



IN HIS OWN WORDS

Inspirational Reflections on the Life & Wisdom of

BILLY GRAHAM

**1 New York Times Bestselling Author*

JERRY B. JENKINS



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In His Own Words: Inspirational Reflections on the Life and Wisdom of Billy Graham

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The Paradox of Humility

The single most striking character trait attributed to Billy Graham—his humility—made him so instantly attractive that it warred against his very nature. The truly humble shun the spotlight, abhor attention, and labor to shift the focus elsewhere. In Mr. Graham’s case, he pointed to Jesus.

Yet his particular modesty proved so magnetic, it made him a celebrity—the label he hated most. The cliché about one’s presence lighting up a room could have been written for him. Everyone from waitstaff to heads of state were drawn to him, and he made Gallup’s annual list of the world’s most admired people sixty-one times—more than any other man or woman.

Billy Graham never wavered from his sole message: salvation by grace through faith in the work of Christ on the cross. Yet he once lamented to me that “nine of ten people on the street would tell you my message was the opposite. They believe I urged them to live right, to do more, to work harder, to go to church, to pray, to read

their Bibles—all wonderful things. But those will not save you. The Bible says we're saved by grace through faith and 'not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast'" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

His statistics stagger the imagination. The most famous evangelist since the apostle Paul, Mr. Graham spoke live to more than 215 million people in 185 countries over the course of more than 60 years. Yet he was never about numbers. When the press raised the subject, he'd say, "It's not how many people can I get into the stadium, but how many people can I get the word out to." About 3 million people indicated that they came to faith in Christ at one of his crusades.

A confidant and spiritual adviser to twelve US presidents, Mr. Graham was an early leader in civil rights, integrating his Southern meetings as early as 1953. An innovator in the use of media, Graham used radio, television, films, books, and a syndicated newspaper column to reach an audience estimated at nearly 3 billion people. He founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950 with the aim of using every means of modern communication to spread the Gospel.

Despite the staggering reach of his message, when Mr. Graham was asked how he would want his obituary

INTRODUCTION: THE PARADOX OF HUMILITY

to read, he said simply, “That I loved the Lord with all my mind and soul and spirit.” And as for his epitaph? “Preacher.”

How gratifying to know that despite his passing, there is no epitaph on Mr. Graham’s worldwide ministry and influence. Under the leadership of his son Franklin, the work of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association continues. The organization scheduled twenty-four Gospel preaching events in ten countries in 2018 alone. BGEA also maintains a twenty-four-hour-a-day worldwide Internet presence. The Billy Graham Library in Charlotte, North Carolina, ministers to thousands of visitors annually. The Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove in Asheville, North Carolina, hosts Bible conferences year-round. And the BGEA’s Rapid Response Team, created in the aftermath of 9/11, has responded to more than 350 crises in twenty countries.

In every endeavor, Billy Graham’s goal was to point others to Christ—and that was true even when writing his autobiography. In the early 1990s, I enjoyed the unspeakable privilege of assisting Mr. Graham with that book, *Just As I Am*. For thirteen months I traveled to and from his home on Black Mountain in Montreat, North Carolina. I spent hours interviewing him for the

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autobiography, but we also spent a great deal of time in informal conversation, both at his house as well as on the road.

I took careful notes, with his permission. For this book, I not only combed through Mr. Graham's published books, articles, and interviews, but I also perused the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association website and referred to our conversations.

I'll never forget those precious hours with him. My wife says that whenever I returned from Montreat, I seemed to be floating two feet off the ground.

I found Billy Graham the same behind closed doors as he appeared in public. Humble. Single-minded. A true man of God.

Jerry B. Jenkins

BLACK FOREST, COLORADO

PART ONE

HIS
SINGULAR
MESSAGE

Evangelism
is the Gospel,
the Good News,
presented to all.

BILLY GRAHAM

HIS SINGULAR MESSAGE

Billy Graham's weakness, critics said, was the simplicity of his message. Yet those who benefited from it—particularly those who came to faith because of it—knew it was his greatest strength.

“I preach Christ and Him crucified,” Mr. Graham would say. And that was true whether he was speaking to the largest crowd in his history—1.1 million in Seoul, South Korea, in 1973—or to a busboy at a suburban Chicago eatery decades later. Regardless of the venue or the audience, Billy Graham shared the Gospel.

Before great stadium crowds, he often began his message with local references, proclaiming the host city “the gateway to the magnificent continent of Asia” or “America’s beautiful Eastern seaboard.” Then he moved directly into the current world scene, painting a word picture of the geopolitical chaos and turmoil, acknowledging the fear that gripped the nations. But soon he zeroed in on the deepest needs of the human heart.

In minutes, Mr. Graham—piercing voice booming—moved from the global to the personal. His distinctive, authoritative, passionate preaching targeted each listener’s loneliness, fear, uncertainty over the future, and feeling of emptiness. And his message was always the same. He eschewed esoteric doctrine and sidestepped specific

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moral, especially religious, controversy. Listeners around the world said they felt he was speaking directly to them, spotlighting their most private needs.

Billy Graham's most common phrases were "The Bible says . . ." and "Jesus is the answer!"

And while his volume and tone varied for the more intimate mediums of radio and television, or during one-on-one conversations, he always moved quickly to his singular message. He explained it this way:

First, you must recognize what God did: that He loved you so much, He gave His Son to die on the cross.

Second, you must repent of your sins.

Third, you must receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This means you cease trying to save yourself and trust Him completely, without reservation.

Fourth, you must confess Christ publicly as a sign that you have been converted. It is extremely important that you tell someone else about it as soon as possible.*

* Adapted from Billy Graham, *How to Be Born Again* (Waco, TX: Word, 1977), 168.

HIS SINGULAR MESSAGE



If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

ROMANS 10:9-10