

The Third Generation: Will Graham Speaks of Faith, Family and Calling as He Ministers Around the World

"You can inherit your parent's business or looks. However, you cannot inherit a ministry. A ministry belongs to God, and He alone gives the ministry to the person He chooses."

These are the words of Will Graham - William Franklin Graham IV, to be exact. Will is the grandson of legendary evangelist Billy Graham and oldest son of Franklin Graham. The down-to-earth preacher is the third generation of Grahams to boldly preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Will was led to Christ at a young age by his father. "It was a Communion Sunday at church, and I was excited to have some. I'd been a good boy. I thought I was going to get the same snack that the adults were getting - grape juice and a morsel of bread," said Will. "When they passed the bread, my dad told me that I couldn't have any. When we got home, he took me up to my room, sat me down, and really explained who Jesus was and what He had done for me. It wasn't the communion that saved me, but Dad used the communion as a teaching opportunity and I accepted Christ that day."

At a time when most boys were dreaming about sports, Will was already feeling the hand of God directing his life. His second grade teacher asked all of the kids in his class to draw a picture of what they wanted to be when they grew up. "All the

guys were drawing footballs," said Will. "Everybody wanted to be a quarterback. I drew two pictures: an open Bible and a pair of headsets, like those they use in aviation. I wanted to be a pilot, like my dad, and go around telling others about Jesus."



Will Graham - William Franklin Graham IV - sits on the stage with his grandfather and father in Baltimore, 1981.

Will was raised by his parents on a farm in Boone, North Carolina, far removed from the large stadiums and media attention that followed his famous grandfather, and, increasingly, his father. He and his brothers enjoyed riding dirt bikes and hunting in the mountains. His upbringing instilled in him a humble spirit and an affable sense of humor.

While many expected Will to become a preacher, he says that his dad never pushed him into ministry, nor would he allow anybody else to steer Will in that direction. "Dad wanted to make very sure that if I ever went into ministry it was

because God was calling me and not because I was pressured into it.”

And, God did call Will. In his teen years, Will attended a Bible camp where he committed his life to serving the Lord in ministry. “At age 15, I told the Lord, ‘I’ll do whatever You want me to do. If it’s flying airplanes, telling people about Jesus in the jungles of Africa, that’s fine. If You want me doing Crusades, that’s fine. If You want me to type on a computer somewhere, I’m fine with that. Just use me for ministry.’”

After graduating from the local public high school where he was a goalie on the soccer team, Will enrolled at Liberty University, and later at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. While attending these two schools, Will accomplished what he drew in the second grade: he received his Master of Divinity, became ordained as a minister, and received his pilot’s license.

Will went on to pastor Wakefield Baptist Church in Wake Forest for several years, and he ultimately felt led to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Will currently serves as the assistant director of the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove in Asheville, North Carolina, a unique mountain retreat center borne of Billy and Ruth

Graham’s desire to see Christians trained to reach their world for Christ.



Will Graham speaks to audiences around the world about the hope found in Christ.

Will is a regular speaker at churches and Christian gatherings in the United States, and he also travels around the world to share the hope and love of Jesus Christ, regularly visiting Australia, India, Canada and other areas of Asia and South America. “To be honest, I don’t care if I’m talking to a stadium full of people or one person on the street,” said Will. “I want to tell everybody I meet that there is a God who loves them and that they can find their hope and peace in Him.”

Will and his wife Kendra live near the city of Asheville, in the mountains of western North Carolina. They have two daughters, Christine Jane (CJ) and Rachel Austin, and a son, William Franklin Graham V, whose nickname is Quinn.

Press outlets are welcome to reprint this article. Contact Erik Ogren at eogren@bgea.org or (704) 577-2109 to request high-resolution photos or an interview with Will Graham.