

Billy Graham Featured in Chicken Soup for the Soul

Billy Graham's ministry has been a remedy for the soul of millions of people around the world. The literary world has returned the favor to the 94-year-old, best-loved evangelist.

Chicken Soup for the Soul, a best-selling publishing brand of several inspirational books, recently released its newest edition, *Chicken Soup for the Soul, Billy Graham and Me*. The book documents 101 fascinating personal stories from celebrities, political dignitaries, athletes and others who have shared a friendship or life experience with perhaps the most important spiritual leaders of our time.

The Chicken Soup for the Soul series has sold more than 100 million copies in the United States and Canada alone since being introduced in 1993. USA Today named Chicken Soup for the Soul one of the five "most memorable and impactful books in the last quarter century.

Graham will celebrate his 95th birthday in November. After more than 60 years of ministry, he retired in 2006 at age 89.

It is the first time in the 20-year history of the series that a Chicken Soup for the Soul book has been dedicated to honoring one individual. A special hardcover version was released this week.

Graham has influenced many U.S. presidents and world leaders, including every living U.S. president. President George W. Bush said he wasn't a true believer in Jesus Christ until he met Graham in 1985.

"I was captivated by Billy," Bush said in the book. "He had a powerful presence, full of kindness and grace, and a keen mind. In his gentle, loving way, Billy began to deepen my

shallow understanding of faith.”

Christian and non-Christian religious leaders who have been impacted by Graham and his ministry paid a hearty tribute to the North Carolina native in the book Joel Osteen, Tim Keller, Mark Batterson, Jud Wilhite, Miles McPherson, Rabbie Yechiel Eckstein, Cardinal Timothy Dolan and South African activist Ela Gandhi spoke of Graham’s spiritual influence worldwide.

Best-selling author and senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., Rick Warren, said of Graham in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*: “Billy has been first and foremost, an evangelist of the Good News. But in close second place, he’s always been an encourager for Christian leaders. ... As I have traveled the globe, I’ve met ministers everywhere who were also personally encouraged by Billy Graham.”

During his career, Graham was a pioneer among evangelists who shunned segregation and encouraged the Civil Rights Movement. In 1957, he brought in a then little-known African-American preacher named Martin Luther King Jr. to preach with him at a crusade at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

“Billy Graham didn’t care about the opposition he faced for that from a lot of people,” said Dr. Alveda King, Martin Luther King Jr.’s niece. “He knew he would face some backlash from it, but didn’t back down. God bless Billy Graham for allowing my uncle to preach during that time.”

President Bill Clinton saw Billy Graham live for the first time during a crusade in Fayetteville, Ark., in 1958, a crusade in which Clinton said white church leaders suggested that Graham restrict to whites only. Graham, of course, refused.

“He said that all people deserve to hear God’s Word and that, if he couldn’t preach to everyone, he wouldn’t preach at all,” Clinton said in the book.

Other celebrities who shared their stories of Graham in the compilation included entertainers Wynonna Judd, Cheryl Ladd, Kathy Ireland, Kathie Lee Gifford and Charlie Daniels; former Heisman Trophy winner Danny Wuerfel and NASCAR driver Justin Allgaier; and media personalities Dan Rather and Larry King.

Many spoke of Graham's impeccable integrity and humility, a staple of his lifelong ministry.