

Decision America Tour Event Draws Only This Many People

Despite a sunny day, a steady south wind dropped wind chills to just 20° F on the west steps of the Iowa Statehouse on Tuesday afternoon.

That didn't prevent at least 2,000 people from gathering to hear from the Rev. Franklin Graham, who kicked off his Decision America Tour in the capital city of the first-in-the-nation caucus state. Another 1,000 people watched from the warmth of their own homes on a live stream of the event on the Billy Graham Evangelist Association's YouTube channel.

The event has since been archived online for others to view.

Graham opened his speech with a greeting from his father, who at 97 years of age is unable to travel. He then discussed the problems the nation faces.

"No political party is going to be able to turn this around," he told the crowd. "I have no hope in the Democratic Party—listen to me—I have zero hope in the Republican party. I have no hope in Tea Party or any other party. My only hope is in Almighty God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The most important thing we can do as Christians ... is pray."

Graham then spoke about the story of Nehemiah and how it parallels what is happening to America today. He said the steps Nehemiah took should be the template for those who were in attendance:

- prayerfully confess the sins of the nation,
- prayerfully confess one's personal sins,
- prayerfully confess the sins of our fathers,

Graham then asked the audience if their sins were forgiven, and if they really believed it. He said he wanted to be sure that everyone in attendance knew that God loved them, and that they understood the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ.

He then led those in the audience in need of it in a Sinner's Prayer.

Graham next discussed the rise of secularism during the "deep sigh" the nation took following the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union. He said there was little difference between the ideologies, particularly for Christians, and he urged them to fight.

Quoting frequently from his father's past speeches, he laid out a two-point battle plan to fight against the invasion of secularism in the political realm. The first of those is to vote.

"Vote for candidates that stand for biblical truth and biblical principles, and that are willing to live them," he said. "I'm not here to tell you who to vote for. I'm not going to do that ... but I'm asking you to vote. Do it."

He then urged Christians to stand up and answer the call of their communities, their state, and their nation. He said his father believed it was imperative that committed Christians enter public service.

"We need men and women ... of Christian commitment to run for political office this coming year, no matter which political party you belong," he said, quoting from speeches his father made in the 1970s and 1950s. "It is the easiest thing in the world for us, as Christians, to think of national [and] world politics as something only involving men and women of the world. That's where we fail. Our job, as Christians, is to make the impact of Christ felt in every phase of life: religious, social, economic, and political. But we must not do

it in our own strength or wisdom. We can only do it as we surrender ourselves completely to God, allowing Him to work in us.”

Graham said the choice may not be easy. It may sometimes require choosing the candidate that is closest to the biblical ideal. But, he added, the most important elections are those closest to home: mayors, city council, county commissioner, judges, and school boards.

“Could you imagine, that in the next two or three election cycles, that the majority of mayors and city councils of America were born-again Christians, the impact that would have on our nation and our cities?” he asked. “If men and women of God controlled the school boards of America, think about [the impact] that would have for the next 20 years on the education system of this nation.”

Graham urged those who attended the event to go back to their communities and start up prayer groups and to pray for their communities. He also urged them to look for Christians in their communities to persuade to run for office, and to support their campaigns.

In closing, he urged those in attendance to go to the Decision America Tour website and to sign the pledge to both God and country. The pledge incorporates 1 Corinthians 3:11, 2 Chronicles 7:14, and 2 Corinthians 4:5.

Upcoming events include Jan. 12 in Tallahassee, Fla., Jan. 13 in Baton Rouge, La., and Jan. 19 in Concord, N.H.