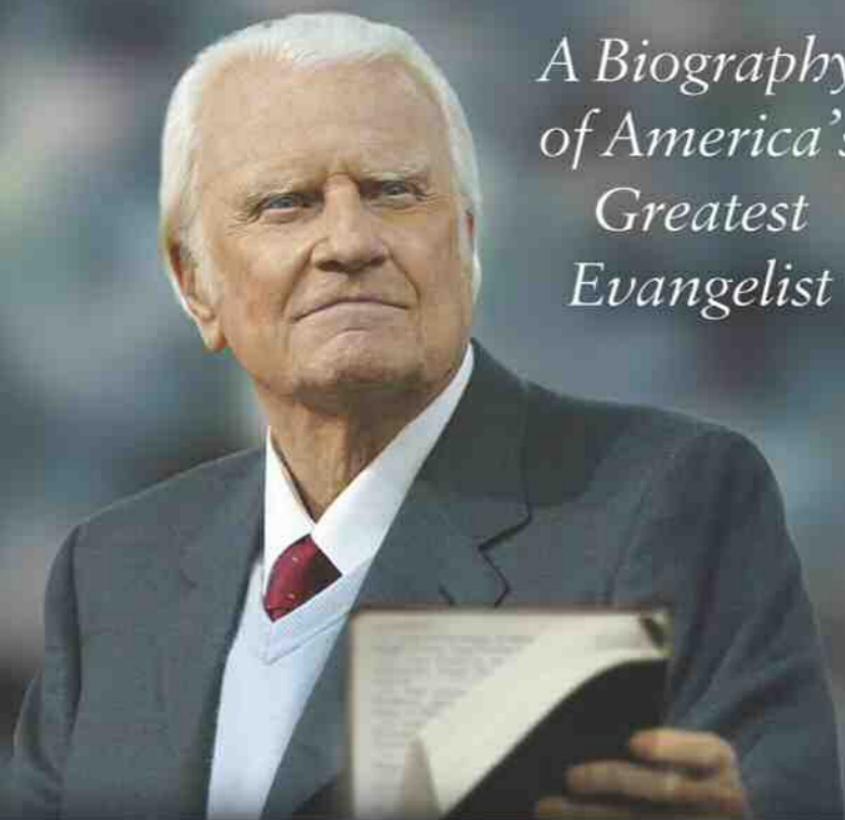


foreword by LUIS PALAU

BILLY GRAHAM

*A Biography
of America's
Greatest
Evangelist*



W. TERRY WHALIN

BILLY GRAHAM

What Others Are Saying about
BILLY GRAHAM

“Every Christian should take time to study the lives of great heroes of the faith—after all, we stand on their shoulders. Billy Graham, a beloved treasure in the kingdom of Christ, is one such saint. If you want to cultivate a passion for souls, get to know Mr. Graham in the pages of this book. I promise you’ll be blessed!”

—**Joni Eareckson Tada**,
Joni and Friends International Disability Center

“This story about the life of Billy Graham is one that I’ve known my entire life. While he has been one of the most admired men in America, to me he has always been Uncle Billy. Now my friend Terry Whalin brings this biography to a new generation of readers. As you read this engaging book, I hope my uncle’s example will stir you to a deeper walk with Jesus.”

—**Kevin Ford**, Principal, TAG Consulting,
and nephew of Billy Graham

“It has been my privilege to serve as a crusade associate and as a vice chairman of three of Billy Graham’s crusades over the years. My life has been deeply blessed and impacted by his ministry. I pray that this biography written by my friend, Terry Whalin, will be a great encouragement and inspiration to you in your service for God.”

—**Paul Cedar**, Chairman and CEO of Mission America

“I’ve had the honor of knowing both this book’s author as well as its subject. Dr. Billy Graham led me to Christ in July of 1973. As I sat in my apartment in San Jose, California, Dr. Graham extended an invitation to receive Jesus as savior. The net was thrown, and I was caught. Over the years, I’ve been privileged to know and serve with Dr. Graham. He is a man of exceptional humility and spiritual power.”

“In Terry Whalin’s book, we glimpse Billy Graham the man as well as his ministry. These fifteen short but informative chapters paint a proper portrait of this extraordinary man of God. Terry’s strength is his ability to capture Billy’s life with poignant stories and providential incidences. I recommend the book and pray God would raise up more men and women dedicated to proclaiming the good news found in the Christ that Graham preached.”

—**Skip Heitzig**, Pastor, Calvary Albuquerque

“Our polarized, divided world dearly misses the spirit of grace that Billy Graham brought to us. I’m very glad Terry Whalin has written a biography that introduces him anew.”

—**Philip Yancey**, bestselling author of
What’s So Amazing About Grace?

“Well written and succinct, *Billy Graham* is an honest look at the man and his calling, his struggles to stay humble in the limelight, the difficulty of separation from his family, and his constant calling on God for the next step.”

—**Deborah Bedford**, bestselling author of *His Other Wife*
and, with Joyce Meyer, *The Penny* and *Any Minute*

“Terry Whalin’s love and respect for Billy Graham shows clearly in this riveting work. Yes, this is a story of one man’s life and the team who supported him. It also clearly gives credit to the power of God’s Spirit on whom Billy Graham relied to accomplish everything from *Christianity Today* to conferences for evangelists, a superb television and media ministry, and remarkable crusades around the world. I highly recommend this book, a book you will not want to put down. It will be a blessing to all who travel through its pages.”

—**Tom Phillips**, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Vice President, Billy Graham Library

“Working with the Rev. Billy Graham on his memoir, *Just As I Am*, remains the highlight of my career. The story of the dairy farm boy who became the world’s greatest evangelist and spiritual confidant to heads of state never grows old. In *Billy Graham, A Biography of America’s Greatest Evangelist*, veteran author Terry Whalin offers a quick-reading account of Mr. Graham’s life, jam-packed with anecdotes that bring him to life on the page. It’s a fun and interesting read that promises to inspire and challenge you in your walk of faith.

—**Jerry B. Jenkins**, novelist and biographer

“Billy Graham has touched millions of lives with the Good News about Jesus. In this biography, my friend Terry Whalin has captured the remarkable story of how a boy from North Carolina took to the world stage and brought a message of hope to millions.”

—**Suzanne Kuhn**, founder of SuzyQn4U and veteran retailer

“This book is very inspiring to me because I know both the author and the man whose life is being written about. Of course Billy Graham is well-known for his accomplishments, and for telling the world about God’s love for mankind.

“For some, let me introduce my good friend Terry Whalin. Terry not only worked with Mr. Graham; he knew the humble and contrite man who preached the Gospel of Jesus to millions upon millions. I recommend not only the book as a story line but the author who shares Billy Graham’s passion to touch lives for Jesus Christ.”

—**Mike MacIntosh**, Pastor, Horizon Christian Fellowship

“Nothing will be more encouraging in your Christian life than to discover the sovereign work of God in the life of Billy Graham! Billy’s story is your story and my story...what happens when the hand of God touches your life and leads you in the steps He has ordained for you! Every chapter reveals new vistas of God’s grace in one life.”

—**Glenna Salsbury**, Author of *Heavenly Treasures*
and *The Art of the Fresh Start*

BILLY GRAHAM

*A Biography of America's
Greatest Evangelist*

W. TERRY WHALIN



NEW YORK

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FOREWORD

By Luis Palau

I have always been fascinated with a good story. When I read about the lives of others, their experiences provide insights I can learn from but also follow for my own life. You hold in your hands the biography about one of the greatest mentors in my own life: Billy Graham.

When I was not even eighteen years old, I was lying on the living-room floor at my Uncle Arnold and Aunt Marjorie's home, listening to a short-wave HCJB radio program from Quito, Ecuador. I didn't hear the preacher's name, but I heard him exhorting and calling me to come to Jesus Christ in a vibrant, somewhat high-pitched, and excited voice. Later I realized I had been listening to Billy Graham. On that living-room floor, I

prayed, “Jesus, someday use me on the radio to bring others to You, just as this program has firmed up my resolve to completely live for You.” Little did I know that one day, by the grace of God, I would preach to tens of millions of people through radio and TV. The Lord has answered my youthful prayer more than I could have imagined.

Early in my Christian life, I lived in Cordoba, Argentina, and while attending a local church, I devoured biographies of several evangelists: Martin Luther, John Calvin, George Whitefield, John Wesley, D. L. Moody, Charles E. Finney, George Mueller, and Billy Sunday. These books influenced my life and ministry. Several years later in my early twenties, I began to hold street meetings and speak in little churches all over the country, yet my preaching seemed to have no power and few results. I gave God a deadline that if I didn’t see converts by the end of the year, I would quit preaching. The end of the year came and went. My mind was made up. I didn’t have the gift of evangelism.

On a Saturday morning, about four days into the new year, I bought a Spanish translation of Billy Graham’s *The Secret of Happiness*. I was blessed reading Billy Graham’s thoughts on the Beatitudes from Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. I couldn’t help but memorize the points Mr. Graham made on each Beatitude. That night I went to a Bible study where the speaker never showed up. Finally the man of the house said, “Luis, you’re going to have to speak. None of the other preachers are here.” I borrowed a Bible and repeated a few points I remembered from Billy Graham’s book. Finally I reached the Beatitude, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”

(Matthew 5:8 RSV). Suddenly a woman from the neighborhood stood and cried out, “Somebody help me! My heart is not pure. How am I going to find God?” How delightful it was to lead her to Jesus Christ! What I learned that evening, of course, was something I had studied and should have known all along: the Holy Spirit does the convicting. I was just a vehicle. God used me in spite of myself, and He did it in His own good time. He had once again used Billy Graham’s words to guide me and push me closer to Him.

Reports of Billy Graham’s growing evangelistic ministry began to catch my eye. Friends gave me the book *Revival in Our Time*, which described Graham’s 1949 Los Angeles crusade; the event that contributed to what Dr. J. Edwin Orr called the mid-century revival.

Missionaries lent me a dated copy of *Moody Monthly’s* report on Billy Graham’s 1954 London crusade. What an impact that had on me! “Why can’t we see this in our country?” I wanted to know. A whole nation could be turned around. Mass evangelism could lift a nation’s moral and ethical standards. History bore that out. I began to dream that Argentina and eventually all of Latin America could be reached on a large scale for Jesus Christ. Eventually I came to America, met and married my wife, Patricia, and became an American citizen.

In July 1962, Pat and I worked as volunteers at the Billy Graham crusade in Fresno, California. I kept a thick notebook on every detail and learned the mechanics of mobilizing thousands of people. At a pre-crusade breakfast, we got to meet Billy Graham, and when he discovered my ambition was to preach in evangelistic crusades, he advised staying in the

big cities. “Paul always went to the centers of population,” he told us. “And Mr. Moody used to say that the cities were the mountains, and if you won the mountains, the valleys would take care of themselves.”

If anyone wonders why our team’s crusades have so closely resembled those of Billy Graham’s over the years, they should have seen us eagerly absorbing the basics in Fresno. Through the years, I’ve had many opportunities to meet with Mr. Graham and learn from his example of how to touch the world for Christ. And although our model for citywide impact has begun to take on its own nuanced approach, the lessons learned from Billy Graham and his fabulous team have always run through my veins.

Before you dig into this book, I want to tell you about one more significant occasion. I was invited to be one of the speakers at the first International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists held in Amsterdam in 1983, which was sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. There were 4,000 delegates from 133 countries.

Billy Graham spoke on the opening night of the ten-day conference. The next evening, he asked me to speak on the sensitive subject of personal holiness. When I finished speaking, everyone in the audience got down on their knees on the convention floor and prayed in their own language, appealing to God for His cleansing power to make them a mighty force for evangelism around the world. Many wept. The effect was profound. I truly felt God’s hand on the evening.

Ten days later, in his closing message, Billy shared from his heart, “This year, I will be sixty-five. At best, I don’t have

left more than a few years of this intensive evangelism that we engage in. Physically, it would be impossible. I have been engaged in it now over forty years. Three-fourths of my time is gone. At seventy-five I may still be able to hold some crusades, of course, but not on the scale we are doing now.”

Here in the United States and abroad, journalists were asking, “Who is going to fill Billy’s shoes once he’s gone?” They are still wondering more than three decades later. But the answer should be rather obvious: *no one man*.

I have many stories of how Billy Graham impacted my life and ministry. No book can contain the stories of how his life in service to Jesus has changed the world. In this short biography, my friend Terry Whalin has captured the details of Billy Graham’s beginnings on a farm in North Carolina, his call to the ministry and his service to America’s leaders, and the global reach of his preaching around the world. As you read this book, I pray you will be moved to give your own life to Jesus and find inspiration to discover new ways to serve Him. For we all must remember the words of Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Few exemplify that biblical reality better than the great Billy Graham.

Luis Palau and his ministry have shared the Gospel with more than one billion people through evangelistic events and media. He has spoken in person to thirty million people in seventy-five countries with more than 1 million registered decisions for Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1

EVANGELIST TO THE WORLD

Clutching his black Bible in one hand and a microphone in the other, Billy Graham stood outside in the howling wind in San Juan, Puerto Rico, near the Hiram Birthorn Stadium. The year was 1995. A satellite dish in the background was only one piece of a dazzling array of technology that had been assembled for one purpose—to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association had worked for more than a year to coordinate the largest single evangelistic effort in the history of Christianity. That year, from March 16 through 18, Dr. Graham's preaching was transmitted from seventeen satellite pathways to thirty satellites across twenty-nine time zones for a total of 300 hours of transmission. His words were interpreted in forty-seven languages. Musical

clips and testimonies appropriate to various areas of the world were spliced into regional programs. For example, the Mandarin language version featured a testimony by tennis star Michael Chang and a Chinese Christian musical group. Thousands of venues around the globe were set up to receive the messages and project them on video screen. The settings ranged from a refugee camp in Rwanda to the rainforests of French Guiana. The largest hall in Burundi was packed out, with many looking in through the windows and doorways. In Cameroon, more than two thousand responded to the invitation to accept Christ. In Bangladesh, nearly 25 percent of the four thousand who attended gave their lives to Christ.

The numbers tabulated after the event were staggering:

- 185 countries reached
- messages heard in 117 languages
- 3,000 mission locations involved
- over 10 million seats occupied per night
- 1 to 1.5 million Christian workers trained in preparation
- over 500,000 prepared counselors
- 1 billion people viewed the broadcast in 117 countries
- another 3 billion attended video missions at various sites

At a satellite meeting in Kazakhstan, a student told her counselor, “I’ve tried everything, and now I turn to God as

the last hope.... Something happened for which I've waited all my life.”

Billy Graham has preached the Gospel message to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history—over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, and film.

Spanning more than ninety years, Billy Graham's story cannot be contained in a single book. The stories of changed lives through his preaching could not be contained in a roomful of books. This short biography attempts to capture the key turning points in his life.

Several years ago, on his CNN program *Larry King Live*, Larry asked Billy Graham how he wanted to be remembered. Without a pause, Dr. Graham responded, “I want to be known as someone who was faithful. When I reach heaven, the Lord will respond, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into my rest.’”

Let's look at how Billy Graham has made this journey of faithfulness.

Chapter 2

NEAR THE CLEAN,
FRESH SMELL

Four days before the end of World War I, on November 7, 1918, Morrow Coffey Graham gave birth to a baby boy in a farmhouse near Charlotte, North Carolina. She named him William Franklin Graham, Jr. and called him Billy Frank.

The roots of the Graham family were deep in southern soil. Billy's two grandfathers, Ben Coffey and Crook Graham, fought in the Confederacy during the Civil War. As a result of wounds suffered during Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg, Coffee had only one leg and one eye, while Graham carried a Minié ball fired from a Yankee muzzle-loading rifle for the rest of his life.

Billy grew up on the family's three-hundred-acre dairy farm. Every day at three in the morning and again after school, he helped the hired hands milk seventy-five cows. The family chores left little time for idle play, but Billy had a reputation for being a bundle of energy, rushing from one activity to another.

One day his mother had had enough of his hyperactivity and hustled Billy Frank off to the doctor. In his office, she explained, "He never runs down, and it isn't normal. He's got way too much energy."

"Don't worry," the doctor said reassuringly. "It's the way he's built." The physician's words were almost prophetic.

As soon as Billy learned to read, his mother encouraged him to develop a habit of reading as much as he could. He was spellbound with the tales of Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest and the whole Tom Swift series. Among his favorite adventure stories were those of Tarzan. A new book was released every two months, and the young Graham could hardly wait for the next episode.

Billy often hung from the trees in his backyard and practiced his version of the Tarzan yell. It often frightened those driving horses down the road. Years later, his father would say, "I think all that yelling helped develop his voice."

One of his school bus drivers recalls another side of the youngster. Sometimes when Billy got off the bus with the other boys, he would reach underneath and turn the shutoff valve to the gas tank. The driver said, "I would go about a hundred yards and the engine would sputter out. I'd get out and shake my fist at him, but he'd only give me a laugh. It made him a hero to the other kids."

During his growing-up years, Billy learned the value of money, and his father taught him firsthand the importance of free enterprise. Every now and then when a calf was born on the farm, the elder Graham turned it over to Billy Frank and his friend Albert McMakin to be raised. When the calf reached the veal stage, the boys would market it and split the proceeds.

In general, the town newspaper was full of local stories, and radio was in its infancy. One day, William Graham, Sr. put together his first crystal radio set and located pioneer radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh. The family gathered around the squawking receiver and held their collective breath. For what seemed like a very long time, Mr. Graham turned three tuning dials to locate the station, and finally something intelligible broke through the static. Billy Frank and his siblings shouted, “That’s it! We have it!”

A few years later, the Graham family was one of the first in the area to have a radio in their car. When his parents went into a store to shop, Billy Frank stretched across the backseat and listened to the mysterious distorted broadcast sounds. These wireless relays from Europe sounded like they were coming from a magical seashell. In particular, Graham was fascinated with the speaking style of a German named Adolf Hitler. While Billy Frank didn’t understand his language, the intonation somewhat frightened him.

The barns on the family farm were roofed in tin, and on rainy days Billy loved to sneak sway into the hay barn and lie down on the sweet-smelling slipper piles of dried grass. He would listen and dream as the rain pounded the tin roof. The

still and solitary sanctuary seemed to help shape his character. Even as an adult, when visiting a busy city, Graham would often find a quiet church where he could meditate in the cool, dim stillness.

There were plenty of animals on the farm, and from a young age, Billy learned to love dogs. The farm also had cats, and once, without knowing any better, Billy took a cat and shut it in a doghouse. While these animals hated each other by some ancient instinct, after spending the night together, they came out friends forever. The seeds of such an experience were planted in his heart. If bitter animal enemies could learn to work together, then people who were at odds with each other could also find ways to get along.

As a young boy, Billy had a close brush with death. When he was sick, his mother gave him what she thought was cough medicine but was actually iodine. Realizing her mistake immediately, she made a quick phone call to his Aunt Jennie, who suggested, “Give him some thick cream to neutralize the iodine.” This remedy no doubt saved his life.

When Billy was nine years old, the dairy prospered enough that the Graham family was able to move into a larger, two-story, brick Colonial house that his father built for \$9,000. The move meant a big change for Billy, his younger brother, Melvin, and his two sisters: no more baths in the washtub on the front porch—the family now had indoor plumbing. Billy Frank and Melvin shared a room that was sparsely furnished with twin beds and a white dresser.

The elder Graham had a reputation as an excellent horse trader, which carried over to his sale of cows. He often took

Billy along with him during these short trips. During one sales call at a farm about five miles away, Mr. Graham was explaining the excellent qualities of a particular animal when Billy Frank interrupted. “Daddy, that cow really kicks when you’re milking her. She’s very temperamental.”

On the way home, Billy’s father gave him some unforgettable instructions about not interrupting business negotiations.

Due to a shortage of cash and leisure time, Graham family outings were few and far between. But on an occasional Saturday night, the family would pile into the car and drive to the nearby country grocery store or sometimes even into Charlotte to Niven’s Drugstore. On these special excursions, the treat was either an ice cream cone or a soft drink—but never both. Then, as the four children waited in the car with their mother, Mr. Graham would go into the barbershop for a shave.

Mother and Daddy Graham rarely went out for entertainment. But about once a year, they attended a potluck picnic at a community hall a mile away, which featured plenty of music. A favorite song of Mr. Graham’s was “My Blue Heaven.”

Sometimes the whole family went to see the movies. Some of the stars of the day were Will Rogers, Marie Dressler, and Wallace Beery. Nudity on the screen was rare at this time, but there were few restrictions. During a movie preview, a brief shot of a woman swimming in the nude flashed on the screen. Mrs. Graham grabbed Billy Frank’s hand and commanded, “Close your eyes!”

The family always looked forward to spending two or three days each year on vacation. Usually they went to the beach, driving about eight hours to either Wilmington or

Myrtle Beach. After arriving, Mr. Graham would inquire at the various boardinghouses until he located the cheapest. Usually he managed to get a room and food for about a dollar a night per person.

Billy Frank's first long trip was to Washington, DC, four hundred miles from his home. His cousin Frank Black drove, but he wasn't interested in spending much time sightseeing because he had to get back home to his girlfriend. They went through the entire Smithsonian Institution—not the large complex of today—in forty minutes! On the same trip, they climbed every step of the Washington Monument.

Billy Frank's younger years were filled with experiences that made that time his happiest, even though when he was big enough, he had to help with some difficult family chores. The longest hours were spent in his mother's garden guiding the plow behind a mule to lay fertilizer down on the freshly sown seeds. Of course, the reward was that in the spring, summer, and fall, the Grahams enjoyed acres of corn, wheat, rye, and barley, and a variety of fresh vegetables.

When Billy's Big Ben alarm clock sounded at 2:30 a.m., he sometimes wanted to slam it on the floor and burrow back under the warm covers. But then he would hear the heavy footsteps in the hallway outside his upstairs bedroom, and he knew his father was up and expected his oldest son to hustle down the hill to wake up Pedro, one of the hired hands. Billy also knew that there would be no breakfast until all of the cows were milked. This was added incentive to get moving on the day.

Joe McCall, another one of the hired workers, usually called the cows into the barn: “Whoo-ee, whoo-ee, whoo-ee!” Instinctively, the cows headed to their stalls, where Billy Frank and the others fastened the stanchions around their necks. If a cow was particularly active, they also put kickers or restraining chains around their hind legs. Then Billy would set his three-legged stool and tin milk pail on the floor beneath the cow’s working end. He’d press his head against her warm belly and begin working the udder “faucets” careful to keep out of the way of the swishing tail.

Billy repeated this process each morning in twenty stalls. And in the afternoon, after school, he milked the same twenty cows. The entire task took his flexible fingers about an hour and a half each time and translated into the commendable rate of five minutes per cow.

After the milking was done, Billy picked up a shovel and cleaned out the fresh manure from each stall, and with the help of the hired hands, he brought fresh hay from the hay barn next door to refill the feeding troughs.

One of Billy Frank’s favorite rituals was carrying the five-gallon milk cans over to the milk-processing house. Before he was old enough to carry the heavy cans, he loved to watch the muscular men carry them down to the spring and set them into the clear water to cool. From there the milk was bottled and taken to town for delivery to homes.

Billy especially loved to watch Reese Brown, a black foreman on the farm for fifteen years. A few of the farmers were critical of the elder Graham because Reese was perhaps the highest paid farmhand in Mecklenburg County, earning three dollars a day.

But Reese was one of Mr. Graham's best friends. He had served with distinction in World War II as an army sergeant and was very intelligent. He was also one of the strongest men Billy Frank knew, with a great capacity for hard work. In the eyes of Billy, there wasn't anything that Reese didn't know or have the ability to do. If the young Graham did something Reese thought was wrong, he didn't hesitate to correct him. Almost like an uncle to him, Reese taught Billy to respect his father. Billy played often with Reese's children and enjoyed his wife's fabulous buttermilk biscuits in their tenant home.

After early morning chores, Billy Frank would head to the breakfast room at about five-thirty. Mrs. Graham chopped wood for the stove and cooked for the hungry men while they worked in the barns. With Billy's sister Catherine and the maid helping, Mrs. Graham served up grits, gravy, fresh eggs, ham or bacon, and hot homemade rolls. It was a traditional farm breakfast with all the milk they could drink.

After the hours of hard work, the fresh air of the dairy, and the good food, Billy Frank was ready for almost anything—except school. Some nights he got only three or four hours of sleep, and he often felt tired in the classroom. He contends the fatigue contributed to his poor grades. In elementary school, he made mostly As but in high school, he only had a C average.

Billy loved to read history, and also found he had a deep and abiding love for sports, especially baseball. One of the great thrills of his boyhood was shaking hands with Babe Ruth. In fact, Billy dreamed of becoming a professional baseball player someday, but wasn't quite good enough to continue in the sport. Ironically, Billy wasn't much aware of a professional

baseball-player-turned-preacher named Billy Sunday, who was at the height of his ministry when Mr. Graham took his five-year-old son to hear him. Billy was overwhelmed with the huge crowd. He had no trouble being quiet, because his father had warned him that unless he was quiet during the service, the preacher would call out his name and have him arrested by the local police.

Throughout his school years, Billy dated several girls and enjoyed holding hands and kissing as much as any other young man. But he attributes his parents' strong love, discipline, and faith to keeping him on the straight and narrow. It never seemed right to him to have an intimate relationship with anyone except the woman he was married to.

Once during his senior year, he took part in an evening rehearsal of the school play. One of the girls in the cast coaxed Billy into a dark classroom. This particular girl had a reputation for making out with the boys. Before Billy realized what was happening, she was begging him to make love to her. His teenage hormones were as active as any other healthy young male's, but when this moment of temptation came, he silently cried out to God for strength and then darted from the classroom.

His sexual restraint wasn't for lack of knowledge. Like other teens, Billy discussed these appealing topics with other boys. He had the added tutor or one of the farm hands, Pedro. This older man was good-natured, but took the young Graham aside to confide in him about his sexual experiences with women.

It was Pedro who tried to teach Billy to chew tobacco. One day, Mr. Graham caught his oldest son with a chaw in his cheek,

and that day became the last one that Pedro worked on the farm. Billy received a memorable thrashing from his father.

When it came to alcohol, Mr. Graham absolutely forbade it. He devised an unusual means to teach Billy Frank and his sister Catherine about the substance. Soon after the Prohibition Amendment, forbidding the sale of alcohol, was repealed, Mr. Graham brought home two bottles of beer and placed them in front of Billy Frank and Catherine in the kitchen. He handed a bottle to each of them and ordered, "Drink *all* of it." The shock of his unusual request turned them both against the bitter taste.

"From now on," Mr. Graham said, "whenever any of your friends try to get you to drink alcohol, just tell them that you've already tasted it, and you don't like it. That's all the reason you need to give." His approach worked, and Billy Frank never developed a taste for any alcoholic beverage.

Through consistent love and discipline, Billy learned to obey his mother and father without question. The concepts of lying, cheating, stealing, or destroying property were completely foreign to him. He also learned that laziness was one of the greatest evils, and he cherished the dignity and honor of hard work. Billy actually embraced with full abandon milking cows, cleaning out latrines, and shoveling manure, not because they were pleasant jobs but because sweat on one's brow held its own satisfaction.

Billy Frank was the oldest of the four Graham children, Catherine, Melvin and Jean. There were thirteen years between Billy Frank and Jean, his youngest sister. When Jean was three years old, Billy Frank carried her around on his

shoulders. He walked from the living room to the dining room and accidentally dropped her onto the floor. Jean wasn't hurt, but for years in the family Billy Frank was teased about the incident.

Though his parents sometimes disagreed, and Billy could sense occasional tension between them, he never witnessed a word of profanity from either. They seemed to weather every problem and move on to what was important.

In the Graham home, the family Bible was read daily not as a ritual but as a practice established the day Billy's parents were married. The Bible was a cherished book, the very Word of God, and they sought God's help to keep the family united. Prayer was common in their home, and each time his parents prayed, Billy knew they were declaring their dependence on God for wisdom, strength, and courage—in spite of circumstances. The foundational prayer was that each of their children would come into the kingdom of God. It would be a few years before such prayer for Billy Frank would be answered.

Chapter 3

COMPLETELY CHANGED
IN A MOMENT

Church was always a part of the Graham's family life. They attended the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in downtown Charlotte. Billy can't remember a time when he didn't go to church. Even if he didn't feel like going, he never spoke it aloud to his parents because he knew "they would have whaled the tar out of me."

In 1934, Charlotte, North Carolina, had the reputation of being one of the leading churchgoing cities in the United States. At the invitation of many of the city churches, evangelist Dr. Mordecai Fowler Ham from Louisville, Kentucky, held a three-month-long revival meeting. The stately, balding man with a neatly trimmed white mustache and impeccable clothing preached every morning and every night except Mondays. This

strong, rugged evangelist had a great knowledge of the Bible, and he didn't "soft pedal" sin. His candid denunciations of various evils were widely reported in the newspapers. To begin with, people were drawn to his meetings out of curiosity.

From the initial news that Dr. Ham was in town, Billy Frank decided not to attend the meetings. He felt negative about them—it sounded like a religious circus.

A number of Charlotte's ministers and several members of a group called the Christian Men's Club invited Dr. Ham to preach in a 5,000-seat tabernacle. The wooden building with a steel frame and sawdust ground cover was constructed especially for the meetings and located on the edge of town near the Cole Manufacturing Company.

Billy's parents were drawn to attend the meetings. Mrs. Graham went out of a desire to nurture her own spirituality but also to encourage growth in her husband. Later, Mr. Graham said, "My experience is that Dr. Ham's meetings opened my eyes to the truth." The Good News about Jesus took on fresh meaning to Mr. Graham and many others who attended.

Mrs. Graham was also deeply affected, and one day said, "I feel Dr. Ham's meetings did more, especially for the Christians, than any other meetings we've had here."

Despite his parents' enthusiasm, Billy Frank determined he didn't want to have anything to do with a person called an evangelist—particularly an evangelist with a colorful reputation like Dr. Ham's. Almost sixteen, he told his parents he would not go to hear the man.

Then one day early in the campaign, Billy read in the *Charlotte News* about one of Dr. Ham's sermons. He charged

that immoral conditions existed at Central High School in Charlotte. Apparently, the evangelist knew what he was talking about and claimed to have affidavits from students. He contended a house across the street from the school was used for certain immoral escapades.

As the rumors flew, some students threatened to contest the accusations and demonstrate in front of the platform. Billy was curious about attending the meetings now, but wondered how he dared when he had resisted for almost a month. Then his friend, Albert McMakin, stepped in and suggested, “Why don’t you come out and hear our fighting preacher?”

“Is he a fighter?” Billy asked. “I like a fighter.”

That night Albert and Billy drove the Graham family vegetable truck to the crusade, loaded with people who wanted to attend. Everyone in their group sat in the back of the tabernacle. There were several thousand people in attendance, the largest crowd Billy had ever witnessed.

When Dr. Ham began, he opened his Bible and spoke straight from his text. His words resonated throughout the tabernacle, and though Billy Frank could not recall what Dr. Ham said, he was spellbound. The evangelist seemed to speak with the voice of the Holy Spirit.

That evening after the crusade, Billy Frank bumped along in the truck deep in thought. Later, stretched out on his bed at home, he stared out the window for a long time.

The next night nothing could stop Billy from attending Dr. Ham’s crusade, and he became a faithful attendee night after night. He wasn’t alone. Huge crowds were drawn to the tabernacle. Dr. Ham was a preacher who spoke on everyday

topics like drinking, keeping the Sabbath, infidelity, and money. While Billy Frank had been in the church all his life, he couldn't recall a sermon about the Second Coming. Dr. Ham spoke of it often.

Neither had he heard a sermon about hell until these meetings. He knew people used the word for cursing, but Dr. Ham left no doubt that hell was a real place. He also told the people about the love of God in contrast to their sin and God's judgment. For the first time in his life, Billy Frank felt convicted about his own sinfulness—and he was confused.

How is it possible that the evangelist is talking to me? he wondered. He had been baptized as a baby, he could quote every word of the Shorter Catechism, and he had been confirmed in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church with the approval of the pastor and the elders. He was active in his church youth group and a diligent son. He got into mischief once in a while, but no more than any other teenager. Why did Billy Frank feel like Dr. Ham's pointing gestures struck right into his soul?

So convinced was he that Dr. Ham was speaking directly to him about sin and God's judgment if he didn't change his ways, one night he actually ducked behind the wide-brimmed hat of the lady in front of him. Yet despite his uncomfortable feelings, he was drawn irresistibly to the meetings.

Throughout these evenings, Billy struck up a friendship with Grady Wilson, who was already a Christian, but was having some convictions as well under Dr. Ham's preaching. Grady had an older brother, Thomas Walter, whom everyone called T.W. Billy Frank and Grady decided they could avoid Dr. Ham's pointed attacks if they joined the choir. Neither boy

could sing, but they mouthed the words and held the hymnal. It seemed like the perfect evasion of Dr. Ham's stare.

Slowly it began to dawn on Billy that he did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He could not get into heaven because of his Christian parents. Each individual had to make a personal decision for Jesus.

One night around Billy's sixteenth birthday, Dr. Ham finished preaching and then gave an invitation for people to come forward and accept Christ. The audience sang all four verses of "Just As I Am," followed by "Almost Persuaded, Now to Believe." On the final verse of the second song, Billy Frank walked forward and stood in a small space in front of the platform. About three or four hundred people responded to the invitation that night.

On his way home, no bells sounded or signs flashed across the sky, but Billy felt a quiet peace. Before getting into bed, he got down on his knees for the first time and prayed, "Lord, I don't know what happened to me tonight. *You* know, and I thank you for the privilege."

In the spring of 1936, Billy Graham graduated from Sharon High School. His friend Albert McMakin, who invited him to hear Dr. Ham, was a field manager for the Fuller Brush Company. He invited Billy and his friends T.W. and Grady Wilson to hit the road and sell brushes. The job gave Billy the chance to earn some money for college in the fall as well as come face-to-face with the public as he went door-to-door selling brushes.

Before long, Graham outsold his friends with his approach. He would say to the housewife, "I haven't come here to sell you

anything. I've come to give you a brush." This line of enticement never failed to get the housewife to want the free brush. But he always kept the free ones in the bottom of the case, so that he had to empty the other brushes onto a table to get to them. Upon seeing all the brushes, women would inevitably comment, "You know, I've never seen a brush quite like that one before." Or, "What is this one used for?" As soon as she began to ask about a product, Billy knew a sale was in progress. During the summer, he and his friends sold lots of brushes. They sent in their orders and received the brushes later in the mail. That required a return trip to the customers to deliver the brushes and to collect payment.

Sometimes a woman ordered a number of brushes and neglected to tell her husband. Billy learned that the best time to make a delivery was during supertime or shortly thereafter, when both husband and wife were home. Then they could work out the situation and pay for the product. That summer, Billy learned a lot about human nature and honed his communication skills to convince a person to make a decision. It was a skill God would use in the days ahead.

Graham also developed another key skill—prayer. He prayed for opportunities to talk to people about Christ. Some customers complained to Albert, Billy's supervisor, that he sold Christ as much as he sold brushes. Nonetheless, his experiences as a salesman taught him some critical lessons for the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W. Terry Whalin has always been fascinated with stories about people and their lives. As a youth, he read many biographies and later he wrote stories as a journalist. Terry has profiled more than 150 bestselling authors in more than fifty magazines including *Christianity Today* and *Writers Digest*. Terry is the author of more than sixty books including biographies of Chuck Colson, John Perkins, Sojourner Truth, Billy Sunday, Samuel Morris, and Luis Palau. An acquisitions editor at Morgan James Publishing, Terry and his wife Christine live in Colorado. His website is www.terrywhalin.com and his book website is www.BillyGrahamBio.com.

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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY'S GREATEST EVANGELIST

BILLY GRAHAM has preached the Good News about Jesus in person to more people than anyone in history. Millions more have heard him through television, radio, and film. This easy-to-read biography tells Billy Graham's story, including his humble beginnings as a southern farm boy, his calling to the ministry, the start of the crusades, his service to America's leaders, and his later years preaching around the globe. As you read these details of a life dedicated to the cause of Christ, you will be inspired to give your life in service to God.

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W. TERRY WHALIN, an editor and author of over 60 books, has written for more than 50 magazines. He is a former editor of *Decision*, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's magazine. Terry and his wife live in Colorado.



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