

Hollywood Producer: 'There's a Lot of People in Heaven Because of Jack Hayford'

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As the faith world continues to celebrate the life of the late Pastor Jack Hayford, a renowned preacher and the founder of The Church On The Way in Van Nuys, California, a well-known Hollywood writer and producer is sharing details of the minister's impact on his family.

Brian Bird, co-creator of the popular TV show "When Calls the Heart" and a veteran film and TV writer, told CBN's Faithwire about his family's meaningful relationship with Hayford, who died Jan. 8 at 88.

As it turns out, Bird's grandfather, Pastor Vincent Bird, was a spiritual father of sorts to Hayford. Bird said his grandpa, a lifelong preacher, even ended up working for Hayford after his retirement.

"When [my grandpa] retired ... Jack Hayford invited him to come on staff at Church on the Way as the pastor to seniors," Bird said. "Because my grandpa was a mentor to Jack when Jack was ... first coming up through Life Bible College."

Bird said his father, Robert, was also at Life Bible College at the same time Hayford attended and added there was a "real sense of brotherhood," especially considering the familial connections.

And that relationship only grew over the years.

"When I was a kid, I played in the sandbox with his kids, and we loved the Hayfords," he said. "We loved the ministry of Church on the Way. I loved everything about them."

Hayford, a larger-than-life character who Bird said made everyone feel as though they were his friends, wasn't only a monumental ministry figure. He also took the time to encourage people one-on-one, building and fostering relationships throughout his life.

Bird, a former newspaper reporter who has found massive success in Hollywood, recalled the preacher encouraging him on his own journey to Tinseltown.

Bird was moved by the humility and kindness of Hayford's actions.

"He was a really a Billy Graham's kind of figure in our world; he really was that influential," he said. "All his books and his music that he wrote over the years ... there's a lot of people in heaven because of Jack." {eo}

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