

# Billy Graham and Where Evangelicalism is Today

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**Host: David Wheaton 00:08**

Billy Graham and Where Evangelicalism is Today. That is the topic we'll discuss today right here on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. The Christian Worldview is a nonprofit listener supported radio ministry. Thanks to you, our listeners for your prayer, your encouragement and support. You can connect with us by calling our toll free number, 1-888-646-2233, writing to Box 401 Excelsior, MN 55331 or visiting [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org).

Billy Graham was the most well-known Evangelical Christian of the 20th century. He led a parachurch ministry called the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association which hosted (and still hosts) large events all over the world, preaching the gospel to tens of thousands of people or more at a time.

Recently on The Christian Worldview Radio Program, Pastor Travis Allen of Grace Church in Greeley, Colorado joined us to discuss a sermon series he had given at a conference on the drift within Evangelicalism, which has become a wide umbrella term that includes theological conservatives, liberals, charismatics, social justice advocates, "gay christians," female pastors, and many more.

Pastor Allen commented how decisions made by the most prominent Evangelical-Billy Graham- way back in the 1900s, mid 1900s, with regard to ecumenism, which is cooperation across denominational lines, and the rise of the parachurch, which are Christian organizations independent of the local church, that those two things contributed greatly to where evangelicalism is today.

So this weekend on the program, we'll dive a bit deeper into the ministry of Billy Graham and its ramifications for evangelicalism today, learning from what was done right and wrong, using Scripture as a measuring rod.

Now, as I mentioned, Pastor Travis Allen gave his sermon entitled, *The Need for Evangelical Reformation*. We have it linked at our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org). And right at the beginning of the message, he explains that there are two purposes for his message. Number

one, that he wanted to show some evidences of evangelical drift showing the decline over the last, let's say, 75 years. And the second purpose is to issue a biblical warning to evangelicals in hopes of repentance and reformation. And he starts out by giving a short history of the term Evangelical. How the term started in England and Scotland in the 1700s. And he quotes from Iain Murray, the great Scottish biographer and Christian writer who said, "That while the profession of the national churches in England and Scotland remained orthodox, the profession, there were many pulpits from which no gospel proclamation was heard. And when the Evangel, in other words, the preaching of the gospel was recovered in certain churches, a term was necessary to distinguish the gospel preaching preachers from the others who weren't preaching the gospel. And that term was evangelical." Now fast forward into the 1900s, and a new evangelicalism arose. And it rose in response to the conflict between fundamentalist who are anchored on the fundamentals of the Christian faith and separate from the world, and the mainline liberal denominations. Those two were warring against each other. And from that a new evangelical movement arose. And in this soundbite, Travis explains why this new evangelical movement came forth.

**Sound bite: Pastor Travis Allen 04:23**

And that liberal fundamentalist conflict could be quite acerbic at times, it could be feisty, many grew weary of the fight over the years. And when we come to go through two world wars, people come home from the battlefield and they are tired of fighting and so the post world war II generation, there's a new evangelicalism forming up finding a middle way, really, between the doctrinal concerns of the fundamentalists and the social sympathies of the liberals. Sounds familiar? Sounds like history's repeating itself today. On the one hand, the new evangelicals wanted to protect the fundamental tenants of orthodoxy. Things like the inspiration inerrancy authority of Scripture, the supernatural nature of the Christian religion, the Bible, the new birth, centrality of the Gospel, the exclusivity of salvation and Jesus Christ, Christ's mandate to evangelize and disciple to build the church. And on the other hand, those new evangelicals did not want to appear intolerant any longer. They didn't want to appear pugnacious like they were fighters.

**Host: David Wheaton 05:32**

Okay, so that's an important soundbite from the message. On the one hand that new Evangelicals wanted to protect the fundamental tenets of orthodoxy. That's good. On the other hand, this is where the problem comes in, "New Evangelicals did not want to appear intolerant and pugnacious to the world. So this is they're trying to find this third way or middle way between fundamentalists and theological liberals. The fatal flaw here is believers will never get the world and non believers to like us. They may appear to like us, but they're so completely different than us. They're not regenerated. To put it bluntly, not children of God as believers are, but they're children of Satan. So the idea that they didn't want to appear intolerant and

pugnacious means they're going to be bending over backwards to, "Be nice, so that the world is interested in Christianity."

It's a fatal flaw in reasoning. What they should have been concerned about only is their faithfulness to God, and not worry at all what the world thought of them. So then Travis goes on in the message to talk about seven evidences of the drift that has occurred within evangelicalism. He said, first of all, there's been a moral drift. And he gave examples like Bill Hybels of Willow Creek and Ravi Zacharias and Ted Haggard, who was the president of the National Association of Evangelicals. And I'm gonna go through these seven evidences pretty quickly. You can hear the whole message linked at our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org).

The second evidence of drift was a cultural drift. So one leads into the other. There's a moral drift. And then a cultural drift is the idea of Evangelicals thinking they have to become like the world, to win the world. So there's not much separation between the church and the world. We try to be as close to the world as possible so they think, well, that's not too big of a step to become an Evangelical Christian. Of course, the problem with that is you get too close to the world, that you start getting bound together with the world. It says in II Corinthians 6:14, Do not be bound together with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? And just look at these graphic contrasts here. Or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial? It's another name for Satan. Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Verse 17. Therefore come out from their midst, and be separate, says the Lord, and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you should be My sons and daughters, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty. That's from II Corinthians chapter six. So this cultural drift of becoming like the world to win the world, leads to the easy step of becoming engaged with the world and becoming so much like the world there's no separation and holiness from the sinfulness of the world.

So he went from the first evidence of moral drift to secondly, cultural drift, third, to the ecclesiological drift, this has to do with the church itself and I'll just quote from the message when he says, "Rather than an equipping center for God fearing Christians to give teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness, many Evangelicals consider church as an event to attract unbelievers." In other words, the church isn't for believers like the Bible says it is, it's meant to attract unbelievers into the church. He goes on to say, "Pastors and church staff serve the event. They cater to the consumers to entertain, to inspire, motivate and provide group therapy. Pastors are not shepherds as the Bible calls them to be. For instance, Andy Stanley believes that model is outmoded and needs to be replaced by the CEO or Chief Executive Officer model from the corporate world." So what he's saying is that evangelicals

think that we should gear church for unbelievers rather than a place for growing believers. And if unbelievers want to come in, that's fine. But the church was not to be geared toward them. Otherwise, you're going to change your whole methodology and message.

The fourth evidence he gave is an institutional drift. And this is the one we're going to talk about today with regard to Billy Graham. So we'll come back to that in a minute.

The fifth evidence of drift is the doctrinal drift. And I'll quote again from the sermon. "Building and maintaining parachurch organizations, again, these are Christian organizations independent of the local church, building and maintaining them, and mega church institutions, large, huge Evangelical churches, requires unity and a whole lot of money. Everyone stays united and donors keep giving, when doctrinal and theological differences are minimized and ignored for the sake of the mission." In other words, if you have to have a lot of people coming through the doors, and you have to have a lot of money being raised to keep the operation going, you're going to have to make the way broader, de-emphasize things that divide people like doctrine and theology.

The sixth evidence he gave of evangelical drift is the ethical drift. And he gave examples of the recent president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Ed Litton, and his plagiarism scandal. He had no sooner been elected to be president than it came out that he was plagiarizing sermons from the immediate past president, JD Greer, and how they didn't know what to do with it. They didn't get rid of him. He was president for a year before he finally resigned. There's ethical problems going on within evangelicalism.

And then number seven, which links into this, that is a result of these ethical drifts, there's a political response instead of a biblical response to these moral and ethical problems. In other words, there's no practice of church discipline as described in Matthew chapter 18. These organizations are too big to fail. So they do typical political maneuvering, political damage control, to sort of let the news cycle pass, so people move on. So those were the seven points, examples, evidences of drift that Travis brought up in that message. So then the question is, What was the road to get evangelicalism to such a point? And this is where we had the conversation, it was actually just one or two questions about the influence of Billy Graham in the early years of the growth of new evangelicalism.

Now before we get to that, I don't want to assume that all listeners know well who Billy Graham was. We may have some younger listeners out there who maybe have heard the name but don't know much about him. So I thought I'd just read a few paragraphs from, [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org) that has a page with the bio and life of Billy Graham entitled, *Who is Billy Graham?* He was an evangelist and servant of Christ for over 70 years. The organization he founded, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association is involved in global evangelism, training

and outreach ministries. Billy Graham was born in 1918 in North Carolina and died in 2018 at age 99 years old. He was one of the world's most famous evangelists for over 60 years, carrying on the tradition of men like D.L. Moody and Billy Sunday. He held more than 400 what he called crusades, or evangelistic rallies in more than 185 countries and territories. It's estimated that he preached the gospel of Christ to 215 million people. He also had a broad outreach through his radio and television programs, video and film projects, newspaper and magazine ventures and the internet. Graham wrote 34 books. Often called America's pastor, he prayed with every US president from Harry Truman, to Barack Obama. That just gives you a brief snapshot of just how massive Billy Graham's ministry was.

At his last Crusade, it goes on to say, in 2005 he said, "I have one message. That Jesus Christ came, He died on a cross, He rose again, and He asked us to repent of our sins, and receive Him by faith as Lord and Savior. And if we do, we have forgiveness of all of our sins. That's from actually Billy Graham's official website. Billy Graham married Ruth Bell, that was his wife, in 1943. And they remained married until Ruth's death in 2007. They had five children. In the mid 1940s, Graham worked with Youth for Christ. And in 1947, he held his first evangelistic mission or crusade. That's really when he became very popular in the late 1940s. In the late 1940s and early 50s, Graham became a household name in America and England, as his tent meetings, as they were called, began to fill even the largest stadiums and sporting arenas. He did radio and television evangelism. His weekly radio program, *Hour of Decision* ran for over 50 years. He co-founded the magazine *Christianity Today* and published *Decision Magazine*.

And then we come to this paragraph in the column on GotQuestions.org where it says, to maximize his outreach in each city, Graham worked with a local council of churches. Graham himself was ordained in the Southern Baptist Fellowship, but he wanted the gospel to have as large a venue as possible, so he reached across denominations. This practice brought accusations of ecumenism. But for Graham, it was simply the best way to reach the most people. The local council of churches helped spiritually by praying for the crusade in the weeks before Graham arrived. They also help logistically, organizing details and raising funds for the big event. After the crusade, the various churches, part of the Council of Churches, were committed to following up with newborn believers. Graham's final crusade in New York City in 2005, was sponsored by 1400 regional churches from 82 different denominations,. Just let that paragraph sink in for a minute. We're gonna get more into that on today's program.

Skipping ahead in the article, he occasionally made doctrinally questionable statements, especially in his later years. We're going to play one of those today. As an example, on more than one occasion, he seemed open to the idea that a person could be saved without faith in Jesus Christ, in clear contradiction to verses like John 14: 6 which says, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life Jesus said. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Or Acts 4:12, which says, *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that*

*has been given among men by which we must be saved.* So he had made some statements at a couple of different times in interviews that seemed to contradict those verses. It goes on to say, Most, if not all of these dubious statements made by Graham were later retracted or clarified. Whatever the case, they serve as a powerful reminder that no one is perfect, and that ultimately, our faith must rest in God and His Word, not in any human being. So that was from gotquestions.org about, Who is Billy Graham?

Now in reading that, there was one thing that struck me that was glaringly absent from his life and ministry. There was nothing about his involvement in a local church, his membership, what church he came out of, or which church he served in. And I think that indicates the fact that he was so involved in parachurch ministry that the local church, because he was traveling and doing crusades all the time, was not a prominent part of his life. I don't know that, but it seems that probably was the case as it is with many people who travel around and speak as part of parachurch ministries. All right, we need to take a short break for some ministry announcements. Stay tuned. We have much more coming up on this topic today. You are listening to *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program, I'm David Wheaton.

**Featured Resource: New Life in Christ by Steven Lawson 18:49**

The momentum from the world is like a tsunami that's flooding our entire country. And the only way to change it is for people to be born again, is for there to be a great awakening in our country again and for people to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And that will never happen until there is first conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment for people to repent and to turn from their sins and to turn to God and embrace his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was Dr. Steven Lawson. His book, *New Life in Christ What Really Happens When You're Born Again And Why It Matters* is available for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. Regular retail is \$16.99. Go to [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

**Featured Resource: Global Warming Skepticism for Busy People 19:49**

The 2006 Oscar winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth* featuring former Vice President Al Gore painted a disturbing portrait of the future. Superstorms, melting icecaps, rising temperatures. Is this crisis unfolding more quickly than you would have anticipated?

This is unfolding faster than the scientists warned us. And now they're telling us we've got to prepare for much worse unless we take action quickly.

Instead of believing the false prophets of NBC News and Al Gore, order a copy of *Global Warming Skepticism for Busy People* by Roy Spencer, for donation of any amount to The

Christian Worldview. This 113 page, softcover book dispels the scare mongering with actual facts, go to the [Christian worldview.org](http://ChristianWorldview.org) or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

**Host: David Wheaton 20:56**

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton. Be sure to visit our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print letter, order resources for adults and children and support the ministry.

Now back to our topic, Billy Graham and Where Evangelicalism is Today. Now, Travis mentioned one of the definitive books on what has gone wrong with evangelicalism and the book is titled, *Evangelicalism Divided A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to the year 2000*. And this book is written by Iain Murray. He's from Scotland. And for listeners who have listened to the program, going several years back now, you'll remember that he was a guest on the program. He is probably around 90 years old now. And he's a very well known biographer. Biographies of Martin Lloyd Jones, the preacher from England, back in the 1900s, many others and highly respected.

So I just thought what I'd do is; I have his book here in front of me, in chapter one of this book, *Evangelicalism Divided*, and we have it linked at our website, [The ChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org), there's a chapter entitled *Billy Graham, Catalyst for Change*. And just a couple excerpts from this chapter that I think are interesting from a standpoint of how Billy Graham started his ministry. One way, he came from more of a fundamentalist background. Again, remember new evangelicalism was trying to find a middle way between the fundamentalists on one side, and the theological liberals or the modernists on the other.

And so Billy Graham steps forward, early part of his ministry, very much of a more of a fundamentalist preacher. But it was through influences that came across his life that things begin to change. He had a relationship or friendship with a man named Harold Ockenga. And he was involved with Fuller Seminary, which is a theologically liberal seminary. And Iain Murray writes, While Ockenga had a plan to redefine Christian thinking through Fuller Seminary, he had never thought that scholarship alone could bring the needed change. In the end, the best defense for the gospel would be its proclamation. And so Ockenga was wholeheartedly behind the formation of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in that same year, 1950. Ockenga was to become one of its directors of the BGEA, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, while Graham became a board member at Fuller.

So now you see someone involved with Fuller Seminary, liberal theologically, getting on the board of Billy Graham's Evangelistic Association. Also, another contributing factor to this was Billy Graham's father-in-law, the father of Ruth Bell, who would later become Ruth Graham. His

name was Nelson Bell. He was not a Baptist, but he was a Presbyterian. And he had a profound impact on Billy Graham starting to work across denominational lines. Again, that wasn't something that Billy Graham did early on, being more fundamentalist, but his father-in-law had an impact on him to work across denominational lines.

Now working across denominational lines isn't a problem, if the denomination you're working with has the same fidelity to Scripture, Christ and the gospel that your denomination does. The problem is when you start working with denominations like let's say today, the mainline Protestant denominations, which have very little in common with what the Bible actually teaches. Reading on. Dr. Bell, or his father-in-law, had no time for any thought of Evangelicals withdrawing from his own broad denomination, the Presbyterian Church. His vision was for a revival of the Southern Presbyterian church and he believed the same opportunity existed for renewal in the other major denominations, provided the evangelical cause was presented in less strident and negative tones. You see there again, evangelicals need to come across as friendly and without being pugnacious. Iain Murray goes on to write the steps by which Graham moved away from his former exclusiveness have not been recorded, but it is certain that his father in law played an important part in the change, which had taken place by 1955. He goes on to say, Graham had said that he never took a major step without asking Nelson Bell's counsel and advice.

And I'm just gonna read one more paragraph from this chapter from *Evangelicalism Divided*, where it says he quotes from a man named Marsden. He said, "During his campaign in England, [this is Billy Graham's campaign] in 1954, Graham received broader church support than his fundamentalist supporters would have allowed him in the U.S. Such successes in culturally influential religious circles were leading Graham toward the conviction that he could make marvelous inroads into America's major denominations, that would be probably the mainline denominations, if he could jettison the disastrous fundamentalist image of separatism, anti intellectualism and contentiousness." So you can see there's a movement going on within Billy Graham in the early 1950s, as he's meeting influential and successful people from different denominations, who see how popular he is, and are trying to use him for their own ecumenical purposes, many of which aren't faithful to Scripture. And so with that as some background, I want to go back to what I mentioned earlier about one of the drifts, the evidences of drift that was number four, the institutional drift. Now this soundbite is directly from Travis's message, where he talks about this institutional drift that was caused in large part by the example of Billy Graham, this ecumenism, and this push toward the parachurch taking prominence over the local church. This is about a five minute clip from the message.

**Sound bite: Pastor Travis Allen 27:40**

The institution that Jesus Christ bled for, died for, redeemed with His own blood, the Church, the institution that he ordained is the Christian church. But it was after World War II that

parachurch organizations began to set the agenda for the churches. In Iain Murray's book, *Evangelicalism Divided*, he draws attention to the influence of one man in that enterprise. And it's Billy Graham. I know that God has done good things through Billy Graham's life, and as much as his message has stayed near to the gospel of Scripture, we can see that people are saved through that, but to recruit the necessary workforce in order to promote and execute on his massive evangelistic crusades, revivals, Billy Graham needed the cooperation and participation of churches in a very wide range of denominational backgrounds. So he pursued an ecumenical strategy for pragmatic reasons, dropping the doctrinal differences in order to bring the most people together so he could bring the most people in.

It's the exact same thing that's happening in many of our so called evangelical churches today. Iain Murray writes, "One of Graham's most frequently repeated sayings from 1957 onwards was, 'The one badge of Christian discipleship is not orthodoxy but love.'" To set those two in contradistinction to one another, as if love and orthodoxy don't belong together and love, true love is Orthodox and true Orthodoxy is loving, that is a terrible misunderstanding of truth. But who could argue with Billy Graham's numerical successes? He packed stadiums by the 10s of 1000s, became the very handsome face and smooth voice of the success of the new evangelicalism. He surrounded himself with scholars, especially from Fuller Seminary. And Billy Graham set the tone for future Christian institutions, household names that many older people will recognize very well, Wheaton College, Fuller Seminary, the publication's of *Christianity Today* and *Decision Magazine*, Youth for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship or Bona Student Missions conferences, World Congress on Evangelism, the Lausanne Movement, Bible Study Fellowship.

Billy Graham had his hands in the start of all those things and held by his ecumenical orthodoxy versus love mentality, sow the seeds of that into all those institutions. So again, those institutions are not churches, but they're parachurch institutions. They have trained Christian laity for decades. They have especially trained and educated the young people. So the young people have a whole different understanding of what Christianity is. They don't have an appreciation for the local church. In fact, the local church seems to them to be a stifling institution, not one that allows them to be performative and to see their gifts realized. So they left the environment of the local church, preferring instead the exciting institutions of this new evangelicalism on a new frontier of new growth and new possibilities. Worldwide evangelization seemed to be within their grasp. They imbibe the spirit of revivalism and ecumenism, they're doctrinally Armenian, and they're American pragmatic, measuring success by counting nickels and noses. All of them embraced Billy Graham's ecumenism, with aversion to doctrines and doctrine divides. And many who rose to leadership and parachurch institutions, they're not ordained, they're not theologically trained, they're not biblically qualified for eldership or leadership in the local church. Nonetheless, they influence local churches.

Entering into local churches and encouraging them to be suspicious of doctrine resulted in theological anemia, a weakness in the churches.

They opted instead for producing concert or conference like experiences every single Sunday, every single weekend for Sunday visitors. Invisible evangelical world, the parachurch, has prevailed over the church in what's visible, in what your neighbor may look and see on the news and what they may click on on the internet. This is what they see. The para churches prevailed over the church. We understand that saying, The mistress has supplanted the Bride of Christ. The evidence to that? Well, the most popular well recognized form of visible evangelical Christianity is represented by the megachurch. More than 500 churches in this country have more than 2000 members, which qualifies them as mega churches. If they have more than 10,000 people, those are called Giga churches evidently. I didn't know that, that Giga churches and the largest of which number is between 30,000 and 50,000 people. I would say 50,000 members, but they actually don't believe in church membership. These huge Giga churches are led by such figures as Steven Furtick and Andy Stanley, Ed Young Jr., Joel Osteen, Craig Groeschel of life.church. He does multisite mega church online church combo, and he bumps that number up over 100,000 people. All those identify themselves as evangelical and identify whatever that thing is called, online church, as an Evangelical Church. All told, evangelical mega churches account for anywhere from 3.5 to 5 million of America's evangelicals. And as everything is kind of going online, I'm sure that number is going up and up. In any community with a mega church, I'll tell you, its influence is felt. Mega churches have a gravitational force in any community. And they present, the sad thing is they present a false witness of what Christianity truly is. It's not the church. It's the para church wearing local church skin. So it stands to reason that the institutional drift of today's evangelicalism with no deep theological foundation leads to number five, a doctrinal drift.

**Host: David Wheaton 34:24**

Okay, that was pastor Travis Allen, very strong preaching there. But let me be very clear. He and I are not saying that Billy Graham is not a believer or that his parachurch ministry was all bad, or that even all parachurch ministry is wrong. The intended point is that Christians today need to be aware of and cautioned by partnering with other professed Christians who are not doctrinally sound on the primary issues. For example, what is the gospel? Justification, sanctification, the doctrine of God, the inspiration of Scripture, the doctrine of the church, ecclesiology. Believers should not partner across doctrinal lines in these instances, because it gives the impression that these churches which are not faithful to God and His Word, are okay for people to go to and they will get sound preaching there, teaching there, which they will not. It leads people into false doctrine and away from the true saving gospel. That is the problem with ecumenism.

And the second point is that the local church that God established needs to be the base of operations, if you will, the center point, not the para church, which does not have the same qualifications for leaders, the same discipline structure that the local church which God established does. Okay, we need to take a brief break for some ministry announcements. But coming up after that are three takeaways on this topic of Billy Graham and where evangelicalism is today.

### **Featured Children's Resources** 36:08

I'm David Wheaton, and you're listening to The Christian Worldview Radio Program. Scripture commands that children how to be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Offering Biblically sound resources for children is one of our top ministry priorities. At our store at [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org), you will find carefully selected children's Bibles and books along with video and audio resources. Check out the Bible Infographics for Kids books, Little Pilgrims Progress, and the popular Adam Raccoon set. Theo is a 15 episode video series addressing key doctrines of the faith that is a must see for children and adults. Satan and the world are bent on capturing the heart and mind of your child. Instead, get sound resources that will train them up in the way they should go. Browse and order at [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org). Or give us a call for recommendations at 1-888-646-2233. That's 1-888-646-2233 or [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org).

### **Featured Resource: My Boy Ben** 37:13

For a limited time, we are offering My Boy, Ben for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. The book is the true story of a Yellow Lab that I had back when I was competing in the professional tennis tour. It's about relationships with Ben, my parents, with a childhood friend I would eventually marry, but ultimately with God who causes all things, even the hard things to work together for good. You can order a signed and personalized copy for yourself or for your friend who enjoys a good story, loves dogs, sports, or the outdoors and most of all needs to hear about God's grace and the Gospel. My Boy, Ben is owned by The Christian Worldview. It's 264 pages, hardcover, and retails for \$24.95. To order go to [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

### **Host: David Wheaton** 38:18

Thanks for joining us today on The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton, the host. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org). Transcripts and Short Takes are also available.

Now back to the final segment of today's program. Okay, let's get to some takeaways about Billy Graham and the movement of evangelicalism and where we are today. The first takeaway is this because we received several emails after that program when we were discussing Billy

Graham. The first one is this. Listen to what was actually said. Here's an example of one email. I love The Christian Worldview. I learn so much and get to share that with my Christian friends. Yet I felt troubled when David was talking about Billy Graham and that he felt he wasn't really sharing the gospel with the people. I realized that many pastors only speak of loving people, but leave out the truth of Jesus Christ and repentance. I'm 75 years old, and I really did not listen much to the Billy Graham events. But I do think that he was sent by God to love people and his character was so honorable that lots of people were driven to him. I have heard over the years how some people went to his crusades and were totally transformed and they were changed and he lived a godly life. Well, thank you for that email. But just to clarify, neither Travis, nor I, nor Iain Murray in his book never said Billy Graham was a non believer, or that he wasn't proclaiming the gospel or that God did not use his preaching to bring many people to saving faith. That is clear. Abundantly clear on the ministry of Billy Graham that many people came to saving faith through his preaching of the gospel. Billy Graham had a heart for the lost clearly. He boldly preached the gospel. As matter of fact, I'm going to give you an example of what he sounded like when he was preaching the gospel.

**Sound bite: Billy Graham 40:19**

All of us here tonight are under the sentence of death. The wages of sin is death, and we have all sinned and broken the laws of God. And so we're all sentenced to die. We are to die physically. The graveyards are filled full of people that are there because sin caused death. And then sin also causes spiritual death. Your soul is dead, your spirit is dead. Physically, you're alive, but your soul that lives inside your body is dead toward God. So you're a walking dead person under the sentence of death. And the only way that you can have that sentence lifted, is to come to Christ by repentance of sin and faith in Him as your Lord and your Savior.

**Host: David Wheaton 41:01**

So it's strong, and it's clear. And even beyond that he was not involved in scandal or moral failure, as so many other evangelicals have been involved in. You know the Billy Graham rule that came from the Modesto manifesto early on. The Ministry made four rules. One of them being to never be alone with a woman who's not your wife, not even in an elevator, going out to eat in a restaurant. And that's something that's even criticized today with some politicians or other business leaders who try to hold to that particular conviction. So nothing was about the fact that Billy Graham was not a believer or he didn't preach the gospel. He absolutely did. The discussion specified that he erred in two ways. And the first way was his ecumenical outreach. And the problem with ecumenism, reaching across denominational lines, specifically with other churches, who don't have sound theological convictions, is that it misrepresents God and His Word, to work with other people to try to minister with other people who are involved in false doctrines. It actually confuses people on what is sound doctrine when you work with denominations that are off base in their doctrine and theology or the gospel. Now, I don't know if the ecumenical outreach of Billy Graham to gather churches, hundreds of churches together

from the wide spectrum of denominations at any given crusade led to this, but later in his life as that article from gotquestions.com mentioned, Billy Graham said things that were actually beyond ecumenical, but actually heretical. I'm not sure why he said these things because he preached differently than what he would say in these interviews. But he did say it. For instance, this was from an interview with Robert Schuller, the health, wealth and prosperity preacher well known in California and across the world that he did with Billy Graham, in May of 1997.

**Sound bite: Robert Schuller 43:07**

Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?

**Sound bite: Billy Graham 43:12**

Well, Christianity, and being a true believer, you know, I think there's the body of Christ, which comes from all the Christian groups around the world, or outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that that loves Christ, on knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ. And I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival that will turn the whole world for Christ at anytime. I think James answered that, the Apostle James, in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out people for His name. And that's what God is doing today. He's calling people out of the world for his name, whether they come from the Muslim world of the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non believing world. They are members of the Body of Christ, because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their heart that they need something that they don't have. And they turn to the only light that they have. And I think that they are saved and that they're going to be with us in heaven.

**Sound bite: Robert Schuller 44:28**

That's fantastic. I'm so thrilled to hear you say that there's a wideness in God's mercy.

**Host: David Wheaton 44:35**

That's extremely hard to explain why Billy Graham would say such a thing that's almost like a kind of universalism he's saying there. And look how much delight that Robert Schuller got when Billy Graham said that. Now I'm not sure if Billy Graham ever repudiated that or corrected that. But again, just a heretical statement I guess is all you could call it. So there's that. And maybe you can ascribe it to age, or something like that, but there it is. I don't know whether the ecumenism led to a kind of universalism there, but certainly this was a different Billy Graham at this point in 1997 than it was, let's say previous to 1955 or 1950.

**Host: David Wheaton 45:17**

The second element that we discussed in the interview with Travis had to do with the parachurch, that the popularity of Billy Graham, and his own parachurch, led to the rise of the popularity of other parachurch organizations. Again, these are Christian organizations or ministries that are independent of a local church. Now, a parachurch isn't necessarily wrong in and of itself. But it's only honoring to God in as much as it stays true to the same mission and teaching of a sound local church. And this is something that we know very well about with The Christian Worldview as well. We are a parachurch organization. But we are intent on being members in good standing and under the authority of our local church. We want to be under the authority of the leadership of our own local church.

The second takeaway from the discussion on Billy Graham is this. No one, not even Billy Graham, is beyond critique. If someone is beyond critique, you've just made that person an idol. Listen to what this emailer said. Dear Mr. Wheaton, I listen to your broadcast sometimes. And I'd like to make a comment on your latest series. Are you ready to say that Billy Graham was an unbeliever? Again, no one said that. It goes on to say, then why be an accuser of the brethren? That is Satan's job. And often he uses us to help him. Praise God that Christ is being preached by whoever the Lord sends out to do that, whether they be a parachurch organization or not. The answer to this is, well, then was Paul, the Apostle Paul, wrong to call out Peter for his hypocrisy in dealing with legalistic Jews? You've read this passage in Galatians chapter two. But when Peter came to Antioch, this is Paul, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, the Jewish legalists, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof from the Gentiles, fearing the religious Jews. In other words, he was eating with the Gentiles when the religious Jews weren't around. When they came in town, he didn't want to appear as if he was mingling with those that the Jews would not approve of. So he withdrew from eating with them, and Paul confronted him for that.

And then he goes on to say in verse 13, the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. So obviously, Paul wasn't considered to be an accuser of the brethren for confronting Peter on this. So neither should any believer who, on the basis of scripture points out an element of another believers life or ministry that is falling short of God's standard. Should we overlook the moral failure of Ravi Zacharias because he was one of the leading Christian apologists in the world? Should we overlook the statements of Andy Stanley about needing to unhitch the Old Testament from the New Testament because he pastored a multi site church and is influential across the country? Of course not. This is the problem. Popularity or preaching the gospel to many people must necessarily mean, Well, this person is not to be criticized because he preaches the gospel. I mean, we should be clear thinking enough to realize that Billy Graham preached the gospel strongly, especially in, let's say, pre 1955 when he was more fundamentalist. But we can also

realize that Billy Graham also erred and compromised in his ecumenism with churches that were not sound in theology, that were compromised theologically, and his ministry model of the parachurch led to the priority of parachurches over the local church today.

Final point, number 3, the third takeaway is to strive for faithfulness in all things, not just some things, not just to preach the gospel faithfully, but who we partner with the ministry as well. One more email. Dear friends at The Christian Worldview, today's interview of Travis Allen is so totally off base, that it warrants this comment. When you denigrate the ministries of Billy Graham, Chuck Smith, and multiple other evangelists and untold contemporary music Christian artists, you have gone over the line. Your judgementalism on the, "Fruit born by those ministries," does a disservice to our Lord in the growing of his church. When it comes to, "Inspecting the fruit resulting from Reverend Graham's ministry as opposed to the fruit born by Pastor Travis Allen, there is really no comparison."

Let me just stop there for a moment. You can see the flaw in the reasoning. So bigger is better if you're more well known, if you preach the gospel to more people, you therefore must be better. So that means that Joel Osteen, who some would say is preaching the gospel must be better than someone else who is very faithful to preach the real gospel then. That's the line of reasoning there. He goes on to say, In fact, you don't have a right to judge or inspect another's fruit. God's Word does not return void, and you are wrong in judging the work of those ministries called to spread our Lord's gospel. Again, we have to go back to Scripture, the basis for truth and discernment. Was Paul harmful and divisive for constantly pointing out error? Warning, Timothy and Titus of error and other believers of error and churches and naming names of those who are leading people astray? Was Jesus? Jesus was incredibly tough on the religious rulers of his day. Was Jude? Or how about Peter? All of them really gave the example of the balance of yes, preaching truth, at the same time, pointing out in warning about error. So

I'll just close by saying this. Paul wrote to Timothy, he said, Take pain with these things that I've told you, be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Verse 16 chapter 4- Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching, persevere in these things. For as you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. There is a carefulness that churches and parachurch ministries need to have. Bigger isn't necessarily better. Faithfulness to God and His Word is the standard, far beyond popularity, or, "Reaching more people." God doesn't need our human reasonings and our ecumenical efforts to bring people to Himself for salvation. The purity of the gospel and God's Word takes priority above all else.

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that Jesus Christ and His Word are the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Our highest fidelity needs to be to Him. So until next time, "Think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm!"

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