



# First Light

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## In Memorial to a great Kingdom force Evangelist Billy Graham Has Died 'America's pastor' shaped modern evangelicalism.

BY: MARSHALL SHELLEY

Billy Graham was perhaps the most significant religious figure of the 20th century, and the organizations and the movement he helped spawn continue to shape the 21st.

During his life, Graham preached in person to more than 100 million people and to millions more via television, satellite, and film. Nearly 3 million have responded to his invitation to "accept Jesus into your heart" at the end of his sermons. He proclaimed the gospel to more persons than any other preacher in history. In the process, Graham became "America's Pastor," participating in presidential inaugurations and speaking during national crises such as the memorial services following the Oklahoma City bombing and the 9/11 attacks.

"He became the friend and confidante of popes and presidents, queens and dictators, and yet, even in his 80s, he possesses the boyish charm and unprepossessing demeanor to communicate with the masses," said Columbia University historian Randall Balmer.

Billy Graham was born in 1918 in Charlotte, North Carolina, attended (briefly) Bob Jones College, graduating from Florida Bible Institute near Tampa, and Wheaton College in Illinois. He was ordained a minister in the Southern Baptist Church (1939) and pastored a small church in suburban Chicago and preached on a weekly radio program. In 1946 he became the first full-time staff member of Youth for Christ and launched his evangelistic campaigns. For four years (1948–1952) he also served as president of Northwestern Schools in Minneapolis. His 1949 evangelistic tent meetings in Los Angeles brought him to national attention, and his 1957 New York meetings, which filled Madison Square Garden for four months, established him as a major presence on the American religious scene.

Graham appeared regularly on the lists of "most admired" people. Between 1950 and 1990 Graham won a spot on the Gallup Organization's "Most Admired" list more often than any other American. Ladies Home Journal once ranked him second only to God in the category of "achievements in religion." He received both the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1983) and the Congressional Gold Medal (1996).

Sherwood Wirt, who for 17 years edited the Graham organization's *Decision* magazine, described one Scottish minister who made this observation about Graham: "My first impression of the man at close quarters was not of his good looks but of his goodness; not of his extraordinary range of commitments, but of his own 'committedness' to his Lord and Master. To be with him even for a short time is to get a sense of a single-minded man; it shames one and shakes one as no amount of ability and cleverness can do."

Graham was a model of integrity. Despite scandals and missteps that toppled other leaders and ministers, including Graham's friend Richard Nixon and a succession of televangelists, in six decades of ministry, no one ever leveled a serious accusation of misconduct against him.

That's not to say he wasn't seriously criticized. Some liberals and intellectuals called his message "simplistic." Some fundamentalists considered him "compromised" for cooperating with mainline groups and the National Council of Churches.

His moderate anti-segregationist stance during the Civil Rights era drew fire from both sides: white segregationists were furious when he invited the "agitator" Martin Luther King Jr. to pray at the 1957 New York City crusade; civil rights activists accused him of cowardice for not joining them on protest marches and getting arrested for the cause.

In 1982, when he visited the Soviet Union, agreeing to preach the gospel at the invitation of the government, he touched off a firestorm of criticism. Despite having met with The Siberian Seven, Pentecostal dissidents who were seeking political asylum, Graham was quoted as saying he "had not personally seen any evidence of religious persecution." Some called him a "traitor." But he insisted he would go anywhere to preach as long as there were no restrictions on his freedom to proclaim the gospel. He returned claiming he saw the hand of God working in the Soviet Union. He was fiercely attacked for being naïve and "a tool of the Soviet propaganda machine."

By 1990, however, after the fall of the Soviet Union, his prescience was vindicated when then-President George H.W. Bush said to the National Religious Broadcasters, "Eight years ago, one of the Lord's great ambassadors, Rev. Billy Graham, went to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and, upon returning, spoke of a movement there toward more religious freedom. And perhaps he saw it before many of us because it takes a man of God to sense the early movement of the hand of God."

Perhaps Graham's lasting legacy was his ability to present the gospel in the idiom of the culture. He did this brilliantly, making innovative use of emerging technologies—radio, television, magazines, books, a newspaper column, motion pictures, satellite broadcasts, Internet—to spread his message.

In the 1990s he reengineered the formula for his "crusades" (later called "missions" out of deference to Muslims and *Cont.*

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## Lent, 2018

FPC Saints,

Recently, a snippet of a rather longish poem by T.S. Eliot (Four Quartets, Little Gidding) has been running through my head,

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from....

This morning Billy Graham died. Or rather, this morning Billy Graham began his life. His faith becoming sight, his hope realized.

When I was a kid, whenever a Billy Graham crusade came on the TV (back when there were only three channels...), our phone would ring, 5-10 minutes prior to the start. On the other end would be my paternal grandma, her message would be short and sweet, "Turn on the TV, Billy Graham is on!" Then she would hang up. We suspected two things, 1) This happened in the households of all my uncles, aunt and cousins, and 2) She wasn't too sure about the one presbyterian part of this overwhelmingly Baptist/Bible church family...

Life and death, the ultimate beginning/ending/beginning haunts us everyone. But there are many other transitions - endings and beginnings, in this life- schools, jobs, marriages, a child getting married, becoming grandparents, divorce, death of a loved one, of parents. An ending and a new beginning. Transitions both unwelcome and welcome impinge upon life, our plans, our imagined futures. Endings and Beginnings.

As these transition times come upon us in life there is a period of liminality. A word used to describe the time in-between. You've left one room have yet to enter the other and you're standing in the door way. You want to turn around and go back, the familiarity of the room you've just left a comfort against the backdrop of an unknown, uncertain, unfamiliar future. But as our Hobbit friends remind us, "You can never go back to the Shire..."

So- when these times, especially the unwelcome, unwanted liminal times come in your life, remember the bigger picture and particularly the One who is painting the bigger picture. God is good. God is sovereign. We are fallen creatures living in a fallen world. He loves his own, he will not abandoned us- he goes with us. God didn't tell Abram, "Leave your father's

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household and go to this particular land!" He said, "Leave your father's household and go to the land I will show you." The Lord goes with... And the Lord is the one who turns water into wine and a couple of loaves and fish into a banquet for thousands. Remain faithful to our Lord and his people, love Him by loving each other, take your requests to Him, don't grow weary in doing good. This is how we are to live, particularly during the liminal times in which we find ourselves, unbidden and unwanted.

Here is a latter snippet from T.S. Eliot's poem:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the very first time.  
Our Lord is the good shepherd, and he will lead you to still  
waters and green pastures in this life, let alone the one  
coming...

With much warmth in Christ,  
Pastor Dave

## “How’s Your Lent Going?”

That is the question the youth are asking one another as we walk through this church season together. Before Lent started we all prayed and sought a way to grow closer to Christ. For some it is fasting, for others it is daily prayer or Bible study, and for others it is acts of service and kindness. Along with taking on the discipline, we asked a friend to help encourage us to persevere in our discipline by reaching out every few days and asking “How’s your Lent going?” We don’t want to guilt-trip anyone into the Christian life, but we also know that having a brother or sister in Christ with whom we can be honest, confess, and find forgiveness and comfort in fellowship is a great treasure! So, how is your Lent going? Whether you made a specific commitment or not, how are you hearing and obeying our Lord, Jesus this season? How can we encourage you?

### Coming Up In Youth Ministry

Confirmation Class - We will be doing a complete study on our Christian Faith for all interested youth. This is the necessary

work all students must complete before being baptized or affirming their Baptism and entering into full participation in the church body here at FPC. The course will take place during normal Sunday Youth Group time (1-4pm) through May. It is not too late for your child to be a part of this Confirmation course. Please contact David soon to sign up!

30 Hour Famine - March 11-12 - Youth Group will KEEP going on Sunday, March 11 ALL night until 12 Noon the next day - as we fast and learn about global poverty and how to fight it. Fundraising materials and more info at [www.30hourfamine.org](http://www.30hourfamine.org)

Sled&Hike Ester Dome - March 15 - Meet at the Ester Gas Station at 10am with a downhill sled and gear to hike and sled in. This is an expedition as we sled down (and often hike down) Ester Dome. There are great photo opportunities and a few fast sledding chutes you’ll want to experience multiple times!

Family Game Night - March 16 - Meet at the church from 5:30-10:30pm for our regular monthly evening of board games, food, and fellowship! All ages are welcome and we ask you to invite friends and bring a potluck dish to share.

## March Birthdays!

1	Derald Johnson	16	Bill McKee
	Jeanne Maddux	17	Jay Quakenbush
2	Travis Brown		Collin Gogley
3	Debby Foster	20	Terry Reichardt
	Michael Thies	21	Barbara Page
5	Linda Stephenson	25	Ian Moody
6	Jonas Huffaker		Ted Riggs, Sr.
7	Holden Jones	26	Dave Moody
8	Gwendolyn Bunch	27	Julie Benson
9	Marjorie Howard	28	Debra Brady
	Sig Ericklook		Ainsley Benson
10	Sandy McKee	29	Adalie Mackey
13	Robert Kent	31	Seth Wietgriefe
14	Evelyn Sites		Anders Brown
	Stacey Lynn Garbet		

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others offended by the connotation). His standard "youth night" was revolutionized into a "Concert for the Next Generation," with Christian rock, rap, and hip-hop artists headlining the event, followed by Graham preaching. This format drew record numbers of young people who cheered the bands and then, amazingly, listened carefully to the octogenarian evangelist.

In addition, he helped launch numerous influential organizations, including Youth for Christ (he was the first full-time staff member of this entrepreneurial and innovative organization), the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and Christianity Today. The ripple effect of his shaping influence extends to such schools as Wheaton College in Illinois, Gordon-Conwell Divinity School in Massachusetts, Northwestern College in Minnesota, and Fuller Seminary in California. His encouragement and support helped develop the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, Greater Europe Mission, TransWorld Radio, World Vision, World Relief, and the National Association of Evangelicals.

He brought the global Christian community together through international conventions: a 1966 Congress on World Evangelism in Berlin, the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, and three huge conferences in Amsterdam for itinerant evangelists in 1983, 1986, and 2000, which drew nearly 24,000 working evangelists from 200 countries.

In many ways, Billy Graham both formed and embodied the evangelical movement. Theologian J. I. Packer attributes the evangelical "convergence" to Graham. "Up to 1940, it was every institution for itself. There wasn't anything unitive about the situation. There were little outposts of resistance trying to keep their end up in face of the liberal juggernaut.

Increasingly, from the 1950s onward, evangelicals came together behind Billy Graham and the things he stood for and was committed to. It continues that way to the present."

For many, however, William Franklin Graham won't be remembered for these accomplishments. He'll always be "Billy," as he preferred to be called. He titled his autobiography *Just As I Am*, a reflection of his humble spirit, taken from the hymn sung most often when he invited people to come forward and receive God's love. And for millions, his humility before the Almighty encouraged them to approach with that same spirit.

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**Elders On Session**

**Ted Riggs, Sr.**

**Brian Rozell**

**Terry Reichardt**

**Joyce Tapper**

**Perry Schneider**

**Kathi Stevens**

**Nancy Dreydoppel**

**Debra Foster**

**Kathy Rahmandar Halfhill**

**Michelle VanHatten**

**Charlotte Wilbur**

**Sarah Curtis**

**Bill Beaudoin**

**Michelle Harpole**

**Donna Brewer**

**Jim Williams**

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