

Lecrae on Evangelism: It's All About Relationships

Lecrae is no stranger to Billy Graham's ministry today, but that wasn't always the case. He admits he didn't grow up in a Christian home and, at first, failed to "even realize the magnitude of [Billy Graham's] legacy."

"I actually had to do homework to understand the weight that he carried," Lecrae says.

He's since participated in several events put on by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). And now the Grammy Award-winning rapper is featured in the "My Hope America" film *The Cross*, which airs nationwide Nov. 7 with a special message delivered by Billy Graham from his home in Montreat, N.C.

Having the opportunity to share his testimony alongside one of the world's most respected men is an experience that's still hard for Lecrae to fathom.

"It makes it a lot more real when you realize, 'Oh wow, they're asking *me* to be involved in this,'" he says.

Thousands of My Hope "Matthews" will invite family, friends and neighbors who don't know Christ into their homes to watch *The Cross*. In addition to the upcoming broadcast, two other short evangelistic films—*Defining Moments* and *Lose to Gain*—were developed to help set the tone and ease the nervousness some may feel when sharing their faith.

All three videos include excerpts of Billy Graham preaching the gospel in past crusades and stories of well-known Christians, including singer Lacey Sturm and ex-NFL player David Tyree.

Bought With a Price

In *The Cross*, Lecrae opens up about moments of anger and audacity when he was younger, like the time he pulled a gun on a woman just for laughs.

“Breaking into someone’s car and stealing things—it didn’t seem big because I knew people who shot people,” 34-year-old Lecrae explains. “I didn’t think I was moving down the wrong path.”

“I was a hedonist,” he continues, saying he was always in pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification.

“No matter how many women I got involved with, no matter how many drugs I took, no matter how drunk I got, no matter how much I wanted to escape the feeling of insignificance and insecurity, I could not quench that,” he says.

Now a father, Lecrae is transparent about growing up in a single-family home.

“I wrestled with a sense of insecurity ... just wondering why [my father] would leave. And I tried to fill that void, that sense of insignificance, with anything I could find,” he shares. “Athletics, money, status—you name it, I tried it, and it all left me pretty empty.”

Lecrae’s search finally came to an end when someone encouraged him to attend a conference in town.

“Here’s me, this skinny 19-year-old kid with all this internal struggle,” Lecrae recalls. “And I hear this sermon, and he says, ‘Do you not know you’ve been bought with a price? That Jesus paid a price for you?’

“And it was as if the scales fell off. It was as if I realized how selfish and how foolish I had been, looking for fulfillment outside of the One who created me.”

Making the Connection

After living “19 years of craziness,” playing even the smallest role in something as big as “My Hope America” has been humbling for Lecrae. But the message behind the project is one he’s already put into practice: taking the time to build relationships with nonbelievers.

“A lot of people have this idea that Christians think we’re perfect and we’re better than everybody else,” he says. “I think it’s important to help people see that you’re human and that the only difference between you and them is the grace of God.”

Heavy bass and unique beats are signature to Lecrae’s music, a style that fits right in with mainstream hip-hop. Because of that, Lecrae has worked with numerous secular artists and says he’s able to share his faith “quite often” in the industry.

Being sensitive to confidentiality, Lecrae doesn’t name names but talks about one “prominent” artist he’s connected with.

“Our first encounter, he didn’t expect me to relate to him,” Lecrae says. “We just connected and built a friendship, to the point where I was able to kind of help him through some tough times and share my life story with him, share my experience with Christ with him.”

That example of relationship evangelism is what “My Hope America” is all about. Lecrae, who once looked up to the drug dealers and gang members in his neighborhood, also sees the national broadcast as an opportunity to introduce young people to Christian role models like Billy Graham.

“He’s unwavering, rooted and grounded in truth and not going to move for anything,” Lecrae says.

And to Lecrae, that’s what the world needs more of.

For national and local TV listing of where to watch Lecrae in *The Cross*, [click here](#).