

Campus Crusade for Christ Founder Bill Bright Dies

After a nearly three-year battle with pulmonary fibrosis, Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI) founder Bill Bright died July 19 in his Orlando, Fla., home. He was 81.

“Bill Bright showed us not only how to live and serve, but he showed us how to die well,” said pastor Ted Haggard, president of the National Association of Evangelicals. “For any of us to live like he lived would be a wonderful manifestation of the grace of God.”

Once a self-described “happy pagan,” Bright is credited with sharing the gospel with billions worldwide through the Jesus Film Project, which has been shown to some 5.1 billion people; his Four Spiritual Laws tract, which has been translated into 200 languages; and through CCCI, which has 26,000 full-time employees and more than 225,000 trained volunteers.

In 1996, he received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, worth more than \$1 million, which was donated to promote his prayer and fasting initiatives. “He has carried a burden on his heart as few men that I’ve ever known, a burden for the evangelization of the world,” evangelist Billy Graham once said of Bright. “He is a man whose sincerity and integrity and devotion to our Lord have been an inspiration and a blessing to me ever since the early days of my ministry.”

In May, President Bush called Bright early one morning to tell

him he was thinking of him. In July, actor Mel Gibson stopped by his house to discuss his film project The Passion, then viewed a portion of the Jesus film at CCCI headquarters.

Yet friends say Bright was among the most humble men they knew. Evangelist Benny Hinn prayed for Bright several times and visited him a couple of months before his death. "Rather than us ministering to him, he ministered to us," Hinn said. "Everything he said was about the Lord ... it was like sitting at the feet of one of the apostles. He never once mentioned his sickness; his focus was on Jesus."

Bright remained busy until the end, preaching—though from a wheelchair and sometimes via satellite—and completing a list of 80 tasks he said the Lord wanted him to see through. In 2001 he tapped Steve Douglass as his successor at CCCI, and in 2003 he named author and noted speaker John Maxwell as chairman of his Global Pastors Network, which he co-founded with the Rev. James Davis to train indigenous ministry leaders.

Bright is survived by his wife, Vonette, his sons Zachary and Bradley, and four grandchildren. A memorial service was held July 30 in Orlando.

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