

Billy Graham Offers Solution to Chicago's Crime Problem

Just like **Billy Graham** has a hope for America, Dr. Erwin Lutzer has a hope for his city of Chicago.

Lutzer, who lives in Chicago, is concerned for the **spiritual** well-being—and the safety—of his beloved city. According to the FBI, the Windy City is the murder capital of the United States. Just last year, Chicago surpassed New York City in its murder count, despite having only a third of the population of the Big Apple.

While there is much work to be done in the way of societal reform in Chicago, the first order of business is *heart* reform. And that is why Lutzer's congregation, the Moody Church, is participating in My Hope America With Billy Graham as it kicks off on Nov. 7.

"There is a tremendous amount of violence in Chicago, and much of it is gang related," he says. "There is also a rootlessness of the children living in the context of torn relationships, which gives birth to much of this violence. So many people in this city are desperate for a **spiritual** solution."

The behavior of people cannot change until hearts are changed. That's where the **gospel**—and My Hope With Billy Graham—both come in to play, Lutzer believes.

"When the church in Chicago begins to evangelize, we will see the transforming work of the gospel in our community," he says. "The visible changes in our city may be seen in just small ways, but even small changes should be encouraging; any change of the heart is important. This is where My Hope can propel change in our city."

The overall condition of Chicago suggests a need for

relational mending as well as heart mending. Lutzer suggests that My Hope can be used greatly in both areas.

“We, as a church, are involved in My Hope because it combines certain aspects of evangelism and brings them together, but it also allows us to strengthen relationships with people by inviting them into our homes,” he says. “By doing this, we create an environment where people can not only hear the **gospel**, but can build relationships with people who know Jesus. I think that this combination of truth and friendship will be used by God to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.”

Lutzer is confident that the environments created by inviting friends, family and neighbors into Chicago homes—and homes all over America—should diminish the feeling of timidity within believers when it comes to sharing the **gospel**.

“Many Christians are intimidated when it comes to sharing the gospel. But that’s the beauty of My Hope—you don’t really have to be the preacher, because **Billy Graham** is the preacher,” Lutzer says.

He also believes that Christians put too much pressure on themselves to have all the right answers.

“What people really need is not an intellectual answer to their questions,” he says. “They need someone to befriend them and let them know there is a **Savior** who came to redeem us. So, as people watch the My Hope program and hear the testimonies of the hosts, the gospel will be presented and God will be glorified.”

The resulting changes from My Hope will not be evident immediately, believes Lutzer, but the transformation will be realized from the bottom up.

“One of the great things about *My Hope* is that there is no agenda beyond the **gospel**. So, as people come to faith, it

begins to float upward. Not just throughout Chicago, but throughout America, and eventually into the public square, such as the courts and in high levels of office in our nation," he says.

Ultimately, Lutzer just wants to see souls saved and Christians emboldened. And he wants to see a far-reaching ripple effect.

"If people have a good experience with My Hope, they are going to begin to talk to their neighbors much more freely about the **gospel**. And of course, the good thing about My Hope is that it is not limited to a time period; you have the DVDs and can access the sermons on the Internet," he says. "I would like for it to not only be used around **Billy Graham's** birthday, but in other ways throughout the coming years. My Hope is timeless."

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