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# Billy Graham

1918 - 2018

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.  
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Billy Graham is an ordained Southern Baptist preacher whose career is principally known because of a series of more than 400 “Crusades” in 185 countries between 1947 and 2005. Beginning with circus tents set up in parking lots, he eventually filled stadiums with tens-of-thousands of interested listeners. The largest Crusade attracted more than a million people to one service. Many of his Crusades were broadcast on television. He hosted a radio show, *Hour of Decision*, from 1950 to 1954. In October 1989 Graham became the only functioning minister to have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Graham was widely recognized and a popular Evangelical minister who has been one of the “most admired men” in America for 55 years. He would end Crusades with an invitation for any who felt convicted and wanted to “accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior” to publicly come forward. Thousands responded to his invitation.

Graham was an adviser to several US Presidents, including Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, and has met with many Presidents from Harry Truman to Barack Obama. He was friends with Martin Luther King, and once paid for his bail to free him in 1963 after his arrest for participation in a Civil Rights demonstration. King and Graham preached together on several occasions, at Graham’s invitation.

He founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950, originally headquartered in Minneapolis, but which relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina in 1999. It is still active and publishes *Decision* magazine as its official publication, and *Christianity Today*, which is “a global media ministry.”

Graham was regarded as America's Protestant patriarch, providing a Christian conscience to the nation. He also organized and supported evangelism worldwide. He supported training conferences to increase the evangelical presence in many nations.

Graham refused to join Jerry Fallwell's Moral Majority in 1979, explaining, "I'm for morality, but morality goes beyond sex to human freedom and social justice. ... We have to stand in the middle in order to preach to all people, right and left."

Graham's views about seeking salvation for all people everywhere motivated his worldwide ministerial efforts. He summarized his belief in a 1997 interview, "I think that everybody that loves or knows Christ, whether they are conscious of it or not, they are members of the body of Christ... [God] is calling people out of the world for his name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they have been called by God. They may not know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something they do not have, and they turn to the only light they have, and I think that they are saved and they are going to be with us in heaven."

Though still living, Graham has suffered from Parkinson's disease since 1992 which led to his retirement because of failing health.

### **2/21/2018 Addendum:**

America and the world has lost an Evangelical giant with the passing of Billy Graham. He has been seen and heard both in person and through radio and television by more people than any other Evangelical minister in history. He lived just short of a century.

Many pastors, bishops, priests and other leaders of different faiths had theological differences with Billy Graham, but there were almost none who disputed his greatness. He preached a message of salvation by acceptance and confession of Jesus as Savior. His beliefs were grounded in the writings of the Apostle Paul, and echoed much of what Martin Luther believed about salvation.

There are millions of people living today whose confidence in salvation through Jesus Christ is based on the preaching of Billy Graham. He inspired not only believers, but also other Evangelical ministers and writers.

Today is not a day to mourn his passing, but to respect and appreciate his life's work.