

Billy Graham Among 'Most Admired' 55th Time

Billy Graham isn't much for accolades.

Nothing personifies this more than the verse posted in big letters on the wall of his Montreat, N.C., home:

Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Still, that hasn't stopped others from bringing up his name.

In fact, the 93-year-old Graham has appeared very favorable in two recent polls.

For the 55th time since 1955, the man who founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950 has made the *USA Today*/Gallop list of Most Admired Men of 2011.

He was also named the most popular man in North Carolina through a combined poll using Twitter and Public Policy Polling of Raleigh.

"People love Mr. Graham," said Ken Barun, senior vice president of communications for BGEA. "The message is Always Good News and Mr. Graham was Always Good News."

Graham, who has met personally with 12 different U.S. presidents, finished fourth on this year's most admired list, behind President Obama and former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. And while he's never finished first, Graham landed second eight times.

Graham, still working in his twilight years, released his 30th book in October, titled *Nearing Home: Life Faith and Finishing Well*.

"He fit what people wanted, he fit what people needed and he still does today," Barun said. "He still fits the need for us and that desire for us to believe in God and to believe that God absolutely is responsible for all of us. Billy Graham was that example."

His 55 years in the Top 10 stands alone, far ahead of Ronald Regan (31 times), Pope John Paul II (27) and former President Jimmy Carter (27). Queen Elizabeth II, who finished tied for 9th this year, leads all women with 44 appearances in the poll, which started in 1946.

According to Barun, it's a legacy born from decades of consistency and an arrival on a global platform at a young age.

"From a spiritual standpoint, when Mr. Graham came on the scene with Youth for Christ in the '40s, there was such a void in this country for spiritual leadership," Barun said. "God's annointment of Mr. Graham filled that void."

"That was a tough time in this country's history, right after World War II, people were searching for answers, the economy was starting to rebound, but people were still recovering from the ravages of war."

Barun added that it was Graham's message resonating with so many people in so many places that has added to his popularity. He preached in 185 countries to nearly 215 million people and countless more on television, radio and now the Internet.

"Billy Graham's the first and probably the only evangelist that's touched every corner of the world," Barun said. "And his ministry is also perpetuated through Franklin Graham. It's never strayed from preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The method used by the *USA Today*/Gallup poll was to simply ask, without prompting, for participants to name the living

man and woman they most admire in the world. Hillary Clinton topped the woman's list a record 16th time, followed by Oprah Winfrey.

In the North Carolina poll, the survey relied on Twitter to narrow the field down to 14 finalists, which were then tested with voters by Public Policy Polling.

Graham's rating of plus 55 was more than Dean Smith (plus 50), Andy Griffith (plus 49) and Michael Jordan and Richard Petty (both plus 44). He also scored higher than anyone else with both retired voters and those under 30.

"That just indicates that BGEA is doing a good job with Internet evangelism and other youth ministry efforts and the message is starting to resonate," Barun said.

"Billy Graham was handsome, he was young, he was vibrant. He was able to garner this charismatic personality that led people to him, then when they heard his message of salvation, they were sold on what God was doing through him."

Most Popular Man (North Carolina)

1. Rev. Billy Graham
2. Dean Smith
3. Andy Griffith
- 4t. Michael Jordan
- 4t. Richard Petty
6. Roy Williams
7. Mike Kryzewski
8. Cam Newton
9. Scotty McCreery
10. Dale Earnhardt Jr.

USA Today/Gallup Most Admired Man

1. Barack Obama
2. George W. Bush
3. Bill Clinton
4. Rev. Billy Graham

5. Warren Buffett
6. Newt Gingrich
7. Donald Trump
8. Pope Benedict XVI
9. Bill Gates
10. Thomas Monson

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