

# My Earthy Hero

By Ron Hafer

## **Announcer**

Crazy. Why don't we pray before I introduce our speaker for today? God we just thank you for uh just coming back to Biola. Lord wither our break was restful or stressful we thank you that were ever were at we can come into your presence and declare that you are faithful you are strong in our lives and in the world. God we see you working around us but Lord just know that you are working within our hearts and in our lives. Thanks for interterm and the difference that it is. Some people had easy classes really stressful class. Lord I just thank you for this time and in this season. In your name we pray amen.

## **Ron Hafer**

Uh well we are going to hear today from one of our favorites. I'm sure. One of mine and one of yours I'm sure. He is the Chaplin here. He is joy. As I was praying for him this morning I said that lord I know we are going to have fun with him. But I pray that you would also help us to hear you so we know that he is going to bring some truth and some fun. So let's welcome our Chaplin Rhone Hafer.

Happy New Year. We could be in trouble. My water just ran out. An optimist as someone who thinks that when their cup is empty, that their message is over. Wrong. Wrong. We can always get more water. I was interviewed by one of my favorite chimes writer, just before Christmas break. and she was asking me as graciously a she could, when I was going to retire, that I've put in 40 years plus, or if I was going to retire ever; and I said, you know, with Dr. Cook our president, that after his years he is a class act. He knew when it was time. He stepped aside. He

did it because he wanted to leave at the top of his game. While he still had some good years of ministry. I said "I on the other hand I am not that way". I will go kicking and screaming. If I had 40 more years I will do it. No I won't leave. NO. "But you are 100 Ron, it is time to go." So here I am, and I want you to now I have no other plane, people in Metzger might have another plan but I have no other plane than this.

I am going to do a tribute this morning. Do not worry Lindsey I will not sing. Uh. As I was listening to a number of world leaders who uh wished that they had said things to Jerrold Ford in person, of course they did not have the opportunity before he passed away. So, they sent notes in tribute saying "we wished we could have said this to him personally." So, I want to do a tribute this morning to my hero, he is still alive, he has been my hero virtually all my life. I love Jesus Christ with all of my heart and soul and mind and strength. That's the one that I want to serve. I want my life to count. I can't think of anything I'd rather do or any place I'd rather be in serving him then right here.

So Christ is my joy he's virtually my reason for existing. I am sure that that's the same with you. However, my earthly hero was a, is a big guy. 5'9, I am only 5'6. If you saw him, I said to linsey, "What I'd like to do is fly my hero in so that all of you can see him. Don't you think that would be special?" But she said, "This is a low budget program Ron." So if my hero was here, if he walked in while I was speaking, he won't, that would surprise me more than anyone, you would see this big guy, if you saw him, as I remember him at his peak, you would have seen him get out of the car, brand new shiny 1936 black Chevrolet, you say were there other colors. No there were not. There were all black Chevrolets. 5'9 kind of slight built than the person that stands before you. Actually bright red curly hair.

I can't remember even when he was going to bed without a big black cigar right here. Always lit. I still long for the smell of that. God forgive me. I did not smoke. I just smelled them. I didn't inhale. But it's ok because I like to stand and sniff at gasoline and cars too you know. That's just the way I am.

So dad gets out. Mom gets out of the car with him. Big brother Dale and little brother Ron are in the back seat. And my hero says, "you boys wait right here and we will be right out." Well we didn't wait right here because we knew that they wouldn't be right out. We pulled up in front of the magnet in. Yes little beer joint, and ain't it Oklahoma, my dad's favorite watering hole. Well on Friday, we went almost every night, but on Friday it lasted a little longer because Friday is when he got paid. You say "You mean they would leave these two small boys unattended in the car?" Yes. Yes. It was just a while bazar.

It's the story of the prodigal family at very best. So dad would go in to cash his check, of course he would cash his check and he would start to knock down a few uh Coors, Americas fine light beer, and whatever else they had. And then of course they would do the Texas two stomp for uh uh as long as long as it took to get snookered. And my father, who is he were here. If he were here he would tell you that he was not just a drinker, but he was the town alcoholic. My dad would say to us, sometimes sober and sometimes not, "Be the very best you can, I am the best I am the biggest alcoholic in town." And he laughed. And he you knew that he was the very best. And he was my hero. The whole family was Pagan and what else was there to do then fight, cuss, stomp, and rump.

My dad was very good at all of those things. I am not going to glamorize my hero but I want to tell you at five foot nine he could have taken rocky balboa. I mean it. My dad was so tuff. And

what was tuff about him was that he could take a blow and bounce right back like those rubber things. He was just amazing. He was not the greatest boxer but he is an incredible street fighter. So, after about forty five minute in the car, actually we weren't in the care, we were letting air out of the tires, my bother said lets go around into the back. The ones who laughed at that have done that by the way. So we would go to the back of the Magnet Inn, and wait for the door to swing open. And let me tell you ya we watched many, dad never lost a rumble. The doors kicked open. The first guy that came out was massive. Might have been six foot tall. He ripped off his shirt. I said to my brother, "What is that on his chest?" My brother said, "That is hair." The Hafers do not grow hair, so I was amazed that a guy had this forest on his chest and uh while I had Hodgkin, 11 year ago, it's gone, yay, uh they, uh I did radiation.

I am the only Hafer that ever grew hair on his chest. Eight beautiful red curly hair, I went through radiation and they roasted them off. I have a lawsuit against Kaiser. I am going to nail them. I get a transplant. Where was I? Oh yes! Then Dad came out then ripped off his shirt. This scrawny little guy. And everyone thought this scrawny guy is going to get knocked." but he didn't, he got hit but he just landed his blows. Two drunks fighting fairly not glamorously at the back of the Magnet inn. My mom is sitting over there quietly cheering for her hero. My brother and I we just knew that dad was going to win. And he did, He popped the left, you know forgive me ladies. I do like to glamorize but I guess a little. And of course his opponent for the night fell. His wife or girlfriend who ever, ran over and picked up a rock. Yelled to my dad.

You know I am not going to give verbatim what she said. This is what she said " You very bad person" and she had never thrown anything in her life. I am not against women, Lindsey introduced me and she is my favorite people in the world. Nor am I against women that are south paws, lefties. But she was the most. I don't think she had ever thrown. Her arm just dangled and

she had this rock and she just let it fly and it's almost like God, you see I had to put that in, it's almost as though God said to the angles "Shall we?" And is the only thing she ever hit. She hit my dad I mean exactly right here. To this day, at 90 years of age, he has an upside V, not for victory, cause he lost the second round, he fell. My mother said to this lady, "Shame on you." we both dug our wires away. My dad is in the back seat feeling no pain. Mom is using an ugly shirt to splotch up the blood so he would not bleed to death and I was in the back seat and just looking like "Life doesn't get any more exciting." And my brother who was nine drove the car home yet again. We were a very dysfunctional family. Let me fast forward. How long do we have? Oh we're done. Let me fast forward.

After several years with gold oil company moving all over Texas and Oklahoma, my dad gathered the family and said, "You know the guys I have been running around with have been a bad influence on me so we are getting away from them." So we moved to Colorado. To get away from all the bad guys, but took a few of the bad guys with us. And I entered junior high, middle school, I would like to say this about all middle schoolers who are like ahhh, God help them, who else will. And I was very typical middle school kid. Mostly always in trouble, but amongst our group was a young girl named Patsy. She was not terribly short, but she was the shortest girl in the school. I was by far the littlest human being. No one anywhere until I shot up to my present strapping height. I know you'll find this hard to believe, but I was little and chubby. Don't say a thing. So here was Patsy. If I wore my engineer boots and combed my hair up and stood very erect as a little person, I came about to her chin, but I thought that was close enough. So I made my move on her one day. I asked if she would like to go on a dance or something. I wasn't a Christian for heaven's sake. And uhh and uhh she said. [INAUDIBLE] So she said, "No I can't go". But a real life girl had never gone anywhere with me anyway. But she said, "Would

you like to go to church with me?" And I said I'll think about it. I said YES YES YES, you know you don't want to lose the moment so I did. I went with her to this church about a block from where we lived. Patsy was a C minus and I was a D+ at the best. But Patsy had a cousin. A foxy chick, sweet mama. Really good looking babe. She was a fine looking young lady, and I had an older brother. My brother made a move on this babe. She shut him down but she would let him sit with her in church. We found that this church, this was years ago, had Sunday night service, and they had missionary film. So we would sit once a month. So we would sit in the balcony during the missionary film with our sweet Christian girls and hold hands.

We were just ecstatic we could barely stand. So here we were. The Christian Hafer boys had now begun to walk inside the confines of a church. On Sunday night, my dad and my mom would be seen hand in hand walking the block. Uh from where we lived to the church and around.

Sometimes they lapped but two sometimes three times. But people who didn't know them, the few men who hadn't been pounded by my dad in the community would look at them and say "My, what a sweet couple. Look they are arm in arm." They were arm in arm because Sunday night was when my dad was trying to get sober from the entire week and sometimes they would make it two or three laps sometimes, they would actually sit on the porch of this church, especially in the summer, and sit there and dad would light up his stogy if it wasn't already lit.

They've already done their walking, and they liked the music. Frankly it was a little bit hoky, you know. But so were we. So imagine his boys are inside the church and here are mom and sitting on the porch, steps, of the church, and the music is hauling away and dad's smoke is wafting in on the scene. So usually there would be an elder or a deacon chosen for their size or inability to smile, and they would come out and they would say come out and say [INAUDIBLE] not in your church. My mom would report and the elder would say to my dad you know your smoke from

that cigar is offending the ladies. And my dad would say "Do you want to eat the cigar?" and then the elder would say no, go right ahead J. just go ahead and smoke.

During the service on occasion before the preacher would start he actually would sit on the steps, this preacher Sherman Millar is home with Jesus and my dad sent him a few years early. He would sit on the steps next to my dad and would talk to my dad about the lord and about basically about all the sins in his life, and I think the thing that bothered my dad the most weren't the sins because [INADUABLE], but when the preacher would put his hand on my dad's shoulder, my mom would tell us cause she thought it was extremely funny that my dad who could intimidate most people would say to the preacher you touch me again and I'll hit you in the mouth, he is saying to the local pastor. Then the preacher would say you know you could hit me Jay but you can't keep me from loving you. My dad would come home so angry at this little flatlander from Kansas who had the nerve, he wasn't afraid of my dad. And this little preacher was starting to get through to him with his love, not with his message because my dad wasn't hearing the message.

Well one Sunday to make a long story a moment or two longer. One Sunday night, and on a rare occasion, my folks did come into the church. My dad would always paradoxly sit in the first or second or third row, best seats in the house you know. If you're going to be there be right. I always thought boy that's amazing, the biggest sinner right under the spout where the message came out. He didn't sit there very often, but he was there one night when an evangelist, who is also home with the Lord long time (that's what happens when there is an old chaplain telling stories), Billy James brother, Billy James, wide mouth frog from somewhere back well Oklahoma, and he was deep and wide and he was a yeller and he was a sin namer. He would say "Some of you, you cussing you smocking, you spitting, you drinking, and you beat your wives".

And here's my mom and she goes woah woah you preach it revered. "You smack your kids" and where up in the balcony with your babes, we called them our babes, we would say, "Right on go you go." He is naming all the sin. In those days there was a TV show called this is your wife. We thought after ten minutes he named all the sins that could be named. They would come and stand next to my dad and say this is your life Jay Hafer. It was his life then you the preach they kind of make the turn, that is what they use to tell me at Talbot, believe it or not, I went to Talbot and graduated and they said that's ok with the stories but you got to make the turn and the application.

So this old preacher after naming all the sin he could possibly think of, describing my dad exactly, then he told the story of the cross, I was twelve, I think I knew most of it but honestly I don't think I knew about the actual death, certainly I didn't know about the resurrection of Christ, there I sat in the balcony hearing this story, and because I started going on occasion to Sunday school and knew just enough information to be dangerous. I knew that Jesus in the garden, these guy come up and I knew they put uh blinders on him and smacked him. I heard the story of the temple not once but twice where he just cleaned their clocks and kick him, turned over the tables and made a whip. And I thought "you go Jesus get those guys" so I knew he could take these guys so there's not a problem. The problem was the time.

We were going to run out of time because everyone knows you do and I do when chapel ends. And I am sitting there thinking I don't know if he is going to get out of this. As a twelve year old kid in that balcony and saw Denver, it hit me that not only he was going to get out of it and that he had done it for me. I believed at that point my heart was broken and I fell in love with Jesus Christ. I was way too proud to give any kind of a public display. I was crying and my brother reached across both of the girls to wack me several times because tears were not allowed,



emotions and any show of emotions were not allowed. I was very ashamed but I just absolutely couldn't stop it. There is one other person that we know that was visibly moved in the service that night. Jay Hafer in the second row. Mom was on the aisle and dad was here and mom said that during the service she thought that he actually was laughing or trying to hold a cough because she never seen my father moved with emotion and dad later tells the story from just the time from the passion of Christ for about 15 minutes in that message his heart was broken with the truth that Jesus Christ was doing that for his sins. It hit him so right between the eyes.

Well brother Billy James had an invitation and he is southern Baptist, so you did all seven stanzas just as I am, you hum the verse, you whistle the verse, I mean you're going to get it. But it didn't take, it took only about stanza two and during this uh week long they tell me cause we were only there on Sunday nights uh we heard that there was only one that had a miserable failure of revival. Only one person uh responded openly. It was Jay Hafer. He was sitting down there and he said to my mom "let's go down there" she said "why" and he said well he actually didn't know what to say. She said she told him don't you go that will implicate me. "I'm not going" she said I'm not going. So he just walked by her and walked down right in front.

Two people responded. Dad came forward and mom left. It wasn't a neat little rug. It was hard tile and mom is what we call a full body woman. She had her strikes. You could hear her not only leave angrily but you could hear her all the way to our house while dad was standing at the aisle. Preacher didn't know what to do with this man that was just out of control. Billy James so he let, he let reverend Sherman Millar handle him. Sherman Millar knew my dad and he said "why have you come Jay" my dad he could not he virtually said nothing he was weeping out of control. The spirit of God had broken this heart of my hero. I was thinking what's happening to my hero. Same man but my hero was being changed.

Are you here to confess Christ? Yes. Do you believe that you're a sinner before? Yes. 800 other heads, Yes. Right woah woah. Guys with a broken. Yes yes right right. Says, do you want to confess Christ and savor now do you want to invite Christ in your life. Didn't say anything. Preacher says, he says yes, lets pray. We were dismissed, we dismissed the girls because we couldn't wait to get home cause we thought this was going to be good. Dad went into the prayer room, we call it the room, and my brother would often say that we have seen many people go in and a lot of them never come out. We didn't know what happened in that room. I would have loved to been the deacon in that room talking to my dad.

Woah, I would love to have a tape of that. We do? Lindsey? So an hour later, the Pagan, the wild man, from Oklahoma, mom is lived. Here is what Pagans did after church, we went home and made fun of the preacher. You do that too? Or the server because you know what else do you do. Mom of course was a southern woman so shed be whooping up whatever was fattening. She was just banging stuff, he walked down there. Yeah yeah right. We wanted to keep stocking the fire. We didn't want her to run out of enthusiasm. Dad gets home and he says " By by bliptity" He should had said "praise God, I've been born again". When he walked in, dad would always kick the screen, and you say did it stick? No, we're Okies ya know? What could I say? So the screen was just raddling. And so dad was home and he walked in and he is laughing and he is very excited and he sees mom and [INAUDIBLE] She starts chewing at him and he pinned her arms down, very smart, cause she would have popped him. And then uh and then he bent her over. He was going to kiss her on the mouth openly on the kitchen. We didn't see anything like that. So he bent her as far till she could resist no longer. He kissed her on the mouth, right on the mouth. And brother Dale yelled "Religion has brought sex to the kitchen!" which was one of my favorite lines.

Actually that was fairly racy. So we went down stairs where our bedroom was. We knew the rumble. It was really wild for a couple hours dad and he had the music but he didn't have the words. And he is trying to explain what happened to this woman who has just been so angry at him all of these years. Now as the embarrassment continues, well she went to work he didn't go to work the next day, the preacher came over, our next door neighbor told us, probably went home sick because dad smoked his big black stogy for several hours on the porch and put away at least one six pack of Coors, Americans fine light beer, while the preacher is reading him bible principles of how to be a man of God. And we heard all of this from our neighbor. And our neighbor said "Yo it's very interesting yeah we've been having something interesting experiences at our house."

That night was Monday night, did we watch Monday night football? We did not! It didn't exist! Television didn't exist, we didn't have a television. What did you do on a Monday night? We were a bunch of pagans, we told the rankes stories and jokes we could possibly, so we would take turns around the table and we brought friends because the Hafers was a great place to be. If you wanted to get filthy, but incredibly funny stories, God forgive me, I still remember several, and they were incredibly funny, but I will not tell them. Eventually I know they'll leave. They haven't yet. So we're telling stories, actually we just finished the black eyes peas, and the gravy, and bacon and uh and uh my little buddy Roy says I've got this story Mr. Hafer. My dad. "Does it have cussing? Is it dirty?" "Yeah yeah!" My dad, "No we're not going to do that anymore here because last night I got religion at the church." Everybody at the table goes ahahahahaha. And then they see the veins on my dad's neck.

So you know, we were all learning real quick how to adjust to the new religion experience, so my dad grabs a Bible off of the counter. And it said Holy Bible on the front and on the side it

said Gideon. You know where you get a Gideon Bible? You steal it from the hotel. So picks up the hot Bible. Flips somewhere into the Old Testament. And he said "We are going to have family alter." I loved it! I loved it because I've gone to Sunday school. I knew you dig a hole rocks and wood, and have a sacrifice on the alter. And I thought my brother since he is the oldest son! That sucker he'll burn for days! Let's have a family alter.

He started a plaque, a family that prays together stays together. When I tell this part of the story, with this I close, which is still good for four more minutes, which is when the beeper goes up. So my dad says what we're going to do I am going to read from the Bible. I love my dad, dad is still one of the worst absolute worst readers, got many other gifts, reading well as though. So he opens it to the Old Testament and he begins. Here are all these pagans on the table going some on, you know, the bible, and he began to read "Us begat verse" There's a precious verse, woah did you I didn't know "Fuz began ner who" and then he hits a three syllable. Whoever nerve bagat, it was something like makala hanawua. And everyone, my brother, we're biting through our cheeks thinking this is funny let us laugh dad. My brother grabs the bible and says "Why shoot" or something "Let me read is it number three? Why nurhoob bagat" ahahah through the bible in the air which gave everyone permission to laugh and everyone laughed uncontrollably I still remember the joy of that laughter until we saw my father's face.

Family worship and alter was not supposed to be funny, so he did the first thing that came to his mind, he reached over and he just popped my brother right on the head. And my brother thought I've been smiting during family alter. I thought maybe he is going to sacrifice him, amazing. So his feet hit the table, these little scuzzy card tables, and the peas and the gravy and everything is flying, the table is flipped, the milk is splashing, and I am sitting there thinking no life does not get any better than this. I am right next to dad, and I've learned that I'm not laughing, I'm just

observing. So now the food is everywhere, its dripping off of people. My dad reaches over and grabs my brother Dale and slams him back into his chair and he yells into his nose "We got to read the Bible every blipping night!" My brother who is learning spiritual formation quickly. He says "yeah uh it's ok with me dad", and we did.

That's the last night that we remembered that we remember because it's the last night that the town alcoholic took one sip of any kind of alcohol and God changed his life and his wife's life who fell in love with my dad and they became so passionate it was embarrassing for two teenager. Normally they say when are you going to be home? Then in the evening now they would say Boys you want to stay out all ight" My mom fell in love with my dad, my mom fell in love with Jesus Christ because of my dad's life has changed. My brother and I both during that year confess Christ as savor and Lord. What do you do with a 6'2 380 pound moose God made my brother Dale a pastor in Buffalo Wyoming, He witnessed to buffalos and has been in the ministry all these years.

Dad took a job at the church as custodian to put me through Biola. And uh during the years since he went to western Bible School which is now part of Colorado Christian. Got up at 4:30 in the morning, got up in the morning for years to study Bible lessons so he can be prepared for ministry. He became a hospital chaplain and has touched more lives for the kingdom of Christ than I will touched by God's grace. I have a hero, I love Jesus with all of my heart, and my dad is still my hero. He is 90. He has Alzheimer's, he is in a convalescent hospital in fourth Collins, see I picked up my bible to I'm going to start moving and that 30 seconds more. So when we visited my dad who didn't recognize me most of the time, I said to the nurses "You know I've heard that sometimes Alzheimer's patients revert back and they swear and yell" And they say oh your dad is a problem but he is a different problem, and sometimes all night long, he has a very loud voice. I

Hafer: My Earthly Hero

said I know, she said his got hundreds of verses and he quotes the Bible and sings hymns all night long, I love Jesus with all of my heart, but I thank Lindsey and the time for the honor to be a tribute to my hero for life, somebody at 90, who's mind is gone, but his heart is still fixed on Jesus Christ.

Thank you Lord that you give us yourself, and you give us human beings and they can be our role models, may we be more like Christ and be the role model to every person to whom we come in contact bless these men and women in their studies. In your name I pray Christ name Amen. By the authority invested in me you are dismissed. [APPLUASE]