

Billy Graham: 'I Never Expected I Would Live This Long'

As evangelist **Billy Graham** prepares to celebrate his 94th birthday on Nov. 7, he has been reflecting on the previous year and preparing for what God has in store for him during his 95th year on the planet.

"I never expected I would live this long, outliving my beloved wife, Ruth, as well as many friends and loved ones," Mr. Graham said. "I believe God must still have a purpose for keeping me here, and I look forward to seeing what that might be."

Graham continues to be called upon to provide perspective on world events and the spiritual state of our nation, especially heading into a presidential election. He has encouraged all Americans to join him in **praying** for our country and its leaders during this critical time. He regularly prays for the president, those who are currently in office, and those who are seeking to lead our nation into the future.

This includes presidential candidate Gov. **Mitt Romney**, who recently visited in the evangelist's western North Carolina home while on a campaign stop in nearby Asheville. During their 30-minute meeting, which also involved Graham's son, Franklin, the men discussed a wide range of topics, including broad issues of faith, the moral decline in our country and the importance of emphasizing biblical values amidst the cultural shift of America. At the close of the meeting, Graham offered a **prayer** for the governor, his family and our nation and committed his ongoing prayers and spiritual support for him and his family.

With the election falling one day before his birthday, Graham will be watching the results closely, as well as **praying** for those who are elected. He keeps up with world events and has a

great concern for our nation as he's observed a decline in respect for **biblical values**.

Currently, the **evangelist** is working diligently to finalize the manuscript for his 31st book summarizing the gospel message of God's love and forgiveness that he has faithfully preached for more than 60 years. Graham is excited about the book's release sometime next year and is considering additional writing projects as there is still much on his mind that he would like to share.

Other ministry endeavors include the forthcoming nationwide evangelism campaign, "My Hope," to be launched by Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in conjunction with Graham's 95th birthday in 2013. He fully supports the project and hopes to be able to participate in some way as the date draws closer.

Earlier this year, Graham authorized Chicken Soup for the Soul to create a special hardcover anthology documenting his life and legacy, *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Billy Graham & Me*, to be released February 2013. This compilation will contain 101 personal and impactful stories from influential leaders—including the last six presidents—as well as Graham's friends and family documenting his influence on their lives and the impact of his worldwide ministry over more than six decades.

As in years past, Graham plans a quiet birthday celebration at home with his family, and looks forward to spending time with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. "I love them all and can't wait to see them again," he said.