



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 9, 2014

Truett Cathy: Christian Businessman Used Fortune to Help Others, Share Faith

Chick-fil-A founder S. Truett Cathy (shown), who died September 8 at age 93, was hailed by a wide range of leaders for his generosity and for putting his Christian convictions before his business success.

Cathy, who started in 1946 with one small restaurant selling his signature chicken sandwich, growing his business over the next 70-plus years into nearly 2,000 restaurants and annual sales exceeding \$5 billion, defied standard business practices by insisting on closing all Chick-fil-A stores on Sunday to honor the Sabbath. He once said that “if it took seven days to make a living with a restaurant, then we needed to be in some other line of work.”



Reflecting on that against-the-grain decision, Cathy explained, “I was not so committed to financial success that I was willing to abandon my principles and priorities. Our decision to close on Sunday was our way of honoring God and of directing our attention to things that mattered more than our business.”

Cathy told a reporter that “people appreciate your being consistent with your faith. It’s a silent witness to the Lord when people go into shopping malls, and everyone is bustling, and you see that Chick-fil-A is closed.”

Cathy, who never went to college, was renowned for his savvy business acumen, along with a strong work ethic, which he said he learned from his parents. Cathy often recalled that the only time he saw his mother with her eyes closed was at her funeral.

A billionaire several time over, Cathy poured much of his fortune into helping disadvantaged youth through his [WinShape Foundation](#), and funded many Christian and conservative causes, particularly those dedicated to defending and protecting traditional families.

Cathy said that he wanted to be remembered “as one who kept my priorities in the right order. We live in a changing world, but we need to be reminded that the important things have not changed. I have always encouraged my restaurant operators and team members to give back to the local community. We should be about more than just selling chicken; we should be a part of our customers’ lives and the communities in which we serve.”

In a statement following Cathy’s passing, former President Jimmy Carter, a close friend for many years, said that “in every facet of his life, Truett Cathy has exemplified the finest aspects of his Christian faith. By his example, he has been a blessing to countless people.”

A member of the Southern Baptist denomination, Cathy taught the eighth-grade boys Sunday school class at his church for over 50 years. [Baptist Press News](#) quoted Cathy’s pastor, the Rev. Mel Blackaby



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of the Atlanta-area First Baptist Church in Jonesboro, as saying that, with all of his success in business, Cathy “chose to invest his life in the next generation of leaders.”

Blackaby said that Cathy’s “winsome personality left a positive impression on every person he met.... In the marketplace he may be known as ‘the inventor of the chicken sandwich,’ but his success in business simply gave him the opportunity to serve people and point them to Christ. Truett’s life is the story of a man and his God. He leaves an example for all to follow.”

Among those pausing to honor Truett Cathy at his passing were U.S. Representative Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.), who remembered the Christian businessman as “a remarkable man whose life was purposely lived in a manner that pointed toward the cross. Thank you for a lifetime of honorably standing strong for American free enterprise, job creation, faith in Christ, and religious liberties.”

Popular financial counselor Dave Ramsey remembered Cathy as “a godly man who loved his family well and showed us faith in the market place.”

And Christian evangelist Franklin Graham, who also heads the global humanitarian outreach Samaritan’s Purse, wrote on his Facebook page, “I knew Mr. Cathy for many years and had the privilege of riding motorcycles with him. He was a fine Christian gentleman who carried his Christian business principles throughout life.... He was kind and extremely generous and used the profits from his business to help others. He will be greatly missed.”

Reflecting on Cathy’s life and legacy, Russell Moore of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission said that, above all, Cathy “modeled integrity, hard work, and compassion. The ‘closed on Sundays’ sign on his stores is a countercultural statement that man does not live by bread alone, and there is more to life than a bottom line.”

Photo of Truett Cathy: AP Images



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