

Anne Graham Lotz: Happy Birthday in Heaven, Daddy!

Editor's note: Anne Graham Lotz wrote this on Nov. 7, 2018, which would have been her father's 100th birthday.

Today is my father's 100th birthday! I'm reflecting, not on the public figure Billy Graham, but on the one I called "Daddy." I miss him more now than when he first moved to our Father's house. With a dull ache in my heart, I long to drive up to see him one more time. To tell him about the new journey of faith God has me traveling. To hear him say, "I love you, darling."

Today, I'm remembering 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 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 except through Me" (John 14:6). Based on

what Jesus said, Daddy is safely with the Father, celebrating his first birthday 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.

So, while he may be physically absent and his voice silent, I am confident that his message will continue to reverberate throughout the generations to come. While I'm somewhat bound and set aside, I have not forgotten my recommitment to take up his message like a baton being passed in a relay race. I am committed to faithfully pass it on to those with whom I come in contact, whether through this blog, or those I pass at the hospital during chemo treatments or doctors' visits. 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.

I know, because the message Daddy carried to the world penetrated my own heart as a young girl and continues to make impact. {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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