

How Billy Graham Helped Johnny Cash Rediscover the Power of Christ

Read Time: 3 Minutes 48 Seconds

Iconic musician Johnny Cash became a born-again Christian in 1972, 31 years before his death. Ironically, he rededicated his life to the Lord in the same “little country church” where he had given his heart to God at the age of 12 in 1944.

After years of sinking into the depths of drug and alcohol abuse, Cash rediscovered Jesus, and it is that miraculous story of restoration that is told in a new documentary titled “Johnny Cash: The Redemption of an American Icon,” set for release in theaters Dec. 5-7.

Cash, known as “The Man in Black,” sold more than 90 million records during a life that saw him in trouble with the law on multiple occasions. But his story of how his determination led him to rediscover Christ and shun a life of substance abuse that is truly inspiring, his sister, Joanne Cash, told Fox News Digital.

Joanne Cash, who rededicated her life to the Lord in 1970, says the forthcoming film is “the best documentary I have ever seen.”

“Your dreams can come true and then [also can fall] away and get to death’s door,” she told Fox News Digital. “[But through] the Lord Jesus Christ, there is hope. ... even if you’re at your very lowest point. Johnny proved that.”

Joanne Cash said her brother indeed came to a low point in 1972, and he had only one place to turn: Jesus.

“He, like all of us, was not perfect,” she said of her

brother. "We are not perfect. That's why we need a Savior. Johnny knew he wasn't perfect. He fell. He went into the dark side.

"And in the drug years, he almost lost his life. But God showed him some sort of light. And I believe that was the Lord. It was the Holy Spirit leading him out of that darkness. And it changed his life.

"That's why ... he gave his heart back to the Lord and emerged from that darkness. I want people to know that as long as there is life and breath, there is hope."

Friendship with Billy Graham

After giving his life back to the Lord in the early 1970s, Cash developed a close personal friendship with Evangelist Billy Graham. It was Cash's renewed faith that prompted Graham to invite Cash to be a part of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's crusades.

The friendship between Graham and Cash lasted until Cash's death.

"Johnny Cash was not only a legend, but was a close personal friend," Graham once said. "Johnny was a good man who struggled with many challenges in his life. Johnny was a deeply religious man. He and (wife) June came to a number of Crusades over a period of many years.

"Ruth and I took a number of personal vacations with them at their home in Jamaica and in other places. They both were like brother and sister to Ruth and me. We loved them. I look forward to seeing Johnny and June in heaven one day."

Billy Graham died at 99 in Feb., 2018.

Mike Garrett, Cash's nephew, told BGEA said that Cash was excited about his salvation experience and excited to tell people about it.

"I remember Uncle Johnny saying to me that he had started going to Billy Graham Crusades—that he would sing and share his testimony," Garrett said. "He made that a top priority—a higher priority than concert tours."

Cash addressed his worldly struggles during a 1989 BGEA Crusade in Arkansas. Some had questioned his Christianity, but he quoted the apostle Paul during his testimony.

"My personal life—my personal problems—have been widely publicized," Cash said at the time. "There have been things said about me that made people ask, 'Is Johnny Cash really a Christian?'"

"I take great comfort in the words of the apostle Paul, who said: 'What I will to do I do not practice, but what I hate I do. It is no longer I that do it, but the sin that dwells within me. But who will deliver me from this body of death? It is Jesus Christ, our Lord.'"

"Meet Me in Heaven" is inscribed on Cash's tombstone just outside of Nashville. Cash's song "Meet Me in Heaven" was released in 1996 and was inspired by his brother, Jack, who died an untimely death.

Jack Cash, who suffered fatal injuries from a table saw accident in Arkansas where the seven Cash siblings grew up, had his entire family around his hospital bed right before his death. His last words were, "Can you see them? Can you see all of the angels around? Meet me in heaven."

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's Joy Allmond wrote that Jack "could very well have planted the seed of the gospel in his younger brother's heart."

Pastor Greg Laurie, who wrote the book that inspired the film, said there was little question about Cash's commitment to his faith.

“Johnny’s faith was tested many times in his lifetime, and it only grew stronger, not weaker,” Laurie said. “What caused him to turn from his past and forward with Christ? Please go and watch the film to find out.” {eo}

Bring *Charisma* magazine home with a subscription today!

Shawn A. Akers *is the online editor at Charisma Media.*