

Women of the Ministry

In addition to the profound impact that Ruth Bell Graham (wife of Billy Graham) made in the ministry work of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), we honor the following women who used their talents in service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Jazz/blues legend Ethel Waters addresses the Neyland Stadium crowd during the 1970 Billy Graham Crusade in Knoxville, Tenn.

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GRADE LEVEL

9th–12th

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Identify the varying roles of women in the formation and success of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.
- Discuss the unique contributions of women to the ministry.

NORTH CAROLINA STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY, SOCIAL STUDIES

12.C.1: Evaluate the challenges of forming an identity in a diverse society founded on freedom and equality.

12.C.2: Understand how socialization regulates individual behavior.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

- One
- Two
- Four
- Five

"Billie Barrows at the piano worked as hard as any of us, and Lorin Whitney tirelessly played the organ. Ruth herself stayed up long hours each night counseling people. None of us would leave the little counseling tent until every person had been personally talked to."
—Dr. Billy Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 156

Pre-Visit Activities:

- Read and review the attached information with students, and discuss the following questions:
 - Describe the career path of Mildred Dienert, Billie Barrows, Ethel Waters, and Aileen Coleman. In what ways were their areas of service similar? How did their roles differ?
 - What hardships did each woman face through her ministry?
 - How do you think each of these women impacted BGEA?
- Watch Ethel Waters sing:
 - "Where Jesus Is, Tis Heaven": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnTkaMizX-s>
 - "His Eye is on the Sparrow": www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QbeNSatFFo

Additional Optional Reading:

- *His Eye is on the Sparrow* by Ethel Waters
- *To Me, It's Wonderful* by Ethel Waters
- *The Desert Rat* by Annette Adams
- *Rebel With A Cause* by Franklin Graham, especially chapters 6 and 7

Visit to the Library:

- Students will walk through *The Journey of Faith* tour with an assigned guide. Questions and themes to consider include:
 - What evidence do you see of the contributions of these women to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association?
 - Which piece of memorabilia related to one or more of these women stands out to you most? Why?

Post-Visit Activities:

- Select from one of the following:
 - With a partner, imagine you are a reporter interviewing one of the women profiled in this study. Write a script of your questions and the responses you believe she would have given. After completing your script, either perform it live or film it being performed.
 - Write an essay detailing the significance of the contributions of each of the women outlined in this study. In your essay, include your definition of success and provide examples of how these women compare to that definition.
- Read the post-visit overview of additional women who have had an impact on Billy Graham and the ministry and do the following:
 - Watch "The Making of *The Hiding Place*": www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3DPRI DXvcI
 - Watch *Joni* movie trailer: <https://billygraham.org/video/joni/>
 - Listen to *GPS: God. People. Stories.* podcast – "Broken Body, Grateful Heart: Joni Eareckson Tada": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ld3t_Gq8WUo

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- Answer the following questions:
 - What impact do you think that prayer warriors like Millie Dienert and Pearl Goode had on the ministry of Billy Graham?
 - World Wide Pictures helped to bring to light strong women of faith who overcame hardships. In what way did these women rely on their faith through their hardships? Did they ever struggle with their faith?

NOTES

"Corrie ten Boom ... is one of the great Christian heroines of the century. We met her in Switzerland, and her story made such an impression on Ruth that she recommended it to writers John and Elizabeth Sherrill. They jumped at it; and the book and film that followed brought home the horror of those days and the triumph of Christ's love in the midst of virulent hatred."

—Billy Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 434

Pre-Visit Reading: Overview



Ethel Waters:

Ethel Waters was born Oct. 31, 1896, in Chester, Pa. She had a very difficult childhood and later said, "I never was a child. I never was cuddled, or liked, or understood by my family."

Despite the obstacles she faced early in life, Ethel began her singing career at just 17. She went on to become a renowned singer, actress, and author. In 1933, she became the first African American to receive equal billing status on Broadway—and years later, the first black woman to star in her own television show. Ethel's vocalist contributions would later be recognized when three of her songs were inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. Ethel Waters was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 1983 and to the Christian Music Hall of Fame in 2007.

Ethel's life changed completely when she rededicated her life to Jesus Christ during the Billy Graham Crusade at Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1957. After that, she joined the Billy Graham Crusade team and was a featured soloist at Crusades for almost 20 years. In 1958, Ethel starred in *The Heart is a Rebel*, a film of Billy Graham's production ministry, World Wide Pictures. Ethel was known especially for her beautiful rendition of "His Eye is on the Sparrow," which was her signature song and the title of her autobiography. She made her final appearance at the 1976 Billy Graham Crusade in San Diego.

"Ethel Waters was one of the most unforgettable characters I ever knew," Billy Graham shared. "She was a superstar not only on stage and screen, but in her personal religious faith." She died on Sept. 1, 1977.



Wilma Irene "Billie" Barrows:

Billie Barrows was born in 1925 in Macomb, Ill. She was an accomplished musician and received a Bachelor of Arts in Sacred Music. She married her college sweetheart, Cliff Barrows, the Crusade choir director and board member of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. She first met Billy Graham in 1945 while on her honeymoon and joined his Crusade team shortly thereafter as the pianist and organist, traveling with the organization around the U.S., England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland for five years. In 1950, she took a break from traveling to focus on raising her five children. Billie passed away from cancer in 1994 and is laid to rest in the Memorial Prayer Garden at the Billy Graham Library.

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NOTES



Mildred "Millie" Dienert:

Mildred "Millie" Dienert was born on Sept. 3, 1917, in Blue Bell, Pa. Her father was a traveling minister, so she spent much of her childhood with her grandparents while her parents shared the Gospel across the country. She often felt lonely and blamed God for keeping her away from her parents for extended periods of time—but when she was 17, she was the only survivor of a car accident and rededicated her life to the Lord.

Millie went on to marry Fred Dienert, whose advertising company handled Billy Graham's radio and TV ministries. In the mid-1960s, Billy Graham asked Millie to go to London and organize a series of prayer groups to pray for the success of the Crusade in Great Britain. Millie's efforts there—and prior to future Crusades—led to her being widely known as the First Lady of Prayer as well as being honored as the Churchwoman of the Year in 1990. In her later years, Millie also became a very popular speaker in her hometown, with over 500 people attending her weekly Bible study. Millie died on Aug. 24, 2015, at the age of 97.



Aileen Coleman:

Aileen Coleman was born in 1930 in Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia. She loved swimming and had an adventurous spirit even as a child. One night while in college, Aileen went to an evangelistic tent meeting on a dare—and surrendered her life to Jesus Christ that night.

After college, she went to nursing school and then Bible college. While researching a paper on mission work in the Middle East, she felt God calling her to become a missionary nurse in the region, and traveled there in 1955. During the course of her ministry, she has nursed countless Bedouin people suffering tuberculosis and other illnesses, and she has raised over nine children who were either abandoned by their parents or whose mother died. The Bedouins lovingly call her "A'Raiisa," which means "the leader."

In the summer of 1971, Franklin Graham met Aileen while on a trip to Mafrag, Jordan, and was inspired by her work with the people there. Her mission work has been honored by Queen Noor of Jordan as well as Queen Elizabeth II of England, who granted her the title of Dame Aileen Coleman. Aileen continues to minister to the Bedouin people and considers Jordan to be her home.



Millie Dienert leads a women's prayer rally prior to the 1969 Billy Graham Crusade in Melbourne, Australia.

Pre-Visit Reading: Discover more about the impact of Millie Dienert's work in this *Decision* magazine article.

"A Passion for Souls, A Passion for Prayer", by Cliff Barrows
from *Decision* magazine, April 2005:

Cliff Barrows, a longtime friend and associate of Billy Graham, as well as music and program director at his Crusades, has worked beside Mr. Graham (affectionately known to him as "Bill") for nearly 60 years. He has also been a "prayer historian" of this foundational element of BGEA's ministry through the decades.

Prayer has been the heartbeat of our mission.

"The three most important things you can do," Billy Graham says, "are to pray, pray, pray!" Bill and I spent six months in the United Kingdom in 1946 and 1947 and, in Wales, we heard accounts of the Welsh Revival. Those accounts touched Bill's heart. He was moved to challenge people to pray for revival.

Bill had a passion to fulfill his calling as an evangelist and to pray that God would lead in every step in fulfilling our mission. That drew us together and cemented our relationship over six decades. Our praying together brought us into a unique covenant relationship—much like Jonathan and David of the Old Testament—that God has preserved and kept to this day.

One of our very first U.S. Crusade meetings was in 1947 in Charlotte, N.C., Bill's hometown. There we began noontime prayer meetings and radio programs. About a month before a Crusade, we would buy time for a morning slot on a local radio station. *The Billy Graham Prayer Time Program* was the basis of the first "cottage prayer meetings," during which women who were gathered in homes would tune into the program.

If a Crusade city wasn't too large, we tried to have radio-coordinated prayer meetings on every city block. The program would include music, a brief devotional and prayer requests. I would announce the sermon title for the next night and say, "All over this town people are praying." The groups would share their prayer requests in their homes and pray.

Listeners were encouraged to pray out loud and to use sentence prayers: "You don't have to be formal in your prayers," I would say. "You may not be able to pray like your pastor prays, but just talk to your heavenly Father like I'm talking to you today—or like you would talk to your earthly father or your dearest friend. That's who Jesus is, and He's concerned about us."

Half-nights of prayer were held at the Crusade's prayer tent. We would be in those prayer tents on our knees in the sawdust until 1 or 2 in the morning. If no prayer tent was available, intercessors would go to a church to pray. That happened in city after city.

Back in 1949 a woman named Pearl Goode, who lived in Los Angeles, had prayer seminars in her home with Fuller Seminary students and taught them the ministry of prayer. Unknown to us, she was a prayer warrior for the first LA Crusade and followed us for several years. God laid upon her heart a burden for those Crusade cities. She would make arrangements to stay in an area home or in a room by herself. She would not attend the Crusade meetings, but she prayed for Bill especially as he was preaching, that God would anoint him. She made it her ministry to be on her knees during his preaching and invitation time. She would call out, "Lord, bless Billy tonight as he preaches on the cross. Pour out Your Spirit into his heart."

When you have somebody praying, crying out to God like that, it gives you great confidence that God is going to honor "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person" (Cf. James 5:16). He's promised to do that. We believe that and encourage people to pray. God honored Pearl's prayers. Eventually we found out that she was coming, and we made possible her transportation—but for several years she scraped up enough money to get to Crusade cities on her own. In those days we would have sometimes eight and 10 meetings a year. She would go to as many as she could.

Our prayer emphasis increased at the 1949 LA Crusade and even more specifically at the Columbia, S.C., Crusade in 1950. There we started having a prayer chairman for the Crusades. Our Crusade Director, Willis Haymaker, took seriously this prayer concern, and he and Mr. Graham chose as the basis for our prayer emphasis 2 Chronicles 7:14: "*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land*" (KJV). We have continued to use this verse to this day.

Also, our associate Grady Wilson led a prayer chain at Crusade meetings. He would take a few minutes each night during the service to establish time periods for people to pray. "How many of you will take from 10 to 10:30 when you get home tonight?" he would ask. "Raise your hand." We set up 30-minute segments through the night and people would set their clocks to get up in the night and pray earnestly for the Crusade.

A short time later we began using the Operation Andrew cards, on which Christians listed the people they would pray for and invite to the Crusade. In the mid-1980s, the prayer triplet program was launched. People would covenant with two others to spend time praying together during the day—often businesspeople would do it at noontime. Each person would have three people for whom to pray specifically, and he or she would share the names so that each would have nine names on his or her prayer list. This got people praying fervently and specifically.

Millie Dienert came on the scene about 1950. Her husband, Fred, and his partner, Walter Bennett, had contacts with the ABC networks. They urged Bill to go on the radio with *The Hour of Decision*.

Millie organized worldwide prayer for all of BGEA's Conferences. We had the Berlin Congress (1966), the Lausanne Congress (1974) and the Amsterdam Conferences (1983, 1986, 2000)—and she was the one who coordinated prayer groups around the world.

In each country she had prayer chairmen who had contacts within the country. She traveled across the United States to speak at prayer rallies—and she did it at her own expense.

BGEA has used various prayer reminders through the years. The 1957 New York Crusade used stickers that read “Pray for New York.” People could put them on the old dial telephones and would be reminded to pray whenever they went to the phone. Those stickers were sent out by the thousand.

We've also used small, colored “prayer dots,” which people could place in the center of their watches. People were reminded wherever they were: “Pray on the spot when you see the dot.” I had a blue dot stuck on the center of my watch. Sometimes it was just a flash prayer, but it was a God-consciousness: “Lord, we need You to move in this situation.”

Prayer reminders were sent out with messages like “Prayer changes things” and “Prayer changes people.” Every avenue we could think of to encourage people to pray was exhausted.

Pray, pray, pray. That is the greatest need of our ministry still today. It's not organization or great corporate structures or design strategy. All of that is good, but we've got to humble ourselves before God and put the emphasis on prayer. Any ministry or organization in Christian work is only as powerful as the prayer life of its leaders.

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16, NKJV). Don't give up. Hang on. George Müller, the great prayer saint of the 19th century from Bristol, England, prayed for some 50 years for a friend who came to Christ *after* Müller passed away. “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of,” wrote Alfred Lord Tennyson.

Someday we'll know the answers to our prayers.

Post-Visit Reading: Overview of Additional Women Contributors



Henrietta Mears:

Henrietta Mears was born on Oct. 23, 1890, the seventh child of a banker and a Baptist laywoman. Henrietta's father owned more than 20 banks, but the family wealth was significantly impacted during the Panic of 1893. Henrietta loved learning and graduated from college at the University of Minnesota before becoming a chemistry teacher in rural Minnesota.

In 1915, she moved back to Minneapolis to live with her sister, and it was there that her church encouraged her to apply educational principles to Sunday school lessons. In 1927, after teaching Sunday school for over a decade, Henrietta visited Hollywood, Calif., where she met Stuart MacLennan, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, which had a Sunday school of 450 students. While visiting California, Henrietta felt God's call to enter full-time ministry, and she became the Director of Christian Education at MacLennan's church. Henrietta grew the Sunday school attendance to 6,500 students enrolled during her tenure. She was well-respected and had a significant impact on evangelists such as Billy Graham, Bill Bright (founder of Campus Crusade for Christ), and Louis H. Evans, Jr. (pastor of Bel Air Presbyterian Church, where Ronald Reagan attended).

Henrietta introduced Billy Graham to many celebrities of the day and was integral in Mr. Graham's acceptance of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. As Mr. Graham recounts of Miss Mears in his autobiography, *Just as I Am*, "Rarely had I witnessed such Christian love and compassion as she had for those students. She had faith in the integrity of the Scriptures, and an understanding of Bible truth as well as modern scholarship. I was desperate for every insight she could give me."



Pearl Goode:

Pearl Goode first came to know of Billy Graham and his ministry during the first night of his 1949 Crusade in Los Angeles, Calif. At the time, she was a widowed nurse in her 60s and looking for God's next call on her life. During the Crusade, she joined the volunteer prayer team and spent many nights in a smaller tent outside the larger Crusade tent in prayer for the Crusade. After that Crusade, Pearl continued to be a prayer warrior for the Crusades, unbeknownst to Billy Graham and his team. She would check in at a motel near the Crusade venue and pray, sometimes all night, for the success of the Crusade. All of this travel was at her own expense, and she estimated at one time that she had traveled over 48,000 miles by Greyhound bus to support Billy Graham and his ministry in prayer. In an address he gave in 1994, Billy Graham said, "She prayed all night many nights, and I could sense the presence and power of that prayer. When she died, I felt it."



Corrie ten Boom:

Corrie ten Boom was born on April 15, 1892, in Amsterdam, Netherlands, to a working class family. Her father was a watchmaker and jeweler, and Corrie eventually became the first licensed female watchmaker in Holland. After the Nazis invaded Holland in 1940, the Ten Boom family helped Jewish refugees and members of the resistance movement go into hiding through the Dutch Underground. Their refuge was known as "De Schuilplaats" or "The Hiding

Place.” On Feb. 28, 1944, a Dutch informant notified the Gestapo of the Ten Boom’s assistance to the resistance, and the family was arrested and sent to prison. Corrie and her sister Betsie eventually ended up at Ravensbrück concentration camp.

Betsie’s health declined significantly at the camp, and she died 15 days before Corrie was accidentally released from the camp due to a clerical error. Corrie later learned that all of the other women her age were sent to the gas chambers a week following her release. After the war, Corrie opened a rehabilitation center for survivors of the concentration camps, wrote many books, and traveled the world as a public speaker. Her 1971 book, *The Hiding Place*, was turned into the most successful movie—with the same title—produced by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s film company, World Wide Pictures. In Billy Graham’s autobiography, *Just as I Am*, he wrote: “Corrie is one of the great Christian heroines of the century.” Corrie died on her 91st birthday in 1983 after suffering a series of strokes.



Joni Eareckson Tada:

Joni (pronounced “Johnny”) Eareckson was born in 1949 in Baltimore, Md. Her father was an alternate for the 1932 Olympics wrestling team, and Joni lived an active life, enjoying activities like horseback riding, tennis, and swimming.

In 1967, she suffered a tragic diving accident when she misjudged the shallowness of the water. As a result, she was left as a quadriplegic, paralyzed from the shoulders down. During her rehabilitation, she suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts. In 1976, she penned her autobiography, which was turned into a film in 1979 by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s film company, World Wide Pictures. In 1979, Joni also founded Joni and Friends, an organization to share the Gospel with the disabled. In 1982, she married Ken Tada, a high school history teacher, and they continue to live in Calabasas, Calif. Today, Joni is a well-known conference speaker, writer, and painter who inspires countless people with disabilities to continue to seek God’s call on their lives.