mission. That has not changed. What is changing is my awareness of where my energy goes and what it costs. Some seasons call for endurance. Others call for discernment. I believe I am in the latter.

I do not yet know what this will mean. I am not rushing toward conclusions. I am simply allowing myself to name what I see and to trust that clarity will come in its own time. For now, it is enough to remain open, reflective, and true to what matters most to me.

That, too, is the weight of a word.

And my Pastor Earl nicely replies:



"Jeff, one additional thought about generations.

You and I are of the same generation, as are our wives. Many of your co laborers at Holdfast come from different generations. Tim by one. Seth by two. Their worldviews and core assumptions about life, leadership, authority, and faith have been shaped in environments and cultures very different from those that shaped you and me. One is not good and the other bad. They are simply different.

That difference places a responsibility on us as elders. Our calling is not to insist that younger generations adapt to our language, preferences, or instincts. Rather, we are to find ways to communicate values and truth that resonate with them. Eternal values and enduring truths. Not merely cultural habits or temporal expressions of them.

I have been fighting this battle for decades in ministry and from the pulpit. The conclusion I have come to, again and again, is this. Seek the Lord. Discern what He is doing. Then join Him in that work. When that posture is maintained, relevance is not something we strive for. It emerges naturally across generations.

I have watched you do this well, especially with your patients and with children. You have an ability to meet people where they are without compromising who you are or what you believe. That is not a small gift.

This work becomes more difficult when it must be applied to peers. You and I will never truly be one of them. Because of that, they will never relate to us in the ways that feel most comfortable to us. That can be humbling and at times painful, but it is also part of the calling of eldership.

Fear not. God is still very much at work at Holdfast and AnchorPoint. You are not finished, but your role has changed and must continue to change. That does not signal loss. It signals transition.

Embrace it. Trust God for what comes next. I believe it will surprise all of you."

In His grace,

Pastor Earl