

Anne Graham Lotz: Billy Graham's Simple Yet Soul-Stirring Legacy

This Father's Day, memories were precious. I spent time reflecting, not on the public figure Billy Graham, but on the one I called "Daddy." The one who was always a farmer at heart. Who loved his dogs and his cat. Who followed the weather patterns almost as closely as he did world events. Who wore old blue jeans, comfortable sweaters and a baseball cap. Who loved lukewarm coffee, sweet iced tea, one scoop of ice cream and a plain hamburger from McDonald's. Who was interested in everything and everyone, from the small to the great. Whose mind remembered details that even a computer would have trouble recalling.

Yet as I remember, I can't help but also think of his message, because he was immersed in it. Saturated in it. He was his message ... a simple man who had responded to God's love by placing his faith in Jesus, receiving the assurance that his sins were forgiven, that he would not perish but would have everlasting life. Simple faith. Faith that now matters more than anything else.

For years, over his head as he preached was the banner that quoted the words of Jesus: *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*. Jesus completed that sentence by saying that "no one comes to the Father but by Me." Based on what Jesus said, Daddy is safely with the Father. In heaven. Daddy not only claimed Jesus as the only way to God, he lived by the truth publicly on platforms and privately behind closed doors and is now enjoying real life.

I have often stated that I was raised by a single parent because ministry took my father away from our family—for weeks

and months at a time. Daddy estimated that he was gone from home approximately 60 percent of his children's growing-up years. Until Daddy started staying home to be with Mother during the last years of her life, I could count on one hand the Father's Days I spent with him. Yet again and again, I've also stated that giving him up was more than worthwhile because I have met people all over the world who have come to faith in Jesus Christ as a result of his ministry.

So, though he may be physically absent and his voice silent, I am confident his message will continue to reverberate throughout the generations to come. I pray that thousands will take up his message like a baton being passed in a relay race and faithfully pass it on to others. Because Daddy's message is God's message. And it's a message of genuine hope for the future, of love for the present, of forgiveness for the past. It's a message, when received, that brings a fresh beginning, unshakable joy, unexplainable peace, eternal significance, meaning and purpose to life and opens heaven's door.

At Daddy's funeral service, I publicly vowed that I would do my best to faithfully deliver that same message by preaching the Word, doing the work of an evangelist as I share the gospel, and living my life so that five minutes before I see Jesus, I have no regrets. (2 Tim. 4:1-8) My gift to Daddy on this Father's Day is to keep that vow. With that in mind, I recently had the privilege of speaking at the Israeli Knesset and at the Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast. To my knowledge, there were people of other religions who placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah, Savior and Lord.

So, the message which Daddy carried to the world that penetrated my own heart as a young girl continues to make impact. This Father's Day, while my heart aches for the one I called Daddy, I'm celebrating with triumphant joy as I continue his legacy by passing the baton of truth to as many people as I can. {eoa}

Anne Graham Lotz, second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her latest, *The Daniel Prayer*.

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