



The **BILLY GRAHAM** Library

STUDENT TOURS

Billy Graham and Racial Equality

*“Had it not been for the ministry of my good friend,
Dr. Billy Graham, my work in the civil rights movement
would not have been as successful as it has been.”*

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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As the civil rights struggle deepened, Billy Graham prayerfully canceled engagements in Europe and took his team on a preaching tour of the deep South. The tour ended here with an eight-day meeting at the Cramton Bowl in Montgomery, Alabama, in June 1965.

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GRADE LEVEL

6th–8th

“Though the race question has important social implications, it is fundamentally a moral and spiritual issue.

Only moral and spiritual approaches can provide a solution.”

—Billy Graham

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Describe Billy Graham’s unique role in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States.
- Explain Billy Graham’s efforts for racial equality abroad, especially in South Africa.
- Give an overview of Billy Graham’s motivation in working toward racial equality.
- Read and understand primary source documents relating to Billy Graham’s role in the civil rights movement.

Pre-Visit Activities

- Have students read the attached message from Graham. Ask students to consider what the world was like in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination—and how audience members may have felt as they listened to Graham’s message.
- Choose either one or both of the attached primary source documents for students to read and consider the following questions:
 - For King’s letter to Graham
 - » What is King thankful to Graham for?
 - » Why does King say that Graham has so much influence in the area of civil rights?
 - » What does King want Graham to do?
 - For the CNN *Larry King Live* interview
 - » What was the status of civil rights when Graham began his ministry?
 - » What step did he take toward integration? To what does he credit this action?
 - » What does Graham say is the problem behind racism?

Visit to the Library

- Students will walk through *The Journey of Faith* tour with an assigned guide and should be prepared to take notes in each room. Questions to consider include:
 - What was Billy Graham committed to above all else?
 - Did his commitment to sharing the Gospel influence his contribution to civil rights efforts?
 - How did Graham share the Gospel message? How did he relate the Gospel to civil rights?

Post-Visit Activities

- Ask students to research one of the following aspects of Graham’s involvement in racial equality efforts and write an informative essay:
 - Crusades, specifically Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1953 and Columbia, South Carolina, 1958
 - Relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - Response to the assassination of Dr. King
 - International efforts, including those in South Africa
 - Response to the ethnic and religious clashes in other countries such as Ireland during this period

NCSCOS OBJECTIVES

8H.1–3: *Explain how individuals and groups have influenced economic, political, and social change in North Carolina and the United States. Compare historical and contemporary issues to understand continuity in North Carolina and the U.S.*

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NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

Era Nine

- **Standard 4A:** Explain the origins of the postwar civil rights movement. Explain the resistance to civil rights in the South between 1954 and 1965.

REFERENCE AND FURTHER READING

- *Just As I Am*, chapters 17–18
- *Billy Graham: Footprints of Conscience* by Bill Jefferson

“Jesus was not a white man; He was not a black man. He came from that part of the world that touches Africa and Asia and Europe. Christianity is not a white man’s religion, and don’t let anybody ever tell you that it’s white or black. Christ belongs to all people; He belongs to the whole world.”

—Billy Graham

Pre-Visit Reading: Overview

When recounting his experience with the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s, Billy Graham said that he began struggling with the ideas of racism and inequality as a child. “Aside from my father, I admired no one as much as Reese Brown, the black foreman on our [family’s] dairy farm,” Graham writes in his autobiography, *Just As I Am*. “As a boy, I also loved reading the *Tarzan* adventure books by Edgar Rice Burroughs, although even at the time it bothered me that white people were consistently portrayed in them as superior to blacks.”

As a student at Wheaton College in Illinois, Graham began to develop strong beliefs about the evil of racism. “It was the first time I had been in school with black people,” he says. “The school had been founded just before the Civil War as an antislavery school and had a long tradition in working for racial understanding. ... However, I did not know how to go about it except to love and treat as equals all of those whom I met of the other race.”

In 1950, just a year after Graham first made national headlines with his Los Angeles Crusade, he started to publicly confront racial segregation. As Graham began holding big Crusades in the South, local leaders often arranged for blacks to sit on one side and whites on the other. At first, Graham reluctantly accepted the seating but insisted that no separation take place when people came forward during the altar calls. “The ground is level at the foot of the cross,” he would famously say at such times.

As Graham recalls, it was during his Chattanooga, Tennessee, Crusade in 1953 that he decided he’d had enough. “I went into the building as the people were beginning to gather one night and personally tore down the ropes separating the white from the black sections—ropes that had been mandated according to the custom in those days,” he writes in *Just As I Am*. “My action caused the head usher to resign in anger right on the spot—and raised some other hackles—but I did not back down.” From that year onward, all of Graham’s Crusades were fully integrated.

Graham also maintained a close friendship with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., throughout the racial equality movement, up until Dr. King’s assassination in 1968. Graham recounts that King urged him to keep up his efforts for integration through Crusades and evangelism. King said, “You stay in the stadiums, Billy, because you will have far more impact on the white establishment there than you would if you marched in the streets.”

During this important period in American history, Graham’s advice on the issue of racial

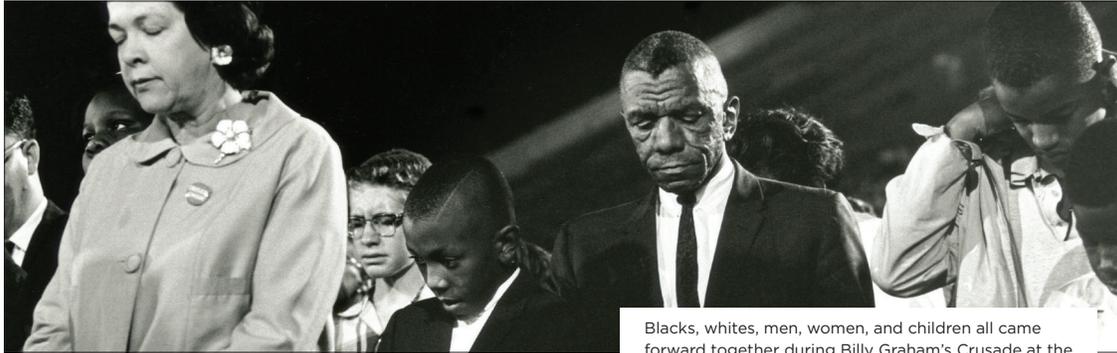
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NOTES



equality was often sought at the highest levels of government. He worked closely with Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, urging each one to take steps to end racial segregation. Billy Graham's push for racial equality also reached far beyond the United States. Beginning in the late 1940s, Graham repeatedly turned down invitations to preach in the country of South Africa, because of its strict segregation policies of the era, called apartheid. The white-led government there refused to give Graham permission to preach to an integrated audience. When Graham made his first trip to Africa in 1960, he deliberately skipped South Africa. He spent three months preaching in several other countries on the continent, filling stadiums and speaking to small groups in remote areas. As *LIFE* magazine reported, "Billy talked to a third of a million Africans. ... Some of Africa's enthusiasm and Graham's accomplishments stemmed from his insistence on nonsegregated meetings."

In 1973, the South African government finally agreed to let Graham preach to racially mixed audiences. They were the country's first integrated meetings ever—including Crusades in the cities of Durban and Johannesburg. Sixty thousand people attended the Johannesburg Crusade, making it the largest multiracial gathering in South Africa's history. The day after the Durban rally, the city's main newspaper ran the headline, "APARTHEID DOOMED." Graham wrote of the trip in *Just As I Am*, "I left South Africa convinced that apartheid was un-Christian and unworkable. ... A start had been made, and for that we thanked God."



Blacks, whites, men, women, and children all came forward together during Billy Graham's Crusade at the Cramton Bowl in Montgomery, Alabama, June 1965.

Pre-Visit Reading: Excerpt from Billy Graham's June 16, 2005, interview on CNN's *Larry King Live*

KING: *You've seen so many changes in a life well lived. One of the biggest must have been the change of the church and ... the black person. Your church. Other churches.*

GRAHAM: *Oh, it's wonderful. ... I just finished reading Jimmy Carter's new book about his experiences in the South. Mine was similar; as a boy. I am older than he is. We're good friends. But he grew up in a situation in which he describes very vividly how he felt and what the situation was with the black people. I did the same.*

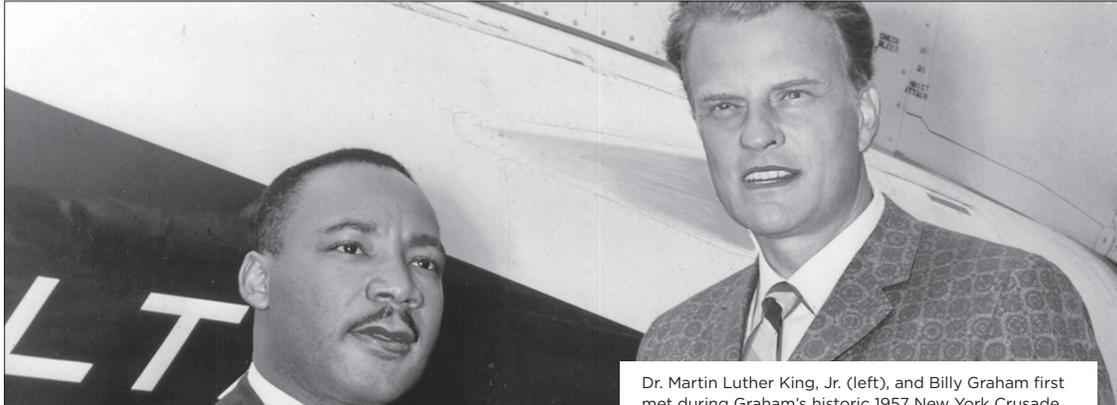
My father had a dairy farm. He employed three black families and one white family, and I used to play with black children. I used to eat in their homes, and then when I got to be 13, 14—maybe a little bit younger—I began to see that they were different than me. And then I went on ... to [college] in Illinois, and we had black students, or African-American students, and I got acquainted with them. I became friends. And when I started doing my ministry in the South, it was still segregated in a few cities, and when we went to Chattanooga for a Crusade, the Lord spoke to me, and I went down and I took the barriers down and insisted that they be nonsegregated, they be integrated. And that was a big steppingstone.

KING: *Why was the church so late?*

GRAHAM: *I think sin. I mean, I think it is a sin to look at another person as inferior to yourself because of race or because of ethnic background, and I think the greatest thing to do is to pray that God will give you love for them, and I do. As we came in today, I looked at all the different colors and I thought, What a wonderful place to minister, New York City, with all these thousands of people of different colors and different backgrounds. It's a marvelous place.*

KING: *A melting pot.*

GRAHAM: *A melting pot. I hope we all melt together.*



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (left), and Billy Graham first met during Graham's historic 1957 New York Crusade.

Pre-Visit Reading: Excerpt from a letter Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote to Billy Graham on August 31, 1957

I am deeply grateful to you for the stand which you have taken in the area of race relations. You have courageously brought the Christian gospel to bear on the question of race in all of its urgent dimensions. I am sure you will continue this emphasis in all of your preaching, for you, above any other preacher in America can open the eyes of many persons on this question. Your tremendous popularity, your extensive influence and your powerful message give you an opportunity in the area of human rights above almost any other person that we can point to. Your message in this area has additional weight because you are a native southerner. I am delighted to know that you will be conducting a crusade in Charlotte, North Carolina on a non-segregated basis. This is certainly a great step. I hope you will see your way clear to conduct an evangelistic crusade in one of the hardcore states in the deep south, even if it is not on as large a scale as most of your crusades. The impact of such a crusade would be immeasurably great.



Pre-Visit Reading: Excerpt from Billy Graham's message "Did Christ Die for You?"

*Brisbane Exhibition Ground
Brisbane, Australia
April 7, 1968*

The brutal assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King has stunned the world. Just as the world was recovering from the shock of President Johnson's dramatic announcement earlier in the week that he would not run again for the presidency, the world has been shaken to its foundations by the murder of Dr. King. ...

The danger now exists that America may be plunged into a race war this summer. The newspapers here in Australia headlined the violence that is sweeping many American cities now and are calling it the beginning of an American civil war. President Johnson is reported to believe that the racial situation at home may be a worse crisis than the Vietnam War. He has canceled his trip to Hawaii where he was to confer with our allies and military commanders on Vietnam. ...

This is not an hour for recrimination. It is an hour for prayer, repentance, forgiveness, and love. Every Christian of both races listening to my voice should go out of his or her way this weekend to demonstrate love and forgiveness to those of the other race.

Tomorrow night, the president will address the nation on civil rights. But no amount of legislation or money can do half the good that a smile or an act of love can do. The race problem will destroy American democracy unless we can find a way to love, understand, forgive, and live together in harmony. The Scripture says in Ephesians 4:31-32 these words: "*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (KJV).