



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Billy Graham: The Man I Knew- Part 2

**Guest(s):** Greg Laurie

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

**Roger Marsh:** Hello, and welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. And today you're going to hear the conclusion of our own Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with pastor Greg Laurie, about Greg's new book called *Billy Graham, The Man I Knew*. Yesterday, the two discussed Billy Graham's upbringing and his early ministry. On today's program, Greg Laurie will go into more detail about his own relationship with Billy and Ruth Graham and Billy's global ministry. Greg Laurie is the senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California. He hosts a weekly television program and is the featured speaker on the nationally syndicated radio program, *A New Beginning*. Greg Laurie is also the author of more than 70 books. He's been married to his wife, Cathe, for more than 40 years and they have two sons and five grandchildren. Well we have a lot to cover today, so let's listen in right now.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Greg, I guess is a great way to start today is just to ask you, how did you meet Billy Graham? Tell us your first encounter with him.

**Greg Laurie:** Well, Tim, I watched Billy Graham on television, like many Americans. I was living with my grandparents at the time and we'd watch them on the old black and white TVs. And I was impressed by him, but after I became a Christian at the age of 17, I wanted to go hear him preach. So I went down to San Diego where he was holding a crusade. And when he gave the invitation, I actually walked forward. Now I was already a Christian, I just wanted a closer look at this man. And I had actually taken a little news article that had been written about our ministry that was just starting, and I wanted to give it to him with a letter saying, "I'd like to meet you." And then as Billy was walking by, I handed the envelope to one of his team members and just as I handed it to them, it occurred to me I misspelled his last name. I spelled it G-R-A-M instead of G-R-A-H-A-M.

But I really started to get to know him in 1985 when he came to Anaheim to do a crusade. That's when I first had a conversation with him. And it was not long

after that, that Billy reached out to me because I was starting my crusade ministry. And Billy was kind of toward the end of his crusade ministry. And he asked me if I would assist him with illustrations for his messages because he wanted to reach a younger audience. Of course I was delighted to do that. So then I had the opportunity to spend hours and hours with Billy Graham when he would travel. I would be onsite with him. And when he first used one of my illustrations, it was like one of the greatest thrills of my life to hear him use these words that I had actually written for him. And I even wrote them in his style and the rhythm in which he spoke because he had a very unique way of speaking and building to a point and delivering it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes, he did.

Greg Laurie: So then it just grew and grew and I was able to spend a lot of time with him and really get to know him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, yesterday we talked about Billy's younger years. And one of the goals of your book was to introduce your reader, all of us, to that side of Billy Graham. He was quite a character as a kid. We've talked about his conversion experience. We walked our way through his early preparation and training in the gospel and the Bible. You mentioned yesterday, Greg, a little bit about his wife, Ruth, how he met her at Wheaton College. Ruth, as we all know, was a remarkable woman of God. Tell us a little bit more about their love story and their relationship, Greg, as they kind of walked away through the years.

Greg Laurie: Well, Ruth was Billy's equal in every way. Billy said of Ruth, "She's the real scholar in our family," and that was not an exaggeration. When you walked by Ruth's room, she had a little study, simple little office, just books piled on top of books. She was like a walking encyclopedia. She was full of wit and wisdom. And if she didn't agree with something Billy said, she told him, and he valued that. And I remember one occasion, I spent time in their front room and they would just be sitting in their chairs, watching television like any other couple. Listened to them banter back and forth. But I remember later on when Ruth got sick and she was in a wheelchair and Billy was next to her. And my friend Dennis Agajanian who plays guitar was there, and Billy has Dennis to play a song. So Dennis did an instrumental version of the hallelujah chorus. And as he was playing, I noticed that Billy and Ruth were having a moment. They were looking at each other. Billy was looking at Ruth with such love. And she was literally glowing, even though her health was fading at this point, she was just luminescent. And afterwards when Dennis finished the song, Billy turned to Ruth and said, "That was the song they played on our first date."

I loved to be with Ruth because she was very witty and very wise and it was really easy talking to her. I have to admit, Tim, even though I spent a lot of time with Billy, I was always slightly intimidated by him. And I was always concerned I might not say the right thing, so I wasn't completely myself with him. It was Greg on his best behavior. But when I was with Ruth, I was my normal, crazy, sarcastic wacky self. And she loved that because her son Franklin is a real

firebrand, and she loved those qualities of Franklin. So I just enjoyed being with her so much, and she was just so sweet. When I would speak at the Billy Graham Training Center at the Cove, she would come and listen and take notes and then afterwards invite us over to her home for lunch. And we would talk and laugh and have the greatest time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Franklin, who is a good friend of yours, Greg, in the story, I was amazed also at Billy's work ethic.

Greg Laurie: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Talk to us about that level of preparation. And during that time, I thought this is interesting, Billy has a crisis of faith. I love that you shared that, Greg. I think it's important for all of us to hear this.

Greg Laurie: Yes, so Billy was preaching with Youth For Christ and this was post World War Two, and they had meetings that were attended largely by young people. And there was another evangelist that was preaching with them as well whose name was Charles Templeton. And some said that Templeton was the better of the two preachers and that he was going to have great success. Well, Templeton was raised by a single mother, very difficult background, much different than Billy's upbringing. Templeton was a very intelligent, articulate man and Templeton began to be influenced by what we would call liberal theology. And so he pushed on Billy, saying, "Billy, you can't just believe what the Bible says. You need to further your education. You need to learn more." And this did cause a crisis of faith for Billy.

And so, Billy was at the Forest Home Training Center founded by Henrietta Mears. And he was there and one night he went out into the forest with his Bible and he was struggling with this and he saw a tree stump and he laid his open Bible on the tree stump. And he just, as an act of faith said, "God, I believe this is your word. By faith, I believe it is true and I'm going to make a commitment right now to believe it and not look back." And he prayed. He didn't have an emotional experience, that reminds you a little bit of his conversion. And on the very heels of that, he went to Los Angeles and preached in a tent and that became his launching pad. Billy went on to literally change the world.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We've all seen the pictures, Greg, of the legendary tent revival. Billy preached I think it was the fall of what, 1949 Los Angeles, wanting to reach LA for Christ. And that really, I believe, was the genesis or the launch of his evangelistic ministry. Right, Greg?

Greg Laurie: Yeah, he had come to the end of those meetings. They'd gone quite well, but they were not an incredible success. So they thought, "We're pretty much done here. Maybe we'll go longer. Let's see if the Lord will guide us." And so there was a personality known as Stuart Hamblen who was like this cowboy singer,

sort of a like a Gene Autry. He had a radio show, a man who was known for his drunken exploits and rather hedonistic lifestyle. And so he went to Billy's meetings and he got converted and he started talking about it on his radio show. So all of a sudden, all these new people showed up. And Randolph Hearst, William Randolph Hearst who owned many newspapers and magazines at that point became aware of Billy Graham. And he sent out a telegram to all of his publications to his editors, a two-word telegram, "Puff Graham." And the next thing Billy knows, there's all this press there. The crowds are now huge. They're overflowing. So, they ended up extending the LA crusade and Billy was suddenly known around the world and on the heels of that, he went off to England and New York to Madison Square Garden and had many historic meetings that happened. So that became his absolute launchpad.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. Our special guest today is Greg Laurie. He's the senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, one of the largest churches in America. He's written more than 70 books. His brand-new book, *Billy Graham, The Man I Knew*, fascinating story. Greg, you call Billy, "the King of Media." It was so rare what was accomplished in and through his life and the reach of his ministry. What do you associate that with?

Greg Laurie: Well, I just think the Lord gave him this vision for the future and he innovated where people had done innovated before. He was one of the first people to utilize radio. And he was such a gifted communicator, he held the attention of the listener. He went on television before anybody was doing television. Now it's common to see preachers on television. No one was doing it when Billy was doing it, and he was criticized for it. And then he went on to start a movie studio. This was back in the days when a lot of Christians thought it was sinful to go to a movie. So what does Billy Graham do? He starts a movie studio. And they produced these films that are released in theaters around the United States. And he used satellite technology way ahead of its time. Now we see churches with multi-sites and all that. Billy was doing that before anyone did it. So I think he really was one of the most innovative guys. Plus in addition to that, he had a weekly column in the newspaper. He started Christianity Today, and he started another magazine called Decision Magazine, and that was just on Monday.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Greg, all of it anchored around the gospel.

Greg Laurie: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It reminds me of Paul in Romans 1. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel."

Greg Laurie: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: "For it is the power of God." Thinking about Billy and that influence. What 185 countries he spoke in? He ministered to some, what 12 Presidents?

Greg Laurie: Every President from Truman arguably all the way to President Trump because I was actually at Billy's 95th birthday party and businessman Donald Trump was there and sitting at Billy's table. And so he knew Donald Trump. President Obama came to visit Billy in Montreat. He was very close with both Bushes, senior and junior, close to Reagan, close to LBJ. He had a relationship with JFK, so fascinating. And Clinton, he was close to Bill and Hillary Clinton. When Billy preached his last crusade there that I already alluded to, Bill and Hillary were there. So this is a man that crossed political aisles and these Presidents and senators and Congressmen and others like Winston Churchill and the Queen herself, were all impacted by this minister.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Greg, let's talk about his opportunity to share the gospel with Winston Churchill for a moment.

Greg Laurie: Well, that's one of my favorite stories. So Billy was in England and Winston Churchill was aware of him. Billy requested an audience with Churchill and Churchill said no. And so Billy went on and held his historic crusades there in London. And so then Churchill all of a sudden wanted to meet Billy. And so he requested, "Billy, could you come in to see me?" And Churchill was very concerned about the future of the world. "And was there any hope?" he asked Billy. And it was supposed to be like a 15 minute meeting. It went on for over an hour. In fact, Churchill kept a member of the Royal family waiting outside because he was so taken with what Billy was saying.

And Billy told me that Churchill asked him a lot about the second coming of Christ. Because we came through World War II, but now we have communism and the Cold War was going to take place on the heels of that. And of course we've exploded our first atom bomb, bringing the war effectively to a close. So Churchill was very pessimistic about the future and Billy was a very young, optimistic, hopeful man. And so he was able to really minister to Churchill and share the gospel with him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, Greg, it's interesting Dr. Dobson, who has a deep affection for Winston Churchill, I think he kind of agrees that he's saved the free world. Without Churchill, Christianity would have suffered greatly. We're in the middle of a culture war, Greg, and racial trauma is front and center. Billy Graham was vehemently opposed to any form of racism. Do you mind taking us back to a couple of incidences that really mattered? I think he invited Martin Luther King Jr. early on to one of his crusades. Didn't he?

Greg Laurie: That's right. Martin Luther King himself said of Billy Graham, "I would not have been able to accomplish what I accomplished in the civil rights movement without the help of my friend, Billy Graham." Billy didn't feel called to march with Dr. King, but he helped in his way, including bringing Dr. King to pray at the Madison Square Garden, which actually was quite controversial. And Billy received a lot of criticism for it. And Dr. King prayed a beautiful prayer. You can actually hear it if you Google it.

But so, Billy did his part. He was preaching in the south and some of the people wanted to have segregated meetings. And Billy said, "I will not preach to a segregated crowd." So he used his influence to help people in the African-American community. Early on in his ministry, he brought African-American preacher on staff to be a fellow evangelist with him. So I think he really deserves a lot of credit for helping the folks back then who were trying to march for their rights and what should have been given to them anyway. And Billy did what he could and had a close relationship with Dr. King, whom he called Mike.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think you're right, Greg. I think he really helped pave the way there. You, in the book, talk about there were no two Billy Grahams. He was the same person in private that he was in public. Greg, can you share a little bit about that?

Greg Laurie: Yes, well, I was having lunch with him once at the Red Lobster. He chose that. And so we went to that restaurant. We're sitting down talking. And as it turns out, there was an atheist convention in town and they were wearing their little ID tags. So they're in town the same time at Billy Graham was holding a crusade. So he had a baseball cap pulled on his head, kind of pulled down low thinking that would disguise him, but people recognized him immediately and that famous profile. So here are people who are attending an atheist convention coming up, interrupting Billy's meal. Now you would think Billy would be, "Hey, I don't want to talk right now. I'm busy." He was so gracious with people. And I was so impressed by how he would take the time to be so gracious while his food got cold, talk with people, have prayer with them, listen to them.

And so, this was what so impressed me about him was his genuine humility. Honestly, Tim, I never heard Billy say a critical thing about anyone, anyone. If Billy had a flaw, and everyone has flaws and everyone has weaknesses, Billy's flaw was he thought too highly of other people and sometimes people took advantage of it. But he just cared about people. I really think we could use a Billy Graham right now because he was like a pastor to America.

Tim, this is the closest book I've written on the subject of leadership, using Billy as an example. And I think as someone reads it, it will inspire them and show them that God can use them as well. God plucked a country boy from a farm in North Carolina to become one of the greatest communicators of all time. It reads like a Bible story. As I said earlier, God can do a lot with a little. God is not looking for ability. He's looking for it availability.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know early on in the book, Greg, you had mentioned that Billy was asked, "What's the one question you want to ask God when you get to heaven?"

Greg Laurie: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: "What's that one question?" And it kind of fits what you were just talking about.

Greg Laurie: Well, yeah, "why did you choose me?" He was surprised that the Lord chose him. Billy would use the illustration of, if you ever see a turtle on a fence post, you know he didn't get there by himself. And I think Billy understood that God did this. And this is something that the Lord put His hand on Billy's life and called him to be this man that would touch the world. And Billy, as I already said, would often say, "I'm just a country preacher." That's all he ever really aspired to be, a country preacher. And in his heart, that's truly what he was. And that's one of the beauties of his ministry. He was down to earth. He was understandable. He was a very intelligent man, very educated man, a widely read man. But he always spoke in a way that ordinary people could understand him, and I think that was one of the secrets of his great success.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Greg, his evangelistic ministry started in 1949 in a tent. 2018 at age 99, Billy Graham passes away. The funeral service is in Charlotte, North Carolina. I know you were there. I had the privilege of being there, myself. Greg, an open air service, pretty much under a tent. Billy Graham's statement, "If you have heard that I have passed on, that I've died," he said, "don't believe it. I'm more alive than I've ever been." Greg, take us to that funeral service and how it moved everyone and the world that day.

Greg Laurie: Yes, well they had a motorcade leading up to it. The press was following it. We get to this giant tent that they erected and we're facing the boyhood home of Billy Graham that is preserved there at the Billy Graham Training Center at the Cove. The president was there. He didn't get up and say a single word. He just sat there because he had great respect for Billy, because he went and heard Billy preach when he was a young man with his father. And it was such a beautiful day. And really this collection of people, as I walked about and looked at the different people that Billy impacted I saw Charles Stanley there. I saw Brian Houston there. I saw Joel Osteen there. I saw Andy Stanley there. I saw Jack Graham there. I think people are understanding these are people from different theological backgrounds, but that says everything. Rudy Giuliani was there. So many people who were touched by Billy, and this speaks to the way he built bridges to so many. And as I walked around, I thought to myself, "This is a little bit, I think, of a glimpse of what heaven might be like."

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley were there.

Greg Laurie: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Dr. Dobson said, "Tim, it was one of the most moving services I've ever been to in my life. Such a life well lived and all about the gospel of Jesus Christ." Greg, I think it's most appropriate to finish this way. If there's someone listening right now who doesn't know the love of God and the message of hope in Christ, we certainly would like to invite them to a relationship with Him. Would you mind sharing that with us and maybe pray over and for us?

Greg Laurie: I'll be delighted, Tim. Thanks for asking. Well, listen, as I mentioned, Billy would often say, "God loves you." And God does love you and He has a plan for your

life. And He wants to forgive you of all of your sin and give you the certainty that you'll go to heaven when you die. But here's the problem, there's a barrier that separates you from God called sin. There's nothing you can do to get rid of that barrier. All of your good works and great deeds will not make it go away. But here's the good news, 2,000 years ago, God sent His son, Jesus Christ, on a rescue operation from heaven to earth. And He was born in that manger of Bethlehem. And then He lived a perfect life and then He died a perfect death on the cross for you. Christ died for your sins. It wasn't nails that held Jesus to the cross. It was love for you.

Jesus said, "For God so loved the world. He gave his only begotten son and whoever believes in him shall not perish, but they'll have everlasting life." So, three days later, Christ rose again from the dead and now He is alive and standing at the door of your life and he is knocking. And He's saying, if you'll hear His voice and open the door, He will come in. So, if you would like Jesus to come into your life, if you would like Him to forgive you of your sin, if you would like to know with certainty that you will go to heaven when you die, if you want that hole in your heart felt and your guilt removed, you can just pray this simple prayer with me. You can repeat it out loud if you like, or just pray it in the quietness of your heart, but just pray.

"Lord Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner, but I believe that you're the Savior who died on the cross for my sin and rose again from the dead. I turn from my sin now, and I choose to follow you, Lord, from this moment forward as my Savior and Lord, as my God and friend. In Jesus name I pray. Amen."

Dr. Tim Clinton: The greatest message and the greatest story ever told.

Greg Laurie: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The one of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Greg Laurie: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Pastor Greg Laurie, Senior Pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, one of the largest churches in America in California, over 70 books. His brand-new book, *Billy Graham, The Man I Knew*. Greg, I have chills. I know this, this book will be a gift to my children. I'll have them read it and I pray that God will raise up a generation who love the Lord with all their heart.

Greg Laurie: I love that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And they, too, are beacons of light for him. Thank you for joining us.

Greg Laurie: Thank you, Tim.



Roger Marsh:

Well, that was the conclusion of our cohost, Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with pastor and author, Greg Laurie, discussing Greg's newest book called *Billy Graham, The Man I Knew*. We hope you've enjoyed this two day broadcast. Remember, to listen to any part of the interview that you might've missed, just go to our broadcast page at [Drjamesdobson.org](http://Drjamesdobson.org). That's [DrJamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://DrJamesdobson.org/broadcast). You can listen to both parts one and two of the program there, or if you'd prefer, you can order a CD copy of the entire program which we've titled "Billy Graham, The Man I Knew." Now remember, you can also learn more about pastor Greg Laurie and his ministry and his books by visiting our broadcast page at [Drjamesdobson.org](http://Drjamesdobson.org), or feel free to give us a call anytime day or night at (877) 732-6825. Thanks again for listening to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And for all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, God's blessings to you and your family.

Announcer:

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