

# The Legacy of Billy Graham

Most people would agree that the world is a far better place because of the life and witness of Billy Graham.

Graham passed away on Feb. 21, 2018, at the age of 99. He left his mark on millions upon millions of people around the world – because he took the gospel message to them, but also for his exemplary life.

As a preacher, Graham held large indoor and outdoor crusades that were broadcast on radio and television, and some are being re-broadcast today. His evangelistic campaigns ran from 1947 until his retirement in 2005. He repudiated racial segregation and insisted on racial integration and invited Martin Luther King Jr. to preach jointly at a revival in New York City in 1957.

He helped shape the worldview of a large number of people who came from different backgrounds, leading them to find a connection between the Bible and secular viewpoints, always grounded in a relationship with Jesus Christ, whom he faithfully served. According to his website, Graham preached to live audiences of 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Graham was a spiritual advisor to U.S. presidents and provided spiritual counsel to every president from Harry S. Truman to Barack Obama.

What was the source of the power of his influence? Graham would attribute it to the direction of the Holy Spirit living within. It also had to do with his integrity, separating him from some other religious leaders and televangelists of the day. And that can be traced in part back to the *Modesto Manifesto*.

On Nov. 6, 1993, the *Tacoma News Tribune* published an article in its religion section commemorating Graham's birthday (which was Nov. 7, 1918).

In it, Religious News Service writer Randall Balmer wrote, "Graham has had a remarkable career, and there will never be another like him who could combine charisma, conviction, integrity, and media savvy to become a speaker known and respected throughout the world."

He went on to point out that in Graham's lifetime, there have been many other evangelists who have fallen because of various moral indiscretions. "But throughout a career that has spanned 50 years, there had never been a serious charge of malfeasance – financial, sexual, or otherwise – leveled against Graham. That was not left entirely to chance."

(more)

Early in his career, Graham gathered his associates – the team, he called them – into a hotel room to discuss how they might avoid some of the pitfalls that had “done in” other evangelists. What emerged was what Cliff Barrows, Graham’s longtime associate, called the *Modesto Manifesto*. Graham and his organization resolved never to exaggerate attendance figures at their meetings and to accept only fixed salaries from their organization, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, rather than a percentage of the offerings.

The team agreed not to criticize fellow members of the clergy, and they set up elaborate precautions to protect themselves from sexual temptation or even the appearance of sexual impropriety. The writer, Balmer, then suggested, “In an age that has seen evangelists succumb to all manner of spectacular scandals, Graham’s greatest legacy may be his integrity.”

How important is integrity to you in the mission you are called to do in Life Care or Century Park?

It is vital, and its effect cannot be overstated. You see, our companies are built on relationships, and trust – which is generated by integrity – must be the foundation of any healthy relationship.

*Abstain from all appearance of evil* (1 Thessalonians 5:22 KJV).

– Beecher Hunter