



# North Carolina's Favorite Son

**GRADE LEVEL**

6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>

*"I cannot take credit for whatever God has chosen to accomplish through us and our ministry; only God deserves the glory, and we can never thank Him enough for the great things He has done."*

—Billy Graham

**OBJECTIVES**

Students will be able to:

- Identify the contributions of Billy Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to the history of North Carolina.
- Discuss the unique contributions of North Carolina in shaping Billy Graham.

**NORTH CAROLINA STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY, SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION**

**6.C.1:** Explain how the behaviors and practices of individuals and groups influenced societies, civilizations, and regions.

**8.C.1.3** Summarize the contributions of particular groups to the development of North Carolina and the United States (e.g. women, religious groups, and ethnic sectors such as American Indians, African Americans, and European immigrants).

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES:**

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four

**Pre-Visit Activities:**

- Read and review the attached information with students, and discuss the following questions:
  - How did growing up on a dairy farm influence the life and ministry of Billy Graham?
  - Why did Billy and Ruth Bell Graham decide to settle in the North Carolina mountains?
  - How did Billy Graham’s upbringing in North Carolina affect his ministry around the world?
- Watch:
  - *Billy Graham: A Life Remembered*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwJ-sT9OwAO>
  - “Reactions from Montreat—Remembering Billy Graham”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oZQgDel8xw>
  - “Black Mountain Residents Remember Billy Graham”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVZWzSH5qOs>
  - “Charlotte, North Carolina Remembers Billy Graham”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcnoEjxOBsM>

**Additional Optional Reading:**

- *Just As I Am*, (especially Chapter 1, “Down on the Farm”)
- *God’s Ambassador*, (especially Chapter 1, “Shaping a Life,” and Chapter 6, “Reflections from Home”)

**Visit to the Library:**

- Students will walk through *The Journey of Faith* tour with an assigned guide. Questions and themes to consider include:
  - What examples do you see of Billy Graham’s youth in North Carolina?
  - How does the influence of North Carolina and the South show up in the message Billy Graham preached?

**Post-Visit Activities:**

- Select from one of the following:
  - Conduct an imaginary interview with Billy Graham. In your interview, include questions and answers about his childhood on a dairy farm, Crusades in North Carolina, and how he feels about being recognized as “North Carolina’s Favorite Son.”
  - In 2013, Billy Graham was named as “North Carolina’s Favorite Son.” Write an essay about the attributes you feel are required to be named as the “Favorite Son/Daughter” of a state. How did Billy Graham meet those standards?

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*"Every time my mother prayed with one of us, and every time my parents prayed for their sons and daughters, they were declaring their dependence on God for the wisdom and strength and courage to stay in control of life, no matter what circumstances might bring"*  
 —Billy Graham

## Pre-Visit Reading: Overview

### A Heritage of Faith

Charlotte, N.C., in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a typical city for its time. As it was across the country, industrialization was transforming Charlotte's social and economic landscape. At a time known for flappers and jazz, however, Charlotte was a place where small farms and churches still thrived.

Situated just south of town was one such farm. Operated by brothers Frank and Clyde Graham, the Graham Brothers Dairy provided milk to many of Charlotte's residents. It was on this farm that Frank and his wife, Morrow, would raise their four children, beginning with their oldest, known as Billy Frank.

Billy Graham was born on Nov. 7, 1918. Like many children of his generation, Billy shared in the work of the home, waking at 2:30 a.m. to milk cows and clean the barn. He repeated this routine after school, returning home immediately for the afternoon milking.

During the summertime, Billy's duties expanded to include milk deliveries in Charlotte. Though chores kept him busy, Billy found time to play baseball, visit with friends, and read. *Tarzan* and *Robin Hood* were some of his favorite stories, but Billy's parents also saw to it that the children read Scripture.

The Grahams' strong work ethic provided some measure of financial security. They were not spared the effects of the Great Depression, however, and at one point the family almost went broke when the price of milk dropped to 5 cents a quart, down from 16 cents a quart in 1924. If these prices seem low, consider this: The average annual income in 1935 was \$1,500. A new car cost just \$600!

The Grahams' strong faith sustained them through it all. In addition to regular church attendance, Frank and Morrow emphasized Bible reading and Christian fellowship beyond the church walls. In one notable gathering, a group of Christian businessmen met on the Grahams' farm for a prayer meeting. During the meeting, a man named Vernon Patterson prayed that God would raise an evangelist from Charlotte to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

It was a prayer that would be answered.

In the fall of 1934, traveling evangelist Mordecai Ham took his battle against sin to Charlotte, where he aroused quite a stir when he suggested in a local newspaper that

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students of a Charlotte high school were engaging in immoral behavior. Soon after, rumors surfaced of a protest at Ham's next revival meeting. That was all it took to motivate young Billy's attendance.

There was no disturbance that night, but something even bigger was happening inside Billy. Spellbound by Ham's booming voice and convicting message, Billy wanted to learn more. He returned the following night, and again each night for several weeks.

As the days went on, Billy felt God pulling at his heart. Going to church wasn't enough, Billy realized. He needed Jesus. Finally one night, Billy made his way to the front platform and he prayed a simple prayer to accept Jesus Christ as his Savior.

In the days and months that followed, Billy's family would see him become kinder, quieter, and more thoughtful. He took a new interest in his studies at Sharon High School and became fascinated with preaching, often mimicking sermons in front of a mirror at home. Soon, these efforts would be put into practice.

In 1936, at the urging of a young evangelist named Jimmie Johnson, Billy Graham shared his faith publicly for the very first time. His audience that day was a group of prisoners at the Union County Jail, just outside of Charlotte. Billy's address was short and unrefined, but his passion was evident as he spoke of the joy he received through Christ.

Billy continued his studies after Sharon High, first at Bob Jones College and later at Florida Bible Institute. There, Billy's boundless energy helped him juggle school, work, and occasional preaching invitations. Most importantly, however, Billy's time in Florida cemented his call to serve.

Billy Graham preached in more than 185 countries during his seven decades of ministry. No matter how far he traveled, however, Billy always returned home to North Carolina. It was here that Billy married his wife, Ruth, where they would raise their five children, and where Billy would find rest from the demands of life on the road.

During his public ministry, Billy Graham preached before audiences throughout his home state, holding Crusades in Raleigh, Charlotte, Greensboro, and Asheville. In recognition of Billy's contributions to the global community, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a 2013 resolution that honored the life of Ruth Bell Graham and named Billy Graham "North Carolina's Favorite Son."

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**Billy Graham's North Carolina Campaigns:**

1947: Charlotte—Charlotte Armory

1951: Greensboro—Temporary tabernacle

1951: Raleigh

1953: Asheville

1958: Charlotte

1962: Raleigh—North Carolina State University

1962: Chapel Hill—University of North Carolina

1962: Jacksonville—Camp Lejeune

1962: Winston-Salem—then Wake Forest College

1972: Charlotte

1973: Raleigh

1977: Asheville

1982: Chapel Hill—University of North Carolina

1996: Charlotte

*\* Locations referenced from Just As I Am and Wheaton Chronology.*

Source: "North Carolina's Favorite Son: Billy Graham and His Remarkable Journey of Faith," North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh, N.C.

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*"Reverend Billy Graham, a proud North Carolinian, was truly America's Pastor and spiritual compass. He dedicated his life to preaching the Gospel and inspired millions of people in America and across the globe."*  
—U.S. Senator Thom Tillis (N.C.)

## Pre-Visit Reading: Favorite Son Declaration

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2013

Simple Resolution Adopted

SENATE RESOLUTION 196

Education/Higher Education Committee Substitute Adopted 4/10/13

Adopted 4/10/13

March 6, 2013

A SENATE RESOLUTION HONORING THE MEMORY OF RUTH BELL GRAHAM AND NAMING BILLY GRAHAM NORTH CAROLINA'S FAVORITE SON.

Whereas, Billy Graham was born William Franklin Graham, Jr., on November 7, 1918, to William Franklin Graham and Morrow Coffey Graham and was reared on a dairy farm in Charlotte; and

Whereas, Ruth McCue Bell was born on June 10, 1920, to Dr. and Mrs. Nelson Bell in Qingjiang, Kiangsu, China, where her parents were serving as medical missionaries at the Presbyterian Hospital; and

Whereas, Billy Graham attended the Florida Bible Institute from 1937 to 1940, graduating in 1940, and was ordained to the ministry in 1939 by a church in the Southern Baptist Convention; and

Whereas, Billy Graham and Ruth McCue Bell met while attending Wheaton College in Illinois and were married shortly after their graduation on August 13, 1943; and

Whereas, after a few years, Billy and Ruth Graham moved to Montreat, North Carolina, where they raised five children, Virginia, Anne, Ruth, Franklin, and Nelson; and

Whereas, Billy Graham served as pastor of The Village Church in Western Springs, Illinois, from 1943 to 1945; as a member of Youth for Christ International, where he ministered to young people and military personnel from 1945 to 1950; and as President of Northwestern Schools, a liberal arts college, Bible school, and theological seminary, from 1947 to 1952; and

Whereas, after World War II, Billy Graham preached throughout the United States and Europe and attained international prominence as an evangelist through a series of Crusades that began in 1949; and

Whereas, since 1950, Billy Graham has conducted his ministry through the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), reaching multitudes of people by means of a weekly

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radio program, “Hour of Decision”; a newspaper column, “My Answer”; televised Crusades; articles published in “Decision” magazine; and evangelistic films produced and distributed by World Wide Pictures and now reaching millions through the BGEA Web site and the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte; and

Whereas, over the years, Billy Graham has preached to live audiences of nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries and territories and has preached to an estimated 2.2 billion people through television and technology; and

Whereas, a renowned humanitarian and philanthropist, Billy Graham has tried to help those in need through his work with the World Emergency Relief Fund, which gives financial assistance to disaster victims, and the “Love in Action” committees, which collected and distributed food and clothing in BGEA crusade cities; and

Whereas, Billy Graham has received numerous awards and honorary degrees, including the North Carolina Award for Public Service in 1986 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983; and Honorary Knighthood (KBE) from Her Majesty the Queen of England in 2001 for his international contribution to civic and religious life over 60 years; and

Whereas, Billy and Ruth Graham were both awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for “outstanding and lasting contributions to morality, racial equality, family, philanthropy, and religion” in 1996; and

Whereas, Billy Graham received the Big Brother of the Year Award in 1966 for his work on behalf of the welfare of children and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation Freedom Award in 2000 for monumental and lasting contributions to the cause of freedom; and

Whereas, Billy Graham has opposed racial discrimination and, in the 1950s and 1960s, never held a segregated meeting but conducted fully integrated Crusades; and

Whereas, Billy Graham was cited by the George Washington Carver Memorial Institute for his contributions to race relations in 1964 and was recognized by the Anti-Defamation League of the B’nai B’rith in 1969 and the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1971 for his efforts to foster a better understanding among all faiths; and

Whereas, Billy Graham has counseled 12 Presidents beginning with President Harry S. Truman through President Barack Obama and has participated in nine Presidential inaugurations, more than any man in American history; and

Whereas, Billy Graham has been referred to as the “Pastor of Presidents”; and

Whereas, Billy Graham has also counseled world leaders and has participated in many historic occasions; and

Whereas, Billy Graham has been called upon as the “nation’s pastor” during times of national crisis. He spoke at the National Cathedral service in Washington, DC, three days after the 9/11 attack in 2001, as the nation and world watched and listened. Five Presidents, including George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H. W. Bush, Jimmy Carter, and Gerald Ford, and their wives were in the audience; and

Whereas, Billy Graham has written more than 31 books, all of which have become best sellers, including his books, “Just As I Am,” an autobiography published in 1997, and “Nearing Home” published in 2011; and

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Whereas, Ruth Graham was also an author, writing or cowriting over 14 books, including “Sitting by My Laughing Fire,” “Legacy of a Pack Rat,” and “Prodigals and Those Who Love Them”; and

Whereas, Ruth Graham helped to establish the Ruth and Billy Graham Children’s Health Center in Asheville; and

Whereas, on June 14, 2007, Billy Graham lost his partner and closest confidante, Ruth Bell Graham, who died at the age of 87; and

Whereas, in 2012, Billy Graham was listed on “The Ten Most Admired Men in the World” for the 56th time. He was first selected in 1955. According to the latest list, Reverend Graham was tied as Number 3 with Mitt Romney, George W. Bush, and Pope Benedict XVI, behind President Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela; and

Whereas, admired and beloved by both Christians and non-Christians, Billy Graham continues to inspire the world with his good works; and

Whereas, there have been many great North Carolinians, but few have impacted the world more than Billy Graham; and

Whereas, Billy Graham, having served in all the aforementioned ways for more than 70 years in our State, our country, and throughout the world, is proud to call himself a Tar Heel and to make North Carolina his home; Now, therefore, Be it resolved by the Senate:

**SECTION 1.** The Senate honors the memory of Ruth Bell Graham, who made significant contributions to our State and nation through her partnership with her husband in marriage and ministry.

**SECTION 2.** The Senate honors and names Billy Graham as North Carolina’s Favorite Son.

**SECTION 3.** The Senate requests the Governor to set a day to recognize and honor Billy Graham as North Carolina’s Favorite Son.

**SECTION 4.** This resolution is effective upon adoption.



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina passed a Resolution Honoring the Life and Service of Billy Graham on Monday during its annual meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina. David Bruce, center, accepted the posthumous honor, which was awarded just two days before what would have been Mr. Graham's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Post-Visit Reading: N.C. Baptists Pass Resolution to Honor Life, Legacy of Billy Graham

by Kellie Van Gilder, Nov. 6, 2018

Innovative. Unwavering.

Those were the types of words folks used Monday night at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina where Baptists honored the life and legacy of one of their own: Billy Graham.

Jonathan Blaylock, a North Carolina pastor and chairman of the resolution committee, presented the Resolution Honoring the Life and Service of Billy Graham just two days ahead of what would have been Mr. Graham's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. When it was time for the Baptists to vote, a fluttering sound filled their room in Greensboro's Koury Convention Center as blue ballot cards were lifted high in confirmation. David Bruce, Mr. Graham's longtime executive assistant, accepted the engraved plaque posthumously for North Carolina's Favorite Son.

On more than one occasion in his lifetime, Mr. Graham spoke at the Baptist State Convention, and every time, he did two things: he pointed all the glory back to God, and he challenged pastors and church leaders to renew their focus on evangelism. On Monday, Bruce graciously accepted the honor.

"If Mr. Graham were here as he was previously at many state convention meetings in North Carolina, I know he would want you to be reminded of two-to-three things," Bruce shared cheerfully. "First, to fan the flames of personal evangelism and soul winning in every North Carolina Baptist church once again.

"He would also remind us to preach the Word of God in truth and authority without any mixture of error to this generation. And then, ... he would want to encourage us in our church to utilize the gifts of itinerant vocational evangelists."

Mr. Graham, raised on a dairy farm in Charlotte, North Carolina, couldn't have predicted the global path his ministry would take when he was ordained in February 1939 near Palatka, Florida. He chronicled the event in his autobiography, *Just As I Am*:

“Being ordained meant lots of things,” Mr. Graham wrote. “Now, I had sanction to perform weddings, conduct funerals and officiate in church activities not open to me before. Far more important though, by that simple act of ordination I was henceforth ‘set apart’ for the preaching of the Gospel. Ordination did not elevate me to superiority over my fellow Christians who sat in the pews and listened, even if I stood in a high pulpit. On the contrary, it specially designated me to be their servant, their shepherd for Christ’s sake. It was meant to nurture me in humility, not pride.”

Through seven decades of ministry, Mr. Graham never lost that vision, and that is a major reason why pastor Blaylock wanted to see this resolution happen. It was the only one the committee had this year, and for Blaylock, honoring Mr. Graham was the biggest thing they could do.

Blaylock grew up in the mountains of North Carolina and he lives there today in the county neighboring Mr. Graham’s Montreat, North Carolina, home. Although their paths never crossed, Blaylock still feels a personal connection with the evangelist. The pastor of West Canton Baptist is particularly grateful for the spiritual renewal he and his wife have found at The Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove.

“We wanted to honor him because we understand that as pastors across North Carolina, really as American pastors, Billy Graham inevitably impacted every single one of our lives,” Blaylock said. “We didn’t have to personally know him, but everybody in our church, every church probably, had somebody that was converted under his ministry or first heard the Gospel under his ministry.

“He was an innovator in a lot of ways,” Blaylock continued. “He was willing to step out and try new ideas, especially with technology for his time. With radio ministry, television ministry that came along, then internet ministry—he was willing to use any of those means to advance the Gospel. As a young pastor, I appreciate that.”

Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, spoke during the Monday night meeting and shared a personal story of meeting Mr. Graham. During that meeting, Akin was excited, hopeful to hear Mr. Graham’s personal stories. With every answer, Mr. Graham just steered the conversation back to Jesus.

“He was a perfect role model of a faithful Gospel preacher,” Akin shared. “He never wavered in his commitment that the Bible is the Word of God, and he never wavered in his commitment to make the Gospel the center of all his preaching. He set a great example for all of us to follow in his footsteps.”