

Biography of the preacher billy graham



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Billy Graham: World Shaker

Billy Graham was an evangelistic man dedicated to spreading the word of God to the people of America and abroad. Throughout his work, he built many bridges to repair the broken relationship between the Catholic and Protestant beliefs. He revolutionized the way the gospel was shared through public events known as “ crusades”. Graham even was able to go as far as speaking in the White House during Truman, Nixon, and John F. Kennedy’s presidencies. Billy Graham greatly impacted the people of America through his widespread efforts to preach the Word of God across the country and to mend the relations between the Catholic and Protestant Church because of his establishment and work through gospel-rooted organizations

BIOGRAPHY AND ANALYSIS

On a farm in Charlotte, North Carolina, Graham was raised through the Great Depression (Bruns 13). Although he did not have a very prosperous beginning, he went on to attend two colleges (“ How BillyGraham Shaped American Catholicism”), through which many of his friends referred to him as a “ preacher.” (Bruns 16) His humble upbringing crafted a story that appealed to others who lived through the Great Depression, inspiring the public in a sense that things could get better from there.

Graham cultivated his passion for evangelical work throughout college, where he and a friend worked to spread the word. Billy Graham and his Canadian friend, Charles Templeton, were close through the beginning of their careers, captivating their audiences with Templeton’s gift for mesmerizing speech and Graham’s ability to speak substance to the soul. Though the two of them reaped massive movement and monumental results

throughout these early years, Graham believed that he and Templeton rallied the crowds more so with their “ good looks” and “ high energy levels” instead of with the power of God. (Aikman 59) Following disputes between the two led to their splitting of ways and Graham’s deeper plunge into the world of speaking.

After gaining a few more years of experience and a touch more confidence in the impact of his message, Graham went on to hold the first of his “ crusades” – a religious gathering held at night which contains a sermon, possibly some hymns, and a chance for those listening to publicly accept Christ – in Los Angeles, this going on for eight weeks straight. Graham led these crusades all over the country, converting hundreds of people along his journey, and didn’t stop there. Like that, at the age of 31, Graham’s movement really took off, leading to him even consulting with presidents, as covered in The Preacher and the Presidents, by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy. The significance of this event was to lay the template down for his quick growth through the religious world, beginning his journey to greatly shift the thinking of those around him.

Amongst all this, on July 14, 1950, Billy Graham visited former President Truman to discuss the rising fear of the people around the ongoing Korean War – some fearing that it could be the start of WWII. He called upon him to “ get a microphone and encourage the people.” (Gibbs 24) At the end of this meeting, Graham went on to pray for the president before leaving humbly, unknowing to the trap that awaited him outside. Here, he was confronted by the press; being new to these situations, Graham dutifully answered all of the reporters’ questions, breaking Truman’s trust as he went. A famous

picture of Graham and his friends kneeling on the lawn of the White House and praying shattered his stance with the former president, “ the only president who suspected Graham might be a phony.” (Gibbs 26) This was significant because it led to an opportunity for him to apologize and restore his character, even though, Graham writes in his autobiography, “ Mr. Truman never asked me to come back.” Where this was the case during Truman’s presidency, the two men eventually made up; the former president accepted Graham’s apology telling him, “ Don’t worry about it... I realized you hadn’t been properly briefed.” (Graham xxiii) Restoring his standing with Truman helped Graham to continue his workings through the White House, later to become a close friend and trusted advisor for the future presidents of his time.

Graham’s rapidly gaining publicity eventually lead him, his friends, and a few others to establish the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association – the BGEA, as often referred to – in 1950, and with it, began their ministry in many television stations, a radio program named the “ Hour of Decision” which aired weekly, and even magazines and more! (“ Billy Graham Evangelistic Association”) All of these outlets enabled Graham to reach out to Americans everywhere and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ like never before, which only increased the rate of his soaring popularity. By this time, he was still preaching to the masses in his crusades, all the while peacefully broadcasting his beliefs through the medias. His radio program was broadcasted for 60 years and his far reaching television influence peaked at 1, 200 stations country-wide, which meant not only that by the time he had all of this going on he was a famous personality with a powerful voice, but it

also meant that he broke evangelistic records and became one of the most well-known evangelicals. Graham spoke to the people and always honestly sought to teach others about having full relationships with the Lord. The BGEA spread the Word of God far and wide whether it be through: lengthy crusades, broad television channels, radio shows, magazines, or even newspaper columns.

Utilizing such methods, Graham always held a belief that all faiths of Christ should be accepted and well met, especially vocalizing on Catholicism and Protestantism and how elephant often only focus on what makes the faiths different rather than realizing what unites the faiths together. In this way, Billy Graham introduced and practiced a new manner of thinking through the medias, which inspired and brought together the American people. He built strong relationships with many influential members of the Catholic Church, earning praise from Cardinal Richard Cushing; who stated that “ Graham’s message was good for Catholics” and that “ God will bless [Graham’s] preaching and crusade.” (“ How Billy Graham Shaped American Catholicism”) Not only this, but he had also become close to Pope John Paul II, who agreed to take a picture with Graham, having told him privately that “ We are brothers.” (Graham 489)

But this didn’t just bring innovation and the people’s approval, critics called him a traitor and a false preacher, as shown in Jon M. Sweeney’s article in the *America Magazine* “ How Billy Graham Shaped American Catholicism,” where he stated that Graham’s support of Catholicism, among other religions, led to other Protestants to “...disown Mr. Graham as a betrayer of the true faith.” He faced much hate and opposition, people downright calling

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him a liar and growing suspicious of his connections with the Catholic Church, they believed he had to choose a side. Although among all of the criticism, Graham stood strong in his ambition to bring the Catholic and Protestant peoples together. This greatly shifted the way the two once hostile religions, perceive one another, mending broken soil between them.

Although Graham's critics throw false accusations and insults, Billy Graham was clearly someone who wanted to bring people together in faith to recognize God, and did his best effort to do so. People often accused Graham of being " ecumenical, a charge to which he freely pleads guilty." (Aikman 256) Graham rightfully agreed that of being " ecumenical" because that was exactly what he was going for – to bring faiths together so they could stop focusing on their differences. For once Graham and his criticizers were on the same page, that he was ecumenical and wanted nothing more than to bring everyone closer to God together.

CONCLUSION

Throughout his life, Billy Graham preached according to his beliefs and aspiration for change, never wavering in his purpose. He worked with many churches, ministries, and organizations, even creating one himself – the Billy Graham Evangelical Association – through which he most famously televised his sermons and messages to people across America. No matter what he did, he did it for the Lord, his God; even going as far as to travel around the country in so called " crusades" and continuing such elongated sermons abroad in rural or urban settings. He stood strong against those who criticized him and took responsibility for his mistakes, of which there were many, and many still that people criticize Graham for. Bad run-ins with

former president Harry Truman led to large conflicts with the peacemaking evangelist. Yet, like the elephant man that he was, he took the initiative and worked diligently to restore his relationship with Truman; never with the intent of political gain or public recognition. He had set out to be friends with every president throughout his career, and he wasn't going to lose that just because he made a mistake and offended someone. As a man of strong integrity and captivating character, Graham set a precedent for the way movement should look and how those in influential positions should carry out their goals and ambitions. When others compared their faiths and argued in disagreement, Graham carved a new way to unite everyone praising the same God. He did so by majorly spreading the Word of God through the various medias such as his radio show which lasted 60 years, or his sermons that broadcasted live on TV for hundreds of stations. Because of it he stood by many of our former presidents, made friends with two popes, had light conversation with President Kim Il Sung of North Korea, and set a new standard of action for those who strive to follow after his cause. Dedicated to working with and not against those of differing faiths, Graham created a new structure for movement that built off of what he had learned from working so closely with others, he revolutionized how people thought about religion, and ultimately brought thousands among thousands of people to faith and salvation.

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