

Newsboys' Michael Tait on My Hope: 'I'm on Board'

Michael Tait still remembers what it felt like to stop everything and gather around the television to watch a Billy Graham Crusade.

"It impacted me as a young kid from the inner city of D.C., watching on my dad's TV set back in the 70s," Tait said. "He'd preach on ABC or CBS. Everybody covered it. All the channels stopped—the whole world stopped to hear the Gospel. And I thought, 'How cool.'"

As a member of the Christian band dc Talk, Tait went from watching Billy Graham on TV to sharing a stage with him. In 1994, The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association asked dc Talk and Michael W. Smith to be part of its first "Youth Night."

No one knew whether the new addition to the Crusade lineup would be a success or a flop.

That night, more than 65,000 people packed a Cleveland stadium to hear the Gospel. When Mr. Graham finished preaching, 6,500 flooded the outfield to accept Christ.

"We were on stage, and Billy calls people forward and we just start bawling," Tait said.

Youth Night became a staple of the Billy Graham Crusades, and Tait developed a friendship with the Graham family that has lasted to this day.

Now, nearly 20 years after that unforgettable night in Cleveland, Tait is part of another new adventure with Billy Graham—a nationwide in-home Crusade to capture the hearts of Americans who have never had a life-changing encounter with Christ.

"This is about the gospel and God's purpose for mankind and hope for mankind," said Tait, now the lead singer of the Newsboys, who has recently performed at Franklin Graham Festivals in Latvia, Lithuania and New York.

The project is called *My Hope America with Billy Graham*, and it's happening this November in conjunction with Mr. Graham's 95th birthday.

More than 19,000 churches in the United States have signed up for *My Hope* and are in the process of training their members on how to effectively share the Gospel in the context of loving relationships.

My Hope will culminate with thousands of believers inviting friends, family and neighbors to their homes to share their faith. They'll have the help of a 30-minute video that mixes classic and new preaching from Billy Graham with current, real-life stories of people who have experienced the power of Jesus Christ in their lives.

"It's a massive idea, because this is so much more attainable, I think, for more people, and more convenient and more tangible to have Billy Graham in your home preaching the Gospel," Tait said.

In conjunction with *My Hope America*, Capitol Christian Music Group is releasing a CD project called *My Hope: Songs Inspired by the Message and Mission of Billy Graham*. The Newsboys are part of the album, along with nearly a dozen other artists including TobyMac, Amy Grant, Kari Jobe, Matthew West and Michael W. Smith.

For the *My Hope* CD, Tait belts out a new song called *We Believe*, which will also be part of the latest Newsboys album, *Restart*.

"We actually had a song on the record that we bumped off when we heard *We Believe*, because it was so powerful," Tait said.

“It’s the believers’ creed. *We believe in God the Father. We believe in the Holy Spirit. He’s given us new life.* It’s Billy Graham’s message. If Billy Graham were to sing a song, he would sing *We Believe.*”

With the *My Hope* album set to be released October 15, Tate is hoping the project will inspire people to get on board and join the call to reach their friends and family in November.

While his childhood memories of gathering around the television to hear the Gospel seem distant now, *My Hope* could bring a little piece of that special time back to life.

“I think this is definitely a wise way to do evangelism,” Tait said. “Here’s a tried, tested and true man of God. I’m not saying he’s perfect; he’s forgiven. But the man himself in your house—95 years old, his life speaks for itself—preaching the gospel. What more can you say?”

“I’m on board.”