

September 2008

**Dear Friend,**

In 1950, the same year I was born, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was incorporated in the state of Minnesota. In 1957, Billy began national telecasts of his crusades. I can remember watching Billy Graham on television at my grandmother's home in East St. Louis, Illinois. She was a great fan and when she died, my uncle, who lived with and cared for Grandma, said that Billy should come and do the funeral. Like many people during that time, my family was touched and influenced by the Gospel according to Billy Graham. Even my dad, who was not a regular church going man, enjoyed watching "Billy" on TV.

Last week, I had the great privilege of attending the Billy Graham School of Evangelism at the ministry's training center in Asheville, North Carolina, located in the beautiful Appalachian Mountains. Billy Graham, who is now almost 90 and in poor health, did not appear in person, but by video. But his mark, and more importantly, the mark of the One he serves was all over the event.

During the school, I learned more wonderful truths about reaching the lost with the Good News of the Savior of the world. I made connections with people and learned principles that will, no doubt, have an effect on this ministry for years to come. The school increased my vision and burden for souls, and faith for what God can do through a ministry that is sold out for Him.

I would like to share with you three strong impressions that I received after spending a few days at the Billy Graham Training Center. These impressions pertain to the man and the ministry, and the example that has been given to us about how to live a life. Don't get me wrong, I'm not idolizing Billy Graham. He's just a man, with all the faults and failures and weaknesses of a man. But at the same time, we must say that he is someone who has made a mark on this world, a man whose life has made a difference. I think all of us would like that—to know at the end of our days on earth that we brought real meaningful change, and especially to know that people will be in heaven because of our words and deeds. There are three thoughts that stood out to me like a message written in neon lights. These are foundational principles upon which each of us can build our lives, our churches, and our ministries.

**First of all, I saw integrity.** It seems every few months another ministry is disgraced by a scandal of some kind. Usually it involves money, pride or sex. Billy and Ruth Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association have stood the test of time. They have, as the scripture says, avoided "all appearance of evil." It's not only keeping your heart right and doing that which is legal, ethical, and moral, but it's also providing for things honest in the sight of God "and man." People are watching to see if we will live what we preach. Moral integrity, honesty, and a good reputation must be guarded with diligence if we expect to run the race successfully and go the distance.

**Secondly, I saw excellence.** It was obvious to me (and I heard many others say it as well at the school), there is a spirit of excellence upon the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. God spoke to my heart while I was there and said, "I do all things well!" And from what I saw, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association endeavors to follow God's example. From the quality and order of the services, to the beauty and care of the facilities, to the hospitality and warmth that was shown to the participants in the school, all things were done well. One man told me that he had one of the greatest spiritual conversations he ever had in his life with a shuttle bus driver. From the cook, to the kitchen staff, to those who cleaned the rooms, to those conducting the training sessions, there was a very obvious effort to give glory to God and to walk in His love in everything they did. The facilities are not gaudy and extravagant,

but beautifully built and well-maintained. There is nothing cheap or trivial. Everything is intended to give glory to God and to lift those who visit that place. Printed materials are top notch. Videos are of the highest caliber. All of these things challenged all of us to a higher standard of excellence in life and ministry.

**Thirdly, I saw focus.** The focus of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association is fulfilling the great commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. They have stayed true to that call and have not deviated. Billy Graham is no longer able to preach and hold crusades, but the work continues through his son, Franklin, and through many other arms of the ministry of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. It is also being multiplied by the thousands of believers and ministries that have been touched by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association over these many years. This is an example for all of us. Keep your focus! The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. The main thing is souls. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," Paul said, and this is our one true mission as the church, "to seek and save the lost." We must reach the lost. Don't turn away into side issues. Whatever you do, make your end goal to reach the world. Don't get sidetracked with controversies, strange doctrines, or the latest fads in Christian ministry. Go! Go! Go! Take the gospel to the world!

Early in his life, Billy Graham surrendered his life to Jesus. He told the Lord, "I will go where you want me to go. I will do what you want me to do. I am yours." I believe that this is the commitment that made a difference in his life, and it is that same surrender that will cause the power of the Lord to be magnified in our lives. It's not our power, talent and ability that matters, but it's God's power and ability working through a yielded vessel that will change the world we live in today. Today in our nation, we are hearing a mantra of "Change! Change! Change!" But the greatest change that we need is a change in the heart of man. We need to turn from sin and back to God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

I want to thank you for your financial support and prayers. It is your giving that enables us to continue the legacy of all those that have gone before us, who have sacrificed to reach a lost and dying world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have great opportunities before us, in the United States, in Canada, and around the world. Specifically in 2009, we have invitations to India and Thailand, as well as many other places. Many of these places are Gospel-starved and in desperate need of the Gospel. Thailand is less than 2 percent Christian. India, as I have shared before, is less than 3 percent. Many people in these nations have never even heard the Gospel message. We need your financial support if we are going to walk through the doors that God is opening.

Today, I am asking you to make a regular contribution to help us in our mission of reaching souls. Perhaps you can make a monthly, or a generous annual, semiannual, or quarterly contribution to help people to come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. A generous one-time gift at this time will also help us greatly to touch lives for Jesus Christ. Through your giving you can leave a legacy to touch the generations to come.

May God bless you!



Tom Shanklin

**Please pray for these upcoming meetings:**

Sept. 4-12, Mistissini Cree Reserve, Mistissini, Quebec, Canada.  
Sunday, Sept. 14, The Country Church, Ruthton, MN. 507-658-3917.  
Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 27-28, Restoration Christian Assembly Church, Pewaukee, WI. 262-691-3336  
Saturday, Oct. 4, 5:30 p.m., The Refuge, 921 SE 8th St. Detroit Lakes, MN. 218-847-1982.  
Sunday, Oct. 5, 10:30 a.m., White Earth Assembly of God, White Earth, MN.  
Sunday, Oct. 5, 4 p.m., Rice Lake Area Fellowship, Rice Lake, MN., White Earth Indian Reservation, .  
Sunday, Oct. 19, 10 a.m., For His Glory Church, Log Cabin, City Park, Spring Grove, MN.  
Sunday, Nov. 14-16, Bethel Christian Center, Muskogee, OK. 918-632-9020.