

Will America Wake Up and Get to the Polls?

It's hard to imagine Franklin Graham smoking cigarettes, gulping beer and fist fighting. It's difficult to believe this self-described bad boy—who dropped out of one school and was expelled from another—would repent and rise up in the spirit of Elijah to turn the heart of a nation back to the Father.

But this once-prodigal son who, in his early 20s, rebelled against his godly heritage, had an encounter with Jesus that left him burning and shining for God. Now, he's laboring with everything in him to see a nation born again.

God has raised up Franklin, the son of the late, beloved evangelist Billy Graham and his wife, Ruth, as a bold voice of truth and morality in a world that seems to be growing darker by the day. So bold and uncompromising is Franklin, in fact, that the White House and the National Association of Evangelicals—and even pastors like T.D. Jakes—have rebuked him for telling it like it is.

Franklin refuses to remain silent in the face of rising defiance to God's Word. He is not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). He is ready to make a defense to anyone who asks for the reason he hopes in Christ (1 Pet. 2:15-16). He is exposing the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). He is telling the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). He is speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Prov. 31:8). Like the prophets of old who saw judgment coming to Israel, Franklin is blowing the trumpet of righteousness and praying people in America will heed the warning.

Franklin has fire in his bones, and he's worked since January to set revival fires in America that awaken the hearts of Christians to make an immovable decision for morality in the

2016 presidential election and beyond. God sent him on a mission to visit every state in America to challenge Christians to live out their faith at home, in public and at the ballot box. His Decision America tour has seen prayer lifted up and the gospel preached at state Capitol steps from sea to shining sea.

“Our country has shifted,” Franklin told me. “This shift is the moral decline of the nation—and even the moral decline of the church. I felt the only hope for this country was the people of God beginning to pray and maybe He would give us some leaders that would help turn this nation around morally. I feel the only hope for this country is God. Politicians can’t save it without God’s help. We need to pray.”

Franklin’s Clarion Call

Franklin is making a clarion call—and people are responding by the tens of thousands. Des Moines, Iowa, was the first stop on Franklin’s tour. He admits he was shocked when a couple thousand people showed up to pray in January’s bitter cold and snow.

Together, they confessed the sins of our nation, the sins of past generations and the sins of their own lives, then asked God to heal the hearts of people in America, to heal the land and give us leaders who will call upon the Lord for wisdom. This was the model for every stop on the tour.

“People realize God’s judgment—His hand of judgment—is coming on this country because of our moral failure as a nation and because we turned our back on God,” Franklin says. “I believe God answers prayer. God uses prayer, no question about it. People on the steps of every state Capitol called out in the name of Jesus. I believe God hears those prayers.”

At the conclusion of each meeting, Franklin gave a three-minute gospel presentation. He says hundreds of people receive Christ at each event.

According to the Billy Graham Evangelical Association, a woman named Brenda who heard Franklin share the gospel at the Arizona Capitol grounds couldn't believe God could love a person like her. "I made some very bad choices in life," Brenda says. "God brought me to my knees to show me where my life was going, and I chose Jesus. I once was lost, but now I'm found—all the glory of God."

BGEA also recounts the testimony of Laura, who joined the prayer rally in Georgia and was motivated to step up her prayer life. "Hearing his service made me realize I needed to pray for the USA," she says. "Our leaders do not have the U.S. citizens' well-being at heart and have neglected to put God first."

Franklin tells breakthrough story after breakthrough story like these, but the tour that hopes to turn America back to God has not been without opposition. Getting permits in some cities was challenging. The Holy Spirit ultimately used Franklin's father's legacy to open doors no man could shut.

"We've seen God's hand at work," he says. "It's a spiritual war, and we do have an enemy who wants to stop us. But we've seen time and time again God's people in place—sometimes at lower levels—who are able to pull the levers and make things happen."

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Beyond cranky city clerks, Franklin has also experienced organized opposition on his 50-state tour. In Sacramento, the LGBTQ+ community organized a demonstration on the north side of the Capitol building at 11 a.m. Franklin's event was set for the west side of the building at noon. The opposition's plan was to gather reinforcements and protest the Decision America meeting.

When Franklin heard about the plans, he thought about how God

shut the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. He then prayed the Lord would quiet the mouths of the protesters. By 11 a.m., the opposition had gathered 25 people. By 11 a.m., about 10,000 people showed up to pray for America.

"The gays and lesbians with their handful of people gave up," Franklin says. "They held up their signs, but they didn't make any noise. They didn't do anything to distract us. At the very end, we closed by singing 'God Bless America,' and they joined in singing with us."

Meanwhile, in Madison, Wisconsin, atheists gathered at Franklin's event with signs proclaiming, "We don't mind burning in hell." When thousands of people start interceding, he says, it took the wind out of their sails. The voice of righteousness prevailed.

"There is no stronger voice for righteousness in America today than that of Franklin Graham," says Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, a global Christian ministry aiming to help families thrive. "He takes every opportunity, whether as a guest on Fox News or in the public square, and takes it straight to the cross. In a world where many pastors and laymen are afraid to speak candidly about their faith and the controversial moral issues of our day, Franklin is a beacon of truth. I admire him greatly."

Preaching a Black-and-White Gospel

Franklin doesn't mince words. He told me we have to wake up. He told me too many pastors are sitting on the sidelines with a politically correct spirit. He told me gays and lesbians get behind their candidates, and Christians should too. He told me we're seeing God's hand slowly coming off our nation. He told me America is rejecting Jesus the way Israel rejected Jehovah. He told me we need to repent.

"We don't want to offend anybody. We want to attract people to

the church. Well, I tell you what attracts people is truth," Franklin told me unapologetically. "Jesus Christ, He confronted people. It's not about political correctness. It's not about not loving people. We should love them enough to speak the truth. And with the gay and lesbian community, I don't want to beat up on them. I love them enough to warn them of God's judgment. I love them enough to warn them that hell awaits all sinners, all sinners. And we should love them enough to tell them the truth."

Throughout the Decision America tour, Franklin worked to stir Christians to stand for unadulterated truth. He wants to see more people praying, yes, but he also wants to see them stand up and speak out. He wants Christians to be vocal, to become community organizers and political activists who live and labor for God and His standards. He's asking Christians to run for office, be strong and courageous, and refuse to bow to intimidating godless agendas.

"I pray that our nation will wake up and that as a country, we would repent our sins. The Obama administration legalizing same-sex marriage is incredible," Franklin says. "It's a great sin. With this administration, abortions are made easier and not harder. It's evil and it's wicked.

"Christians are getting complacent, and we're just beginning to accept this," he warns. "It's not OK. It's wrong. We need to stand up and we need to fight. When I say fight, I'm saying we need to speak God's truth. People need to know and understand that these are sins and this grieves God. We can fight by going to the ballot box, and we can vote for Christians and let the other candidates know, 'We're not going to vote for you.'"

The American Family Association, which promotes fundamental Christian values, has been promoting Decision America all over the country. Tim Wildmon, president of AFA, is concerned that America is in open rebellion to God, especially when it comes

to human sexuality. Wildmon told me we need more voices like Franklin's to blow the trumpet.

"Franklin Graham could have avoided the controversial cultural issues and been commended by everyone for his charitable work through Samaritan's Purse but chose to be public about God's moral standards, and I commend him for it," says Wildmon. "We are promoting what the Bible calls wickedness in so many ways."

Believing for Revival

Although Graham is not endorsing any political candidates, he does encourage people to vote. As he puts it, we may have to "hold our nose" when we go to the polls because no candidate is perfect. His advice: Vote for the one who will listen to the plight of Christians and appoint judges who could have a positive moral impact on this nation.

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"Only God can do this, only God," Franklin says. "We have gone too far. We need a revival in this country. And that's going to start with people praying. Going to these Capitol steps, I ask people, 'What do you do tomorrow?' I ask them to form prayer groups in their communities and get people of other political persuasions to join them. At the end of this tour, we hope to see hundreds, possibly thousands, of new prayer groups springing up across the country, people praying for this nation."

Despite some who have a defeatist mentality, Wildmon warns it absolutely matters who our president is. Our very way of life could be at stake. The Bill of Rights, including freedom of speech and freedom of religion, could be at stake.

"It is silly to underestimate the power of the executive

branch of government,” Wildmon says. “Secular progressives are on the warpath against Christianity, and they will continue to come after us in many ways, should they win the White House. Yes, God cares about these things. America has been a beacon of light for the world in so many ways based on her Christian heritage.”

Historically, wickedness in cultures has been progressive and eventually pandemic. One of the factors that concerns Dobson about a Hillary Clinton presidency is profound: She is not the same person she was when Barack Obama took office. Dobson told me the cultural influences of the past eight years seem to have incited Hillary, and she will pick up where President Obama concluded his second term.

“In this sense, each election is more dangerous than the last, because the people become more accustomed to godless ideology,” Dobson says. “What is at stake in the next election is the loss of America as it has been known. If we don’t vote, we leave all the decisions of consequence to those with no moral convictions. The only hope for America is that voters who are basically ‘good,’ even if they are not perfect, will participate in this great experiment in liberty. My father once said, ‘Democracy is the worse form of government if the people want evil. In that system, there will be no stopping those who want what is harmful and wicked.’ I think he was right.”

Handwriting Is on the Wall

As Franklin sees it, there is no doubt that the 100,000-plus who have joined forces with the Decision America tour know that America is in deep trouble and on the verge of total moral and spiritual collapse—unless God intervenes. Like him, Franklin says they have no hope in either the Democratic or Republican Party. They know our only hope is in Almighty God.

“Never before have I seen such a sharp rift in the moral and

spiritual fabric of our country,” Franklin says. “The cross of Christ has become the deep divide between a growing segment of our population that no longer fears God and those who follow Christ as Lord and Savior.”

“In this secular age, the influence of biblical principles and values has diminishing impact upon education, government and politics. More young people than ever before claim no religious affiliation at all. We Christians are not just simply tolerated—we are under constant, unrelenting assault for our beliefs and practices.”

The cross of Christ is the dividing line between the righteous and the unrighteous, between the deceitfully dark powers of evil and the liberating light of the gospel, between the virtues of godly living and the unfettered lusts of corrupt, debased passions, Franklin says. And he wonders if the handwriting is now on the wall for America.

“Has God decided that our idolatry, immorality and godlessness have become such a stench in His nostrils that we as a people will experience a harsh form of divine judgment?” he asks. “Have our iniquities grown so foul and vast that we will reap the bitter harvest of our wickedness and rebellion against Almighty God?

“I don’t know the answer to that, but I do believe that God is able to restore and heal us if we repent of our sins—personal and corporate—and turn to Him in humility and reverence. The Bible tells us that the Lord is patient toward us, ‘not willing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance’” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Franklin offers four truths about prayer and politics as Americans prepare to head to the polls: 1) God can turn the hearts of kings (Prov. 21:1). In America’s case, that translates to political leaders. Our prayers for godly counsel to surround political leaders empower the Holy Spirit to move.

2) Interceding for those in authority is a biblical command (1 Tim. 2:1-2). 3) Pray urgently for all elected leaders (Eph. 6:12). 4) Pray for leaders who don't know Christ to be born again (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

Dobson agrees and urges Christians to follow 2 Chronicles 7:14 and its four provisions. Paraphrased, it reads, "We who are called by God's name must humble ourselves before Him and pray and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways."

"If we do as instructed, then our gracious Lord will respond with three blessings," Dobson says. "He promises to hear from heaven, to forgive our sins and to heal our land. That is one of the most precious promises in all of Scripture. It is not too late for America. What we need is a revival that will sweep the nation, as it did in the First and Second Great Awakenings. That is the hope of our nation."

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