

7 Reasons Why Billy Graham's Influence Is Greater Now Than Ever

I am very pleased with the way the passing of Billy Graham has captured the heart of the U.S. and the world. Every major secular and religious news venue on every platform—whether printed or online through every mode of social media—is highlighting his life, legacy and playing snippets of his messages. Truly, it may be that Billy is reaching more people in his death than he ever did in his earthly life.

The following are seven reasons why his influence is greater today than ever before

1. Leaders are often more honored after they pass away.

Unfortunately, as we can observe in both biblical history and contemporary culture, prophets are honored after they die more than while they are alive. (e.g. the prophets Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and the like were persecuted during their lifetime or put to death, but were universally honored after they passed from the scene.)

Even in church history I am sure that leaders like St. Augustine, Martin Luther, Calvin George Whitfield, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, William Carey, D.L. Moody, Karl Barth, William Seymour, Martin Luther King, Smith Wigglesworth and the like have been almost elevated to mythical greatness post death; but they did not obtain the same honor while they were alive.

Too often we take greatness for granted until it is no longer around. When we are in proximity to something or somebody we often undervalue the uniqueness of their contributions. I believe now that Billy is gone his amazing life and

accomplishments will be appreciated even more

2. The gospel he preached is being highlighted everywhere through secular media.

I am amazed that every secular newspaper and television news outlet on every medium of social media are airing snippets of his preaching or quoting his words, interviews and sayings. With all the advances in social media since he was active, it is possible that he is preaching now to more people in his death than in his life.

3. He is being introduced to a younger generation.

With the public honor, publicity and celebration of Billy Graham's life from presidents to plumbers—from both believer and unbeliever—he is being reintroduced to Millennials and introduced to Generation Z. This can't help but have a positive imprint and perhaps motivate thousands of young people to pick up the mantle of evangelistic ministry.

4. His example of integrity is impacting church leadership.

As this public figure is being celebrated he is also being examined and scrutinized by saint and sinner. Although Billy was a sinner who needed to be saved by grace just like the rest of us, he carried his public mantle by living a life of simplicity—without scandal—which will motivate millions of believers and leaders in the church and marketplace to do the same. (Truly, people follow what they celebrate.)

5. He is being honored by Congress and every living president.

Billy is only one of the few private citizens to be honored by Congress posthumously by having his body lie in repose at the U.S. Capitol rotunda. He is the first private citizen to be afforded this honor since civil rights hero Rosa Parks was given the same honor in 2005. His funeral will also most likely be attended by every living U.S. president (unless

President George H.W. Bush is too sick to attend).

6. His organizations helped train generations of evangelists.

The Billy Graham organization and its offshoots have been responsible to equip and train thousands of past, present and future evangelists and church leaders. Billy fulfilled the role of a New Testament ministry-gift evangelist, whose primary role was to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12).

I'm sure the BGA will receive more substantial endowments now in his memory to further the work of this vital ministry; hence, Billy's influence and impact of equipping ministers will continue to increase as time goes on.

7. He is a model of reconciliation.

Back in the day before many civil rights victories had been won, Billy refused to segregate blacks and whites at his crusades. He said that the gospel is not a white man's gospel or a black man's gospel. Although he regretted not marching with Dr. King in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, his voice was one of love and unity under the banner of Jesus Christ.

Oh, how we need voices like his today in this racially polarized world! His example in this area will live on and continue to positively affect the church and world.