

Franklin Graham: America Has to Make a Decision, and It's Not Really a Political One

Decisions; we face them and make them every moment of our lives. Some are simple, others are hard. Some are life changing, while others only affect the next moments of our day. From coffee or tea in the morning to how to clean the house faster on the weekends, to deciding what college or next career move, then to what dog, cat or type of exotic fish we will get the following year. And we haven't even gotten to when and where our next vacation will be. There are a handful of researchers and analysts who suggest that some people spend more time deciding and planning out their vacations each year than they do planning for their future.

Decisions can make us or break us. Great decisions made with bad timing only create more problems. We've all been there, right? Horrible decisions can, however, be resolved with God's creative handiwork and grace. Like me, you've probably pleaded with God more than once to fix your mistakes, or to "bless this mess." Sometimes what we create by our actions—our decisions—can only be fixed by a mastermind (God).

Decisions matter! You matter! What you do with your life is important to others, and it matters to God. We all make flawed decisions every once in a while. Franklin Graham mentioned how when he was younger, that he was sent to boarding school in Long Island, New York and then eventually dropped out to go back home and to a public high school in North Carolina. Later, he went to LeTourneau College in Longview, Texas, where he was expelled. This is the same college where his father, Billy Graham, served on the board of trustees from 1961 to 1975.

As I listened to Franklin speak to over 6,400 people on a rainy evening in Syracuse, New York, my wife and I both agreed that he looks and sounds so much like his father, Billy Graham. He carries the same spirit and gentle compassion for the lost, mixed with the same no-nonsense message of salvation. This event took me back to the day in 1992 when I decided to follow Christ. Not long after, I went to a Billy Graham Crusade, and the entire stadium was packed. Evangelist Billy Graham gave such a simple salvation message, and what appeared to be thousands made their way down to the front to give their hearts to Christ and for prayer.

Like father, like son! With 341 prayer counselors on site and ready, Franklin Graham presented a clear-cut gospel message; one anyone could understand. From where I was seated, it looked like several hundred came forward to give their hearts to the Lord. Young and old, male and female, the drug user and the business professional, all standing in the aisles and taking a first step toward God instead of away from Him as in the past. There were people of all colors, backgrounds, age groups, cultures, and styles—all repenting from how they once had lived, now giving their lives to Christ on May 30, 2019, right there in the amphitheater at 490 Restoration Way, Syracuse, New York. It was a time and place they will never forget. That outdoor theater has been the site of many performances by well-known people and bands making people laugh or cry and singing songs for whatever cause or purpose, but on May 30, God received all honor as many were added to the kingdom of heaven.

Was It a Political Decision That Was Made at the Decision America Syracuse Event?

Absolutely *not*! The decision for a better America doesn't rest in politics alone. Franklin Graham stressed that while it is important to pray for our politicians, including our president, the Christian should love God way more than politics. I was able to be a part of a private media interview

with Franklin Graham and his team, and Mr. Graham graciously answered all the questions directed to him. During the interview, some of our local liberal media reporters tried to trap Mr. Graham in his words to make it seem that this God-ordained event in Syracuse was about politics. Franklin stated that the Decision America tour wasn't a political movement and stressed that he prayed regularly for former President, Barack Obama, when he was in office and he now prays for current President, Donald Trump. As Christians, we all should be praying for our leaders regularly. I will admit that there have been a few presidents who I just didn't like or trust, but that didn't stop me from praying for them. Make no mistake; God doesn't fall off His throne just because a new president comes into office with whom you don't agree. The Lord knew them before they were born, and He has every king and kingdom in the palm of His hand, directing them the way He sees fit.

"The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the Lord; he guides it wherever he pleases" (Proverbs 21:1 NLT).

The Bible tells us to pray for our leaders, regardless of their gender, political background or color of their skin. It doesn't matter whether or not we agree with them, Christians are *required* to pray for the president as well as congressional and government leaders.

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity" (1 Tim. 2:1-2, NLT).

What Decision Did So Many Make Recently? What Exactly Did They Turn From?

Franklin Graham directed us to Mark 8:34 (NIV), "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said:

'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" Deny ourselves? Are we denying our physical bodies? No, because we are already made of dust and the breath of God. When we give our lives to God, we deny our rights and will, turning from our sin and giving our hearts and lives completely over to God, just like Franklin Graham did at the age of 22. When he did that, the result was that he no longer got into deep trouble.

I find it interesting that Mr. Graham was once a "troubled sinner" just as we all were. We are all born into a sinful world; not a single one of us is perfect. We must decide to turn from things like lying, cheating, murdering and, as Mr. Graham stated, even abortion, and give our lives over to God once and forever. Mr. Graham went on to say, "You may feel like the power of sin in your life is so strong that you can't turn away from it. Or can you? It is Christ who gives you the strength to turn from sin." every single sin of every kind—yours, mine, Mr. Graham's—was taken to the cross by Jesus Christ. Romans 5: 6 tells us, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."

Hundreds made the decision that night to follow Christ, and this is just a taste of what God is doing all over America and in other countries; people are turning from sin to Christ. In the days following the event, the local liberal Syracuse news suggested that only 100 or so made their way down to the front for prayer. I was standing in the middle of the huge amphitheater in the well-guarded media booth, and I easily counted over 100 people in the aisle next to me and in front of me. Of course, some of these were counselors and prayer team members, so there isn't an official count of the decisions made for Christ at the time of this article. What does this gathering and this many salvations tell us about America? The American people are deciding right now to follow God, honor our country and protect the sanctity of life,

liberty, and justice for all.

Americans are deciding to turn toward God and away from sin. The history of America proves that we were founded on God's principles, and our decisions today, right now, confirm that we are staying on the solid rock of God's Word, the Bible. This foundation we stand on cannot be removed by force, nor will God's foundation and truth in America be torn down just because it offends someone. There are more of us who love God and love this country than those who don't.

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

Jesus is truth, and the only one who can lead us to eternity. This realization is coming alive in the hearts of many people across this country. I agree with Mr. Franklin Graham that the Decision America Tour isn't about politics at all, because politics is the lesser, the minor role in a smaller corruptible kingdom; one that can be broke up, shaken and then made low at any time. Not so with God's kingdom, one that can never be shaken. Hebrews 12: 27 tells us, "The words 'once more' indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain."

You see, what *can* be shaken is a political kingdom or power, but what *can't* be shaken is the kingdom of heaven. This is what Franklin Graham and The Decision America Tour is establishing. They are doing the work of the kingdom, which is way more important than just traveling from region to region for a political campaign which is here today and gone tomorrow. We serve the Lord, and His kingdom has no end!

I am so grateful that I decided to attend the Decision America Tour in Syracuse, New York. I hadn't seen this many people gather for such a great cause like this for a really long time in Syracuse. The last time Billy Graham was in Syracuse was on April 30, 1989. Thank God his son, Franklin, took the time and

effort to stop by our city. For those of you who have not been to one of Franklin Graham's Decision America Tours, I highly recommend that you make the decision to attend one of these events; put it at the top of your "To Do in 2019 List." I believe every pastor should encourage congregational involvement with future Decision America Tours, especially those in the regions of where they are going to be. Speaking of where the Franklin Graham organization is going to be next, [click here](#) to see a list of their next stops.

A special thank-you goes out to all of you who worked tirelessly behind the scenes for the ministry of Franklin Graham. Mark, Kelly, Lisa, Cecil, Jim, Andrea, Gina and so many others I met there that night. You go above and beyond to help make it all happen! {eoa}

Andy Sanders *has been speaking for 25 years. He has traveled extensively around the U.S. and other parts of the world. He is a prolific writer who carries both a prophetic and leadership-type message to the church. Sanders has a B.A. from Central Bible College and a master's and doctorate in Christian education from Freedom Seminary, graduating with honors. He is married to Cathy, and their family resides in Syracuse, New York.*