

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association  
Communications – Cissie Graham Lynch  
Fearless – Ep 126 – Growing up as a Graham, Accepting Your Calling, and  
Leaving a Powerful Legacy – with Franklin Graham  
Final Transcript**

**MUSIC STARTS**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:00:02** Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

**MUSIC TRANSITION**

**Cissie:**

**00:00:21** Today's episode of *Fearless* is special because I'm marking five years of *Fearless*, and I want to thank each and every one of you that have been along this journey from the beginning or may be new to *Fearless*. It has been so much fun, and sometimes even hard conversations we've had here. But as I've looked back at what I wanted to share with this episode, there was only one story I wanted to share and tell. And that's the story of my life and how God changed my dad's life 50 years ago when my dad gave his life to Christ and surrendered his life, and how that forever changed the trajectory of *my* family and what my life would be like. So, we're at a special location up at my grandparents' house here in Montreat, North Carolina, and I'm here to ask my dad questions that I've never asked him before.

**MUSIC FADES**

**Cissie:**

**00:01:07** Dad, in the last few years, I think I've just been so grateful looking at the legacy of our family. Maybe I took it for granted growing up or I just didn't realize how special it was, but to have godly great-grandparents, godly grandparents, and godly parents, and I realize now I'm in the hot seat. That baton is being passed and I have to raise *my* children in this world.

And, I know we're not a family that typically just sits down and has these like heart-to-hearts and tell all the stories, but I want this opportunity to be able to ask you things I've never asked you. Things about what it was growing up, growing up in this house behind us, growing up as a Graham, but how God, 50 years ago this summer, changed your life, and that you've never looked back. And so, I'm thankful to hear—and to start off, I have a few photos here. Things I've looked at. This one I've always loved ... because you've been you since a young age. You have the gun, you have the cowboy boots. Where—is this here, on-site?

**Franklin Graham:**

**00:02:05** Yeah, that's just right down—where all these trees are down there, used to be a field. We kept sheep. Daddy liked sheep and we had some goats. The goats are terrible. They get on top of the car and all that kind of stuff. But, one of the sheep down there, Daddy got inside the sheep pen, and he was going to show us something about the sheep. Well, it was a little runt ram and it backed up and it butted Daddy and broke his leg.

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**Cissie:**  
**00:02:32** Oh!

**Franklin:**  
**00:02:33** And he went tumbling down the hill. And so ...

**Cissie:**  
**00:02:36** So, were they out of here after that?

**Franklin:**  
**00:02:39** It went too long. Those sheep went on somewhere else, and I don't know if that's the little ram or not that butted Daddy.

**Cissie:**  
**00:02:47** Well, this one I like 'cause I know what it's like growing up with you, that we always had to pose for pictures, but it looks like Teta might be pinching you or something or whispering, trying to get you to behave.

**Franklin:**  
**00:02:57** Now that's taken down at the old house at Montreat. So,

**Cissie:**  
**00:03:02** Was Teta always whispering in your ear to take a photo, or?

**Franklin:**  
**00:03:06** No.

**Cissie:**  
**00:03:07** No? Because here she is again, you can tell she's holding your hand.

**Franklin:**  
**00:03:10** Yeah, that was—

**Cissie:**  
**00:03:11** And you decided maybe you didn't want to cooperate with the photo.

**Franklin:**  
**00:03:14** And that was taken right down below the house here.

**Cissie:**  
**00:03:17** And German Shepherds—your parents always had German Shepherds. Right? What was that dog's name, remember?

**Franklin:**  
**00:03:22** Peter.

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**Cissie:**

**00:03:23** Peter.

**Franklin:**

**00:03:24** That was Anne's dog.

**Cissie:**

**00:03:25** And then this Jeep—now I know you just bought a Jeep—would this have been the Jeep?

**Franklin:**

**00:03:28** No.

**Cissie:**

**00:03:29** No, that's not it?

**Franklin:**

**00:03:30** No, this is a CJ7, but that's Mr. Rickman.

**Cissie:**

**00:03:32** —and he worked for?

**Franklin:**

**00:03:33** Yeah, he was a caretaker here, John Rickman, and that's Ned. I think that's a CG6 Jeep.

**Cissie:**

**00:03:42** And then of course today, as we're recording and filming, it would have been Teta's birthday today. June 10.

**Franklin:**

**00:03:47** She would've been 104 today.

**Cissie:**

**00:03:48** 104, so ... we'll talk about her coming up. And when you come up this driveway, and the winding up the mountain, and you pull up to this house, what goes through your mind?

**Franklin:**

**00:03:58** Well, a lot of wonderful memories here, and, the one thing—you talk about a godly house and home and so forth. My mother was very strong on Scripture memory and wanting us children to memorize Scripture. So, on Sunday before we could go out to play, we had to memorize a verse and so she was constantly instilling us the Word of God, because she was afraid at some point, you know, the Communist would take over something and take all the Bibles and she wanted the Word of God hidden in our heart and that day still may come where Bibles could be

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hard to come by and you think of just the world in which we live but this house was centered on the Word of God.

Sundays. We always had Sunday lunch together. And either Mama would cook it or sometimes we'd go down to my grandmother's house—Mrs. Bell, Virginia Bell, but usually the lunch was here and so before we go to church, she would put the chicken—she'd put it in the oven, on broil, for about 30 minutes before we left—or an hour before we left—and then she'd turn it off and just let it sit in the oven. But by the time we came back, the chicken was crispy on top and it was excellent. So, it was done by the time we finished. She'd make rice and gravy and green beans and so forth. She did a wonderful job making Chinese food. Sometimes she'd do Chinese spare ribs. That was one of my favorites she would make. But then on Sunday after eating, lots of times, we would have a hymn sing. We would play, what's called charades, where we would act out a Bible character.

**Cissie:**

**00:05:44** So you had a Biblical charade?

**Franklin:**

**00:05:45** So, yeah, a Biblical charade. So, then we would do that. So whether it was a hymn sing, whether it was charades, we could only watch one TV program a week and that was always Disney on Sunday night. You could watch it. It came out at 7:30 or something like that.

But we didn't have, iPads and iPhones—and these things are huge distractions today. And I think it robs our time with God. It robs our time to study, to prepare. And I think that's probably one of the greatest dangers for children today—[**Cissie:** Mm-hmm.]—are the electronic devices. And, I don't know how one would do that, but I would almost—

**Cissie:**

**00:06:26** It's definitely hard for parents to navigate.

**Franklin:**

**00:06:27** —have very strong restrictions on—and even an age limit to where a child gets an iPhone. But there's peer pressure because, you know, kids come home and say, "Well, all of my friends have iPhones. How come I can't have one?" That kind of thing, so ...

**Cissie:**

**00:06:40** I can remember in the early '90s being in New York City for Daddy Bill's Crusade. And that was the first time I remember saying, "Hmm, I think there's something different about my granddad." Was there a time that you remember growing up that kind of pivoted for you? Like, 'Huh, my dad's gone all the time. There's something different about my dad's life than the other dads around.'

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**Franklin:**

**00:07:04** No, I don't think so because there's a lot of dads that were gone, whether someone's dad was a truck driver or salesperson or whatever.—[**Cissie:** Mm-hmm.]—They were on the road; they were gone. So it wasn't that, but I remember one time Daddy came home and T.W. Wilson's brother flew helicopters for Duke power and what he did is he flew the transmission lines just to inspect them. And so, he had a job going all over Western North Carolina just flying the power lines. And remember him landing right here in this yard and picked up Daddy, took Daddy somewhere. And I thought, "You know, not many kids' fathers have helicopters in their yard," so that was kind of fun.

And there've been other people that landed helicopters—Bill Cristobal, who was my roommate in college. He flew up here one time to see Mom and Dad, and he landed right here in the yard. He flew helicopters for Wycliffe Bible Translators, so he flew one of their helicopters.

Patricia Cornwell, who we call Patsy, but she's an author, a very well-known murder mystery writer. She has a helicopter and she would land here in the yard and come see Mother when Mother was getting older and couldn't get out. She'd just land the helicopter in the yard and go inside and then sometimes took Mama for a ride. That was a big deal.

**Cissie:**

**00:08:22** I think I remember, one time for Christmas, I just answered the phone and they said, "This is the White House; the president calling from the White House. We'd like to talk to Billy Graham." And I thought it was just a joke and I think Mom has a very similar story of when she was here and y'all were dating or something, the White House called. So that was just an early memory of mine on Christmas Day, the president calling Daddy Bill and I just thought it was a joke.

Take me back to the early years of growing up. When you started maybe kind of testing the waters a little bit. Maybe decided, 'I'm going to walk my own path, not the path my parents would choose.' What age was that? What started happening in your heart?

**Franklin:**

**00:09:03** I don't think there was there was never a conscious decision, 'I'm going to do my own thing.'—[**Cissie:** Mm-hmm.]—I just did it, you know, it wasn't something that was calculated. It was just one of those things, you know, you're just growing up and we lived here in the mountain. We had wild animals, which we still do—I was talking to David just a minute ago about the bear problem we have up here. Bears getting in the yard and coming in and tearing up stuff—but we had wild animals when I was growing up and I lived in the woods. Had a little .22 rifle and I'd go in and I'd just shoot squirrels and chipmunks and anything else and it just—so you lived—that was kind of—growing up that's what I did.

And of course, when I got my driver's license, my parents wouldn't buy me a car. I used my mother's, but I had an old Jeep I paid for and it was the 1946 Willys and I

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drove that Jeep everywhere. And then, later on, I had a little Triumph Spitfire that I had, but my parents didn't buy that for me. I worked to save my money. And I first started off with a minibike—

**Cissie:**

**00:10:11** Well, I think I have a photo of that minibike right here, which—you had a love for that bike early on. Was this it right here? Was that your first one?

**Franklin:**

**00:10:24** Yep. And made by a little company up in Mansfield, Ohio, called Rupp. And I saw that, I don't know, in some magazine and I saved up my money and I think it's like 200 bucks or something. One time I was riding my motorcycle—my car—too fast, and the town policeman was chasing me. So, I just came up the mountain, closed the gate behind me, thinking that would take care of the problem, but he got on the phone and called Daddy and that was not very good.

**Cissie:**

**00:10:57** I've always been curious, what are those conversations? First, your parents, Teta and Daddy Bill, who I call them, they never seemed embarrassed by their children. They never seemed embarrassed by the decisions their grandchildren would make. They were very gracious. What were those conversations like? You know, you just locked the police officer out of the gate. You ended up getting kicked out of school at one point. What were those conversations like with Teta and Daddy Bill?

**Franklin:**

**00:11:24** That's kind of a hard question to answer because I don't know. I mean, because I don't have anything to compare it to.

**Cissie:**

**00:11:29** But were they ever angry with you?

**Franklin:**

**00:11:32** No, they never yelled, but I mean, my father could be stern.—[**Cissie:** Mm-hmm.]—You know, 'Franklin.' 'Yes, sir,' you know, 'Come here,' and, we'd have a conversation. 'The police called and I understand you locked the door. Well, I've opened the gate. He's coming up here. If he wants to arrest you, then I'll support him.' It was interesting. His name was Pete Post. And he later came to Boone. He was a police chief in Boone for a short time.

**Cissie:**

**00:11:58** And school was never your thing, never really enjoyed it. You did end up getting kicked out of school. Where did you get kicked out of?

**Franklin:**

**00:12:06** Well, Stony Brook was—I was getting ready to get kicked out, so.

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**Cissie:**

**00:12:11** Well, you were shipped out; you went to Stony Brook in eighth grade.

**Franklin:**

**00:12:15** Yeah, and so 11<sup>th</sup> grade. I came home my junior year and I just said, 'Dad, I just need to stay home.' And it was a good thing I did, because they would have kicked me out. But, I went to one high school and finished my junior year, but got into fights. So, they kicked me out for a couple of weeks, or suspended me, whatever. And then, you know, they just realized I wasn't going to make my senior year there very well. So, he—only had one credit that was I was missing to get out of high school. It was an English credit. So he knew R.G. LeTourneau and R.G. LeTourneau had a school down in Texas and he had an aviation program and it was engineering and you could get a degree in welding and things like that. So, he called R.G. LeTourneau and asked him if there was—R.G., excuse me, R.G. was dead at that time, but his son was running the school. And he said, 'My son is having problems in high school and you think y'all could let him in and we work out something,' which they did. So I never graduated from high school. I went down there and got the English credit, but I learned how to fly and that's something I still use today.

**Cissie:**

**00:13:24** Let's talk about your mom for a little bit, who I call Teta. When you look at this house, even though it's empty now and all the furniture's gone, you can still feel her presence.—[**Franklin:** Mm-hmm.]—This was her home. She built it. She designed it. She is in every detail of this house.

**Franklin:**

**00:13:40** Yep.

**Cissie:**

**00:13:41** And you two had a special relationship. You adored your mom.

**Franklin:**

**00:13:43** Absolutely.

**Cissie:**

**00:13:44** And she was a strong woman. And a lot of people didn't get to know her, but people that knew her loved her. And why is that? What was about her charm and her wit? Her genuine love for people?

**Franklin:**

**00:13:55** Well, she grew up in China, and they grew up very poor. They lived in China in the, you know, the '20s and she was born in '20. And, then she stayed there till she went off to high school in North Korea, and that was in the mid- or the late '30s. She had a deep relationship with God. She was a woman of prayer. And she was concerned about people. She loved people and the people in the community. She was a friend to everybody.

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And when Daddy was gone, she invited people up. We had all kinds of people come up and have lunch or dinner—or just come have tea. Then when Daddy came home, she stopped that. She wanted this to be a haven for Daddy. She wanted this to be a place where he could rest and want to come home. So, when we had friends want to come, ‘Can I have so-and-so come home and spend ...’ ‘No. Your father’s home now.’ So, that was one of the things that she did. She protected him. But when he was gone, I mean, this house was open to all kinds of people that came up and that were her friends.

**Cissie:**

**00:15:03** You know, she was always playing a practical joke on somebody, always was humorous, was quick-witted; but that even spilled over into her maybe discipline with you sometimes. Tell us a few times maybe and her creative ways of disciplining; tell us a few stories that she would have done that maybe caught you or you got in trouble when she had a different approach.

**Franklin:**

**00:15:25** So, I smoked. But I wouldn’t smoke—

**Cissie:**

**00:15:27** At what age did you start smoking?

**Franklin:**

**00:15:29** I think the first cigarette I smoked, I was probably about 7 or 8.

**Cissie:**

**00:15:33** Where’d you get the first cigarette?

**Franklin:**

**00:15:34** I picked up a cigarette from one of the workers. You know, when they lit it and smoked, had that much tobacco in it, you know, I took a couple puffs of it. So, Mother was afraid that I was going to get addicted, or not get addicted, but start smoking. So she wanted me to get the taste out of my mouth. So, she got one of the workmen to get a whole pack of cigarettes. And so she made me sit in front of the fireplace, and I’d smoke and blow the smoke up the chimney; and I would smoke two cigarettes and I’d go throw up. I’d come back and have another cigarette and then another one. I smoked that whole pack in a couple hours and so Mother thought that had cured me.

**Cissie:**

**00:16:15** And it didn’t.

**Franklin:**

**00:16:16** No. But I smoked till I was in my 20s, 22.



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**Cissie:**

**00:16:22** Now, but there's another story too, because your bedroom was up over here.

**Franklin:**

**00:16:26** My bedroom was the last door right there.

**Cissie:**

**00:16:29** And couldn't she smell the smoke or something? She had climbed it?

**Franklin:**

**00:16:31** No, she wanted me to get up and go to school and I was running late.—  
[Cissie: Hmm.]—So, she would come in my room and she would throw some water or something like that. Didn't tell my [ ...] to get me up. So, one day she came in and I had this cup that had cigarette butts and ashes in it. She got that and just dumped it on my head. 'Get up, time to go to school.' Well, I locked the door. So, the next morning, I could hear her coming up the stairs, so I jumped out and locked the door. So, then she went to this window, which was my brother's room, opened up the window, and I could hear her coming across the roof and she had in her mouth a cup of water—and the roof's got an angle there—

**Cissie:**

**00:17:13** And she's a tiny little thing.

**Franklin:**

**00:17:15** Yeah, so she's crawling across the roof, kind of like this, with this cup in her teeth and she was going to come to my window and just sling the water through the window, you know. I heard her coming. So, I got up, stuck my head out, looked at her, smiled, and I slammed the window, locked it. Then of course she had to back up and get back to the window. But, she was just fun. I mean, she just—instead of, you know—

**Cissie:**

**00:17:41** And that didn't make her angry? I mean, I'm thinking if my son did that right now, how angry I'd be.

**Franklin:**

**00:17:46** No, she laughed because she knew I got the best of her.

**Cissie:**

**00:17:48** Let's go back to the summer of 1974, 50 years ago. It was a day in Switzerland, and it was your birthday, July 14.

**Franklin:**

**00:17:59** Yep.

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**Cissie:**

**00:18:00** And Daddy Bill takes you out to lunch and has a pretty direct conversation with you. Tell us about that day.

**Franklin:**

**00:18:06** We went up to lunch. It wasn't at lunch, but he was staying at a hotel in Lausanne. We were there working.

**Cissie:**

**00:18:12** And actually, I think I have a couple photos.

**Franklin:**

**00:18:14** That was at the Congress on World Evangelism, and this is Walter Smith and my father. I'm not sure who that is. And so I worked at, like, the hospitality desk. So, if somebody didn't have a good hotel room or complained, you know, we'd try to get them into the hotel. So, that was in Lausanne. This was at the Palais de Bulles, which was a conference center, so—

**Cissie:**

**00:18:40** I like the facial hair, Dad. Now, take us back to your birthday 50 years ago.

**Franklin:**

**00:18:46** Well, we were just, we went to a little pizza—it was an Italian restaurant, down on the shores of Lake Geneva; not a fancy place, just kind of where you sit outside. It's a cafe kind of thing ... because my father said, 'Where do you want to go for your birthday? We want to go have, take you to lunch.' I said, 'Well, here's an Italian place.' OK, so we met there, 12 o'clock. Afterwards, there's a big wide—along the shore there of Lake Geneva, there in Lausanne—kind of a wide boulevard with trees, and right next to the lake, and people will stroll and walk, and then there's a road next to it, but Daddy said, 'Let's just go for a walk.' OK. So, we walked, and we walked, I don't know, a hundred yards or so, and he said, 'Franklin, I want you to know, your mother and I, we love you, and we're proud of you.' 'Well, thank you.' 'And I want you to know, Franklin, that no matter what you do in life, you're always welcome home.' I never doubted that but all right. 'Thank you.' Then we walked a little farther, then he stopped and he looked at me and he said, 'Franklin, I feel that there is a battle for the soul of your life and you're going to have to choose either to accept Christ and to follow Him or to not. There's no sitting on the fence. You're going to have to make a choice.' When he said it, kind of, that made me mad 'cause I knew he was right. I just, I didn't want to face it. I didn't want to own up to it. But, I felt that it was, what he was saying was true, and I knew it.

And it was about two weeks later I was in Israel with Roy Gustafson on a tour. And that's where I got on my knees one night and just said, 'God, I've sinned and I'm sorry, forgive me. I believe Jesus is Your Son and I want to trust Him as my Savior. And if You just take the pieces of my life, You can have it. I'll just give it to You.' And I prayed that prayer in a minute.

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And God just takes you at that point and He just deals with you. And, over the years, Cissie, I've made many mistakes in life, but my attempt has always been to try to do what's right. And, if I've made a mistake, try to correct it and move on. And so my parents were great examples. Not only were they godly, they were practical people.

But my—Daddy never wanted me to, never tried to force me to preach. He never even asked me to preach, but it was John Wesley White, who worked for Daddy, who said, 'Franklin, I think you got a gift of evangelism.' I said, 'No, I don't.' 'Yes, you do. I think you do. I want you to come to one of my crusades and take a night. Preach for one night or two nights.' 'I'm not going to do that.' So, he kept asking me, kept asking me, but finally he asked me to—he was in Juneau, Alaska, next March. Oh, that's going to—he'll forget about it. So, I said, 'OK.' He didn't forget. So, when March came, you know, you get, 'Franklin, you know, it's February, you know, and next month we're going to be in Juneau. We're looking forward to having you come preach.' Oh, brother. So I remember going and I have no clue what I preached on. I remember the night that I preached several people came forward and I realized I had nothing to do with that. That was something God did. And I went back to the hotel, just said, 'God, if You want to use me in evangelistic preaching, I'll make that a priority in my life.'

**Cissie:**

**00:22:05** Is that it something you were nervous to step into, under the shadow of your dad being—?

**Franklin:**

**00:22:11** I think people expected that of me, so it wasn't something I was nervous. I just said—I just didn't never believe that's what God would call me to do. And so, I'm very thankful for John Wesley White, for him pushing me to do that because, you know, I was already involved in Samaritan's Purse, which I still am—I haven't given up Samaritan's Purse. So, God has let me do both.

**Cissie:**

**00:22:34** Mm-hmm. I want to back up a little bit because in the summer of 1974, I love that Daddy Bill went for that direct conversation.—[**Franklin:** Mm-hmm.]—I think it's hard to evangelize to strangers. It's hard to evangelize to family members. I think people can be scared of that. But what I've loved, and even you, you've always gone direct to somebody's heart. And I'm just, I'm thankful for that because not too many parents go to that direct question, that direct statement, and saying, 'We're worried for your soul.'

You came home. You were in Israel when you gave your life to Christ. The next morning you went and bought a ring. I actually am wearing that ring. And you called Mom from—

**Franklin:**

**00:23:15** —from Jerusalem.

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**Cissie:**

**00:23:17** —that you were going to come home, and y'all got married just a couple weeks later—right here with family and friends.

**Franklin:**

**00:23:23** Robert Jones and Preston Parrish and Jane's family, and our family, and a few friends.

**Cissie:**

**00:23:31** And that was a big year for you guys. Teta had led her to the Lord—and that's what I love. When I look at Teta, they didn't have this idea of like who they thought their son should bring home. You know, Mom wasn't a Christian. Teta loved her with open arms, led her to the Lord. And both of those women, they're strong women. You got strong women in your life. And they had to be, you were gone a lot. And you once told me, I remember riding the car, how thankful you were for Mom. That she kind of, my brothers and I, she raised us, she kind of kept the home in line.

**Franklin:**

**00:24:03** Yep.

**Cissie:**

**00:24:04** But, growing up I never read articles. And to this day I still don't read a lot of articles about our family. But a couple years ago, Mom had this old article in a stack of papers at the house, and it was about lessons you had learned from your father, and you talked about you wanted to raise us in the mountains of North Carolina like you were raised, where we could go out and the boys could hunt and ride motorcycles and stuff, but you were talking about Mom, because you were praising her, but it says, 'It takes a certain kind of person to live in the mountains, but Jane has tackled the challenge.'

And you talk about a story: One time, the neighbor boy came in and was complaining about a snake down in the creek, and she came and grabbed your pistol. And I laughed so hard that in the magazine they said, 'The neighbor boy ran up into the house and said, "Jane had done blown its head off."'

**Franklin:**

**00:24:53** Yeah, it was the Critchers, and it was Trevor. It was like a water snake down in the creek, and that's where the kids played. We didn't have a swimming pool. We had the pond and the creek. So, everybody was playing in the creek, and so the snake chased everybody out. So, I had a little short barrel .357 Magnum and Mama got it, and she aimed and shot that snake, and one of the boys said, 'Shoot it again, Mrs. Jane.' And the other boy said, 'She done blowed its head off!' But I think we've raised you all in the country. And of course our neighbors, the Critchers, were wonderful. You know, he was a cabbage farmer. And just good people. And I'm glad we didn't live in some gated neighborhood or something. I mean, this, where you all could just enjoy not only the country, but the country people.

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**Cissie:**

**00:25:46** Well, and I look at Teta and I look at Mom, two strong women who—Teta, of course, as I said, led Mom to Christ, and they had a strong relationship. You know, Mom will say Teta was her best friend. But I look at how God called you and Daddy Bill to ministry, but He didn't just call you, He called the women too—

**Franklin:**

**00:26:05** Yeah.

**Cissie:**

**00:26:06** —and He called Mom to serve in different capacities, to take care of the house while you were gone and to give you that ability. I can never remember Mom one time complaining about ministry, complaining about you're gone all the time. She was strong. She knew that God had called you to that—

**Franklin:**

**00:26:21** Yeah.

**Cissie:**

**00:26:22** —and she was supportive and—

**Franklin:**

**00:26:24** My mother never complained to my father; my mother always encouraged Daddy. Daddy didn't like just picking up and leaving, but it was something God had called him to do. And so, for Jane, your Mama, when I traveled, she never once complained. Now I made sure that I wasn't gone for months at a time. Like my Daddy, he went to Australia one time for six months, and when he came home, we didn't recognize him. So, he was hurt. You know, that, 'Well, don't stay away from home so long.' So I just decided if I'm going to make a trip—I think the longest I was ever gone was like three weeks—it was just two-week trips. You can go anywhere in the world in two weeks and be back.

**Cissie:**

**00:27:03** Mm-hmm. And I do remember growing—you took us maybe 'cause I was so much younger and I got to go—you made sure you always took us with you a lot—

**Franklin:**

**00:27:11** Yeah.

**Cissie:**

**00:27:12** —to see the ministry. And for me, I've shared that on the podcast before, you know, growing up, you *were* gone a lot and just the typical teenage daughter-father things, but God changed my life and my relationship with you at 18 years old or 19, I believe. You took me on around-the-world trip—

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**Franklin:**

**00:27:27** Yeah.

**Cissie:**

**00:27:28** —to see Billy Graham Evangelistic Association—think you had a crusade and a few different Samaritan's Purse projects and I can remember where we were. We were in Kenya in the middle of the desert under one tiny tree and we're with the Rendille tribe. That tribe looked like they were straight out of National Geographic. And I can remember—it was just a split second—and I just remember looking across the tribe, looking at you, and saying, 'That's why he's been gone all this time. He was obedient to what God had called him to do.' And God healed my heart of any resentment of being a Graham or a dad who was gone. I was thankful that I had a dad that was obedient to God's calling. And I tell people all that all the time when I look at, you know, women that might be complaining if their husband's traveling, it can be difficult, but if God's called your husband, God's called you to serve in different capacities. And I'm thankful for Teta and Mom who have set that example. But after the summer of 1974, you went to Bible school for a little bit, you and Mom started a family. You did end up going back to finish college at Appalachian State, which I don't know if they would claim you anymore as one of the graduates, but let's talk about Samaritan's Purse. You know, people look at it now and how big it is, but you really started off with one box of names. But what was that first conversation with Bob Pierce like? I've never heard that story of what that first conversation—why he chose you.

**Franklin:**

**00:28:49** Well, I had gone to Bob and asked Bob for money to help Mafraq hospital. And so he went up there to Mafraq, saw the hospital, and he had asked me to travel with him in '75. We went around the world together and just helped him. My brother-in-law, Ted, went with me and we helped Bob. Bob was sick. He had leukemia at the time, so he was sick. And the next year he wanted me—I traveled to New Guinea with Dick Furman and Bob took my spring break and went to New Guinea. And so Bob wanted me to take over Samaritan's Purse, but Samaritan's Purse was just Bob Pierce and a couple of secretaries. And that was, you know, it was very small.

So he had talked to Daddy about it. And Daddy said, 'Well—,' and I didn't know he had talked to Daddy; I found out later—but Daddy said, 'Well, you just have to talk to Franklin, if that's God's will.' So Bob Pierce asked if I would take it over. Said, 'OK.' I was kind of excited about the challenge, and then Bob died, but he didn't tell his board that he wanted me to take over. So we go to the funeral. He had put me on the board, but he hadn't said anything, so we go to the board meeting, and they had no intention of putting me as the head of the organization. They let his secretary kind of run things. So I was disappointed, and I thought, 'Well, then God must have something else planned.'

**Cissie:**

**00:30:11** So they weren't going to put you the head of Samaritan's Purse and Roy came to you.

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**Franklin:**

**00:30:15** They said—because he was trying to encourage me, and said, ‘It’s better to be worthy and not have it than to have it not be worthy.’ So, I just felt that OK, if God has something for me, He’ll show it to me. So I just went back. I was already helping Dick Furman with World Medical Mission, you know, looking for doctors and Becky Williams came to work for me and so it was just Becky and me and Eva Dickerson, and we were trying to find doctors to work in mission hospitals, and Dick Furman had given me an office above his office, and so I thought, ‘Well, I’ll just stay with this.’

So later that year—well, it was about a year later—we had another board meeting, and a man by the name of Robert Thompson, who was on the board, and Guy Davidson, they just said, ‘Listen, it’s not going to work with the secretaries running this thing. We need somebody who can fundraise, write letters, and we think that’s Franklin, and we need to go ahead and put Franklin in charge of it.’ So they did that. Well, I came home and for about six months tried to run it from here, didn’t work.

**Cissie:**

**00:31:26** Here at Montreat?

**Franklin:**

**00:31:28** No. From Boone.

**Cissie:**

**00:31:28** From Boone.

**Franklin:**

**00:31:30** So I went back to California and just said I want to move office. And, Dennis Agajanian came and we cleared out the office.

**Cissie:**

**00:31:41** Well, because Samaritan’s Purse was located, at the time, in California.

**Franklin:**

**00:31:43** It was in Hollywood.

**Cissie:**

**00:31:44** You mean you didn’t want to raise a family in Hollywood?

**Franklin:**

**00:31:47** It was right off Hollywood and Vine. And those offices were given by Fred Dienert and Walter Bennett. So, you know, we moved everything to Boone and started over. And some of the ladies from the church came to help me. Some of them stayed with me. And, it was just really starting over. But God does things like that. So, we stripped everything away. I didn’t have anything to really build on. I had Bob Pierce’s Christmas card mailing list. It was a couple thousand people.

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I think it was mainly, it was 9,000, and we had 2,000 out of that mailing list that gave. And so for the first year I would just—I would take a trip. I would come back and write a letter about what I saw, what we were, what people we were wanting to help, and people would give money and it just began to grow.

And then Jim Bakker invited me to come down and be on his TV program. I was all excited and I'd just gone to Tenwek Hospital and they had three people in a hospital bed this wide. So, this end would be two heads with a pair of feet between it and down at that end would be two feet with a head between it and three people in a bed. So I told Ernie Steury, who was the head of the hospital, 'Ernie, we'll try to help you raise money for a new ward.' I said, 'How much is that going to cost?' He said, 'Well, Franklin, we've got the plans for one, but it's going to cost about \$400,000.' 'How much have you got?' 'Well, we haven't got any of it.' So I'll go on Jim Bakker's program, all excited about showing, you know, this picture and telling people about the need of that hospital. Well, Jim had a preacher on there, and that preacher talked and talked and talked. The next thing you know, the whole hour was used up, and Jim never invited me out. So he came to me after the program, said, 'Franklin, I'm so sorry.' He said this guy just couldn't get him to shut up. He said, 'How about coming back down tomorrow? I'll give you the whole hour. Just you and I; the two of us.' And so when I did that, we were talking about, 'Franklin, where have you been? What are you doing?' And so I showed this picture. 'Oh,' he said, 'Let's put that—make sure that we put that up and everybody can see that on TV.' And, 'Franklin, that's terrible. What can we do?' I said, 'Well, they need a new ward.' I said, 'I'm going to try to help them raise the money for a new ward.' 'Well, how much is that going to cost?' 'Well, about \$400,000.' 'I want everybody watching right now to send Franklin a dollar. Put Franklin's address up there.' And that's what I appreciate about Jim Bakker. He helped people. Jim had his problems, but he helped people. He helped a lot of missionaries, a lot of people. And so, he helped me.

Now back then, he was on cable. And for the program to go through all the cable systems, it would take about a month. It wasn't live. It was delayed and so forth. So during that time, we received 40-some-thousand letters with contributions. Some were a dollar; some were much more than that, but at the end of about six weeks, we had received something like \$407,000. So, Jim Bakker wanted me to come back down and give a report as to what had come in. So, I went down and told Jim, and I took Jim a check for \$7,000. He said, 'What is this?' I said, '\$7,000.' 'What's that for?' I said, 'Well, Jim, we needed \$400,000. God gave us \$407,000, so I'm just giving the \$7,000 to you.' He told me later no one else had ever done that to him or for him.

And he made a big investment in Samaritan's Purse and he had me come back down and talk about other things, but it gave me exposure to an audience that wasn't my father at a Crusade. It was a different audience. And those letters that came in, those 30-some-thousand letters had names and addresses. So, we went from having 10,000 on the mailing list, now we were up to 40,000–50,000 names and addresses. And back then we put everything on cards. We had the name and



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address and realized, 'OK, we need a computer or something to help us manage these.' So it just—we had a growth problem.

And every year, God has blessed Samaritan's Purse; it has grown, and every year, it's just something God has done. And God has brought different people into my life, and people that I didn't know, but He's brought them into my life that have invested in me. And we have, you know, amazing donors and volunteers and people that work at Samaritan's Purse. We couldn't do anything if it wasn't for God. It was all God.

**Cissie:**

**00:36:16** I've always said there's nobody I would want more in a crisis than my dad. You love to help people. When there's a crisis, you run to it. That's what you've taught us as kids. That's what you teach at the ministry at Samaritan's Purse. But what's been your favorite aspect of ministry over the years?

**Franklin:**

**00:36:34** I think it's the challenge, Cissie. It's seeing something that looks impossible and getting a team of people and praying and asking God for help and watching God work. Bob Pierce taught a principle about 'God room.' And I was asking, you know, 'Bob, how do you raise money?' or, 'How do you, you know, you see a need and the need is so big, but you can't meet it?' Bob says, 'Franklin, first of all, I think you take needs not to what you can do; you help people as to what *God* can do, and always leave some God room.' I said, 'What do you mean by that?' 'If the need is this, and that's what you can do, then God hasn't done it. You've done it. But if the need is up here and all you could do is here, then there's a gap. That's where you get on your knees and pray, and you watch God close that gap. You've got to have God room.' We always try to use that 'God room' principle in the ministry.

**Cissie:**

**00:37:31** What's been the hardest part of ministry over the years?

**Franklin:**

**00:37:35** I think dealing with people. You know, you have large staffs, and people have problems. Sometimes people have health problems. Sometimes people have marriage problems. Sometimes your staff have children problems. Sometimes you have staff that just are not doing what they're supposed to do and you have to deal with that. So, it's people problems; that's the toughest, but, you know, my mother was pretty tough. Daddy was not very good at that. He didn't know how to say no. I learned from Mama how to say no.

**Cissie:**

**00:38:10** And I think in a world that we live in now, in ministry, people can easily get burnt out, and we live in a time of people talk about mental health a lot. I have never seen you stressed; maybe you have been, but I have never seen you stressed. I've never seen you anxious. I've never seen you worry. I've never seen you take a sabbatical. You don't plan on retiring. How do you do that?

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**Franklin:**

**00:38:36** Well, first of all, a lot of people take sabbaticals. I don't know about that. Jesus didn't take a sabbatical, so I mean, I don't know. And ... the business world, I don't think they take sabbaticals either. I'm not sure where that ever came from, but I love what I do, Cissie, and when God has called you to something, you love what you do, why would I want to do anything else?

I've had friends that are pastors of churches and they just love it. I've been with guys who are pastors and hated it ... and after they preached on Sunday, they couldn't get out the door fast enough. I had this one friend who was a pastor and he'd want to talk to everybody. So he'd invite you out to Sunday lunch, but you couldn't eat at 12:15 or 12:30. It was going to be two o'clock because he had to stay behind and talk to everybody. He just loved it. But, I never griped about it. I just thought, God bless him for doing that.

And it's: What has God called you to do? I think sometimes people in life, ministry, or whatever, you're doing things that you're not called to, and so therefore it becomes a job and there isn't joy. I've never thought of Samaritan's Purse as a job or running the Billy Graham Association as a job. It's just what I do.

**Cissie:**

**00:39:47** Another thing I've learned from you is you don't let criticism affect you. At least I never saw it as a kid or growing up. And you never felt like you had to rebuttal or defend yourself to criticism. It's like you *knew* what you were called to do and you didn't need to answer to anybody else. You knew what God has called you to do. And through the years, you've stayed solely focused on the cross. When I see so many people that start off looking at the cross, but they get sidetracked and distracted—you've stayed on the cross, no matter what the criticism, no matter what's come. How would you encourage people in today's time? People who might be leaving ministries or leaving their families?

**Franklin:**

**00:40:25** I think, Cissie, we live in a much different world today. People have to be very careful about getting sidetracked. Your grandfather was offered a chance to be the U.S. ambassador to London. That's the most prestigious of all the embassy assignments in the world, going to London, to the Court of St. James's. That's the premier ambassadorship.

He was offered opportunity to be in films. Cecil B. DeMille's, in the '50s, was like *the* number one Hollywood producer and Hollywood director. Some of the biggest films that had ever been on TV were directed by Cecil B. DeMille. And, Daddy said no. He was offered once to be on the board of directors of ABC, America Broadcasting Company, and Daddy thought about that. And, Oh, Billy you could have a great influence and Billy you could then, if you were on the board, you could get free air time and so forth. Then he thought, No, that's not what God has called me to and furthermore if they put on a risqué television program, or get behind a risqué movie,

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then I'm partly responsible for that. I'm not going to do this. And they offered him a lot of money. He wouldn't do it.

So, I think, you know, Cissie, you have to stay focused on what God has called you to do and the devil is always going to tempt you. He's always going to put something out, dangle out there in front of you to try to get you to come and then you can rationalize it. It's easy to rationalize in life. But what has God called you to do? And you just have to stay focused on it and not to change midstream for this reason or that reason. If a preacher's been called to preach, then preach. It doesn't mean you stay at the same church or the same place, but you preach. That's what you do. If you're an evangelist, you preach. That's what you do. And another thing, we don't want to compare ourselves to other people. You don't want to look at someone else's ministry. Because then the person can be jealous. 'Well, look at his ministry. They've got this and they've got that.' So? Be faithful to what God has given you. You just want to stay focused.

**Cissie:**

**00:42:35** There's a lot of things I've learned from you by observing. I probably wasn't directly taught them, but I caught them by watching you. One was just the power of the *simple* Gospel, the power of prayer in ministry and in life. Obedience, what humility looks like, the power of serving one, and loving people around. The importance of loyalty. The importance of integrity in ministry, financial integrity. There's a lot of things I've learned from observing. But when you look back at growing up from your parents, what is something you might have caught from them? Things that you learned?

**Franklin:**

**00:43:10** Well, I think my father, when it came to criticism, he just kept doing his work. You know, if they want to throw dirt at me or throw mud at me, they'll just have to hit me in the back. I remember there was, years ago, there was a local paper, *The Charlotte Observer* came after Daddy, and they were really wanting to bring Billy Graham down, and they were printing things that were not true. And after several months of that, Daddy finally got his lawyers and just said, 'OK, I think it's gone far enough. We need to find a way to stop this and fight back.' And so, when the attorneys presented their case to the editors at *The Charlotte Observer*, they backed off. And so that was the only time I saw my father really kind of get—I remember this one lady talked to my father, 'Well, how much money do you make, Billy Graham?' 'Well, how much money do you make? If you tell me what you make, I'll tell you what I make.' Well, the reporter made quite a bit of money, made more than Daddy. She didn't pursue that any further. He had a spine. I mean, he would stand up.

**Cissie:**

**00:44:26** Dad, what do you want your legacy to be? What do you want to be known for?

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**Franklin:**

**00:44:31** You know, Cissie, it's not a question of being known, because I don't really care. If anything, I just want to be, you know: Franklin did what God called him to do. And he was faithful to the Gospel, in preaching and proclaiming the Gospel. That's what I want. Like when I went to your grandfather after Mother died, everybody knew what Mama wanted on her tombstone: End of construction. Thank you for your patience. OK. We all knew that because she said that over and over and over again. But Daddy had never had, so I didn't want there to be a fight in the family or an argument when it got ready to put his [epitaph] on the tombstone. So, I thought, 'Daddy, what do you want on your tombstone?' 'I'll get back to you on that.' So, about a week later: Preacher of the Gospel. So, we put that in writing, had Daddy sign it, OK? Put that in the file in case there was an argument. We could go to the file, pull this out, show it to all the kids, OK? It's got a signature on it. But there was no problem. And, Daddy didn't want—if you go to his grave, it's just field stone. It's not some polished granite. It's just a field stone. Mother's is just a field stone. And the reason we got field stone because Daddy, as a boy, going out into the fields as a farm boy, milking cows, that was what he came from. So, we have these field stones.

**Cissie:**

**00:45:57** Well, you think about it, and you put it in writing. I got Will here, what you want one day, not anytime soon.

**Franklin:**

**00:46:03** I don't care.

**Cissie:**

**00:46:06** This is a couple more questions. As you reflect back on life, are there any regrets? Maybe not regrets. I know that's not what we really believe as a family, but maybe things you would have done differently, now that you look back and you would have spent more time doing?

**Franklin:**

**00:46:20** Oh, I think, no question, Cissie, there's a lot of things you probably— I wouldn't have a different ministry or, but you would have made this decision better. You would have used time better. I'm not one of these people that look back over my shoulder. You do that; that's all you'll do. I'm one of these people that wants to look ahead to what God has next. And, try to make sure that I make the right decisions tomorrow, the next day, and the day after that. Daddy was like that. Daddy never looked back over his shoulder. He always looked forward.

You know, we're only on this Earth for a short time. When you're young, you think life will go on and on and on. It doesn't. You know, 72 this year and God only promises 70. I'm two years past the time limit. Now, Mama lived to be 86; Daddy lived to be 99. I don't know, Cissie, if God gives me a few more years, a few more days, a few more months, I still want to look to what the next thing—I'm going to Birmingham, England, this week, and then I'll be going to Amman, Jordan, and then I'm going to, back to Glasgow. That's what I'm focused on. Then I got to go to Montana and

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preach. I'm focused in on that. And then to Alaska for rest of the summer. And I'm focusing on those things. Those are—what happened last week, I can't do anything about it.

**Cissie:**

**00:47:45** In ministry, one thing I'm curious about, and meant to ask you a little bit earlier: When you look back over the years at Samaritan's Purse, or at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association once Daddy Bill asked you to take it over and lead it, what has been your biggest trial in ministry that you learned from that others in ministry could learn from, or a difficult chapter in ministry?

**Franklin:**

**00:48:06** Oh, Cissie, there's a lot of things, my goodness. Making sure you let God lead you, and not let your own pride or flesh lead you. And I think that's where a lot of guys get into trouble is just their pride. You know, they look at Billy Graham, 'Oh, I want to be like Billy Graham; I want to preach like him, look like him.' 'Oh, I wish I had a big organization like Billy Graham.' And usually the guys that want that, God doesn't give it to us. And Daddy never wanted a big organization. He never even thought about that. And, you know, Billy Graham Association came about, he was pastoring a church outside of Wheaton. Then they asked him to take over a little school up in Minneapolis or St. Paul. And so, Daddy goes up there and he's in his 20s and he's the president of a university or a small college.

And he started preaching with Youth for Christ. And then, my father's meetings got so big, people were writing letters, getting saved, asking questions. He told George Wilson, he said, 'We need a little office up here to handle this mail. We need somebody to help answer the mail, but we don't want to do it at the college and get it commingled with the colleges, because that's not fair to the school. We need to put it over here, out of the way, and handle it.' Well, that lasted for a couple of months, and then he realized he just needed to do that full time and left the school and, before he left, he gave doctorate degrees, I think, to all of his friends. [chuckle] That was kind of fun back then, you know, and then the Billy Graham Association—that's how it ended up in Minneapolis.

And my father told me right here, in this house, he said, 'Franklin,' he said, 'that was a blessing because being a Southern preacher, going through the '60s, through the racial tensions we had in this country, and me being a Southern preacher, the fact that my office was in Minneapolis, Minnesota, gave, I think, credibility to the message, that if I had been Billy Graham from Charlotte, North Carolina, you know, being associated with the South would have kind of tainted me a little bit, but it didn't. I was kind of like on neutral territory being from Minneapolis.' And I got to that conversation because I wanted to move the office from Minneapolis to Charlotte, and I had this conversation right here, and he was, at first, not happy about that conversation. And then he said, 'Franklin, this is why I stayed in Minneapolis.' But he said, 'Those reasons don't exist anymore.' He said, 'I think it's a good thing to move it to Charlotte.'

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**Cissie:**

**00:50:38** You've spent your entire life preaching the Gospel, serving people in the Name of Jesus—Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. And I think I know what you'll say in this answer, but when you look at Samaritan's Purse and Billy Graham Evangelistic Association now and going into the future where it is getting harder to preach the Gospel—and who knows what the future holds for the generations to come—what is your hope for both ministries?

**Franklin:**

**00:51:04** My hope is that the leadership will stay true to the Gospel and if they do that, God will bless it, like He's blessed me, and He's blessed Daddy Bill, and He'll bless you children as you all take the leadership in the future, but you have to be focused on the Gospel and be true to the Word of God and without compromise. And that's where we get into trouble is compromise. Because we all, 'Let's all get along. We don't want to hurt someone's feelings.' No, you cannot compromise. And we live in a day where sexual orientation and, these transgenders, and all this issue, and so many churches have compromised on that. Pastors have compromised. And, this is gay Pride Month. A lot of churches have rainbow flags in front of them and all this kind of stuff. Compromise. We can't compromise. If we compromise, then that will be the end of Samaritan's Purse. It'll be the end of the Billy Graham Association.

**Cissie:**

**00:52:06** Well, Dad, here at *Fearless*, I'm celebrating five years this month, but celebrating you and 50 years since you surrendered your life to Christ is way more important and exciting for me because I am so thankful watching God's goodness throughout your life, through Daddy Bill's life, through your life, and seeing God's hand, not just on your life, but the men and women He's put around you to make things possible—volunteers, people who've prayed for our family, meeting strangers who just come up and say, "We are praying for your family." There's not a bigger compliment in the world if somebody was to tell me, "You're like your dad." And I just want to say thank you. Thank you for serving. Thank you for being obedient to God's calling, but staying faithful—and your eyes forever focused on the Gospel.

**Franklin:**

**00:52:49** Well, Cissie, I'm thankful for the children, for Will and Roy and Edward and you and for the grandchildren, 13 of them. And you've got three wonderful kids. And, you know, I shudder to think what the future holds for your children, and the world that they'll have to live in, and the difficulties that they're going to face—to be true to the Gospel.

## **MUSIC STARTS**

**Cissie:**

**00:53:16** Well, thank you for setting the example. Love you, Dad.

**Franklin:**

**00:53:19** Love you.

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association  
Communications – Cissie Graham Lynch  
Fearless – Ep 126 – Growing up as a Graham, Accepting Your Calling, and  
Leaving a Powerful Legacy – with Franklin Graham  
Final Transcript**

**MUSIC TRANSITION**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:53:23** Thank you for joining us on a very special day here on *Fearless*. Thank you for being a part of this for the last five years, and we hope we can continue the conversations we have, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

**CLOSING MUSIC**

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