

Fil-Am Community Church

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“What Would Billy Graham Say to Justin Bieber?”

It all started with just a few homemade videos posted on YouTube to be seen by family and friends. But those videos found a wider audience and other people started discovering them, including a former marketing executive by the name of Scooter Braun.

The videos were, of course, of a young Justin Bieber crooning out a few songs. And when Braun saw the videos, he recognized the talent and charisma this kid had. So he tracked down Bieber in his hometown of Stratford, Ontario, set up a meeting between himself and Bieber’s mother, and arranged to have Bieber travel to Atlanta to record some demo tapes for Braun and his business partner, R&B artist Usher.

All that happened when Bieber was only 13 years old. Since that time, Bieber has skyrocketed to fame. Still at only 19, he’s one of the youngest superstars on the planet. In fact, forget his age; he’s the only artist to ever have seven songs from a debut album chart on the Billboard Hot 100.

In 2010, he won the American Music Award as the Artist of the Year, as the Favorite Pop/Rock Artist, the Breakthrough Artist, and for the Favorite Pop/Rock Album. He also picked up several MTV, Much Music, and International music awards.

In February 11, 2011, Bieber saw the release of his 3D concert/biopic, “Never Say Never.” The film debuted at number one on its opening day, and had the second biggest opening weekend for any music-documentary film behind only

a Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus 3D film from 2008. And even then, it nearly matched its totals.

On November 23, 2012, Bieber was presented with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal by the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper. Then on May 17, 2013, Bieber received a Diamond award from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) to recognize his single "Baby" as the highest-certified digital song of all time, but later it was replaced by "Gangnam Style" of Psy. Oops.

Even if you're not a fan and even if you're not into his music, you can't deny that Justin Bieber is a star. He has established his place in pop culture, and has millions of fans all over the world. It's been quite a journey for the Canadian kid born to a teenaged-mom and raised in a single parent low-income home.

This morning, we're continuing our "What Would Billy Graham Say" message series, and obviously today we're talking about what Billy Graham would say to Justin Bieber. I'm going to give you four things that I think Graham would say to him, and you can use your notes to follow along and fill in the blanks.

The first thing I think Graham would say is

1. Remember to set a positive example for others.

The music industry really pays attention to image. Justin Bieber regularly received coaching on how to handle his fame and public image. Usher even appointed his former assistant to become Bieber's personal stylist, and he went on to create Bieber's streetwise look complete with hoodies, baseball caps, dog chains, and flashy sneakers.

Bieber's image is important because he has millions of fans who follow everything he says and does, including over 6 million fans who follow his every move on Twitter. Like when he got a haircut one time, it was major news for many adoring teenagers. We would think that only girls swoon over him. But some boys

want to be like him and look like him. I guess they're thinking that's one way to attract girls. And so, many cut their hair like him. They want to imitate what their idol does. Let me see, do we have any Justin Bieber look-alikes here? From our young people? How about our oldies?

But you know, that's not new. I remember when the young Sharon Cuneta was so famous in the Philippines many years ago. I think I was only 10 years old. Plus 20. Young girls wanted to have a hair like hers. Including my little sister. But not me.

Now, those are kind of silly things. But the words and the actions and the worldviews of people in the spotlight are not so trivial. What they say and what they do can shape attitudes and direct a culture. So I think Billy Graham would say to Bieber, "You can set a good example, or you can set a bad example. But the best example you could set would be to follow the example of Jesus."

In the New Testament, Paul understood this. As an apostle... as a church leader... Paul knew that he was in the spotlight. He knew that people were watching everything he said and did. But Paul didn't squirm at that thought. He didn't shrug it off or downplay it. Instead, he accepted the reality of it and chose to take the responsibility seriously. As he told the Christians in the city of Corinth...

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV)

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

Underline the phrase "as I follow" in your Bible. Even if it's the church Bible. Because this is important. Not only did Paul know that people were following him; he also knew who he was following himself.

Here's another verse. This is advice that Paul gave to Timothy. At the time, Timothy was just a young man—a rookie pastor—and Paul thought it was important to remind Timothy that even though he was young, he could still be an example to others.

1 Timothy 4:12 (NLT)

“Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.”

Now let me talk to parents for a minute. Parents, remember that you are setting the example for your children. What habits do you have and what are they teaching your children? What good habits do you have, and what bad habits do you have?

How about how and where you spend your money? What are you teaching your children about what’s really important to you? Where do you invest your time? Where do you invest your energy? How do you treat other people? How are you living out your faith? What kind of example are you setting?

You know, your kids don’t become what you say; they become what they see. The example you set for them speaks a lot louder than the words you say.

For example, a child that grows up in a violent home is 6 times more likely to grow up and treat their spouse with violence. When children themselves are the target of violence in the home, they are 12 times more likely to use violence with their own kids.

Another example, if mom and dad both attend church, the child has a 72% likelihood to attend church as an adult themselves. If only dad goes to church, the likelihood that the kid will continue to attend church drops to 55%. And if only mom attends, it drops to 15%. And if neither parent attends, then only 6% of those kids will grow up and become part of a church. So what kind of example do you set for your kids? How do you treat each other—with respect or with contempt? How do you treat your spouse, and how do you treat your children? What are your priorities? Does God play a prominent role in your life, or do you reserve Him just for when you come to church?

I’ve been picking on parents, but the truth is we all convey a variety of

messages in everything we say and do. We all have people who admire us and look to us as an example to follow. So what kind of example are you setting? And I'm not talking about being perfect... none of us are perfect. But do you aspire to set the best example possible?

Can you say the same thing that Jesus said to His followers... ?

John 13:15 (NIV)

“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

I believe Graham would say to Justin Bieber as well as to you and me, “Remember that you are setting an example for others. And the best example you can set would be to follow the example of Jesus.”

Secondly, I think Billy Graham would tell Justin...

2. Use your success to do good by helping others.

Since Justin Bieber does have so many admirers and has achieved so much success, he's in a unique position to do some good. And to his credit, Bieber recognizes this. In an interview with the Associated Press in 2011, he said...

“Hollywood is ... a scary place. There's a lot going on, there's a lot of bad things, but there's also a lot of good things. I'm able to live my dream, I'm able to do a lot of good things ...”

~ Justin Bieber in an interview with The Associated Press

In an industry where so many people try to acquire as much as they can to serve their own pleasures, it's so refreshing to hear someone say that they want to use their success to do good things that will benefit others.

Now, I understand you're not likely to ever have the kind of fame or resources that Justin Bieber has. But whatever you do have... whatever level of success you have achieved in life... can you use it to do good? Can you do good deeds that are going to benefit other people and are going to bring glory to God?

You know, many of us are familiar with the words of Jesus where He talked

about doing your good deeds in secret, to the point that your left hand doesn't even know what your right hand is doing. That's in Matthew chapter six. But in the previous chapter, Jesus talked about how it's okay to do good deeds in a way that people see what you're doing and it's not only done in secret. Take a look...

Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

So in Matthew six, Jesus says to do good deeds in secret. But here He talks about doing good deeds for everyone to see. What's the difference?

The difference is the motivation. Take another look at these verses... “Let your good deeds shine out for all to see...” why? “So that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” So in one instance, Jesus talks against doing good things only for selfish reasons for the praise and recognition you can gain from it. And in this instance, He says it's okay to do good deeds publicly if you are doing them to show people how good God is and to direct people toward Him.

How about you? So, if you are giving to the typhoon victims, whether in secret or not in secret, it doesn't matter. So, Kuya Rey, shall we still keep it a secret that you're giving \$200 to the disaster fund? The point is, we can give in secret or not in secret. If it benefits others and/or glorifies God, it doesn't matter. It all boils down to the motivation.

The third thing that Billy Graham I believe would say to Justin is

3. You have unique abilities, but maintain humility.

It really is amazing how quickly Justin Bieber's star has risen. A year and a half ago, I hadn't even heard of Justin Bieber. But he's since become one of the

best-selling recording artists and most recognizable names and faces in the world, as well as dominating Twitter and YouTube. Which makes you wonder if he can stay grounded in reality.

So I think Billy Graham would say, “Justin, you do have some level of skill and ability. You are able to entertain the masses. Plus, you’ve got a lot of charisma. But don’t let it go to your head. Remember where that all came from. It came from Jesus. So don’t get proud; don’t get an inflated ego. Remember to practice humility and to think about others.”

You know, this is perhaps the greatest trapping of fame, especially for those who hit it big at an early age. You see it all the time. How many child stars and teen heartthrobs have you seen utterly ruined as a result of their fame? It’s easy for us to become full of ourselves and begin to think that we’re more important than we really are, while at the same time looking down on others. We’re actually warned against this in the New Testament book of Romans, chapter 12...

Romans 12:3-5 (NLT)

“Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.”

Now, I do not believe that God wants us to develop an inferiority complex. That’s not what humility is. Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less. God want us to recognize our strengths and weaknesses and to know what we’re good at. But God does not want us to develop a superiority complex either.

In the next book in the New Testament—1st Corinthians—we’re reminded that even though we might have specific abilities that empower us to make a

unique contribution to the Church and to society, the contributions that others make are just as important if not more important. And that includes those who don't receive as much recognition or as much credit for what they do.

1 Corinthians 12:22-23 (NLT)

“Some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care.”

Finally, Billy Graham would say

4. Stay true to your faith.

Earlier, I read a quote from Justin Bieber. He went on in that same interview to say...

“I’m a Christian, I believe in God, I believe that Jesus died on a cross for my sins. I believe that I have a relationship and I’m able to talk to Him and really, He’s the reason I’m here, so I definitely have to remember that. As soon as I start forgetting, I’ve got to click back and be like, you know, this is why I’m here.”

~ Justin Bieber in an interview with The Associated Press

Now, I don't know Justin Bieber. From what I understand his mother is a Christian, and she really struggled with the idea of her son being signed to a secular recording contract. She would have preferred a Christian label with a Christian agent and manager. And so at that time she actively sought the advice and prayers of her church.

I also understand that kids do not inherit faith. Just because a parent is a Christ-follower does not mean that the child will be. But from that quote, it appears that he at least has a head-knowledge about Jesus and about what's really important. He knows the importance of having faith in Christ and receiving the forgiveness that Jesus offers. And I hope it goes beyond a head-knowledge. I truly

hope he has a solid faith in Jesus and that he remains true to it throughout his life.

Now, I know Justin Bieber is just a teenager... he's still young... and he'll need to work out his faith over the years.

But I've got to say, I'm concerned about him because I've heard other young stars say similar things and then go on to throw everything away.

I think anyone that's in the spotlight like Justin could use our prayer support.

God has a purpose for his life just like for any of us. But do you know he was born out of wedlock? His mom was a teen-ager when she conceived him and she was a Christian. Many told her to get an abortion but she didn't because of her faith. God honored that by giving her a talented and famous child. Justin Bieber needs our prayers so that he can use his platform to give glory to God.

Just think about the impact on our culture someone like Justin Bieber could have if he lives a life of integrity and remains devoted to following Jesus. And think about the impact your prayers could have if your prayers help make that happen.

I think Billy Graham would remind Bieber to not neglect his faith... to consistently seek to grow and know Jesus better. Billy Graham should know because he himself did not neglect his faith for 95 years and consistently sought to grow and know Jesus better. Because of that, untold millions have come to know Jesus through his ministry. He has become famous all around the world that heads of states in the US and nations around the world sought him for advice and counsel through the years. Because of his humility and integrity, he has always been on the top ten of America's most admired men since 1955. He has tried to guard his integrity so much that he wouldn't ride an elevator if there was only a woman and him alone in it. Unless it was his wife. And he wouldn't drive a car with only a woman as a passenger. Unless it was his wife.

Now, I think Billy Graham would also warn Justin about worldviews and beliefs that might dilute or minimize his faith.

I think he would tell Bieber the same thing that Paul told Timothy...

1 Timothy 4:16 (NIV/NLT)

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.”

1 Timothy 6:9-12 (NLT)

“...People who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.”

I think Graham would say something similar to Justin Bieber, because the alternative is that Bieber’s faith could be pushed more and more to the background. Even if he doesn’t completely turn his back on Jesus, it’s possible that he just neglects his relationship with Jesus until He’s no longer that important to him. If that happens—even if Bieber continues to set a good example and do good things—he will have lost the most important thing in his life. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John wrote about how this happened to an entire church. Writing in the words of Jesus, this church was told...

Revelation 2:2-5 (NIV)

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance... You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown

weary. “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen!”

I’m concerned that this could happen to Justin Bieber. I’m concerned this could happen to each and every one of us, too, if we allow the busyness of life—even good things—to crowd Jesus out. In a marriage, you have to intentionally devote time for each other. It’s the same way in our relationship with Jesus. We have to intentionally make time for Him.

When he was 17, Bieber was recently asked about his views on abortion. And he responded by saying that he didn’t believe in abortion because it’s killing a baby. I guess he realized that he himself wouldn’t exist in this world if not for his God-fearing mom. Nevertheless, he took an unpopular stand in a world that goes against it. The standard line is that a woman has the right to control her own body and so it’s a personal decision. But instead of trying to stay politically correct or neutral, Bieber made his thoughts known and expressed his faith in defending the life of the unborn. And I applaud him for that.

So let me ask you, are you true to your faith? Is it a priority to you, and do you nurture your relationship with Jesus? Or do you neglect it? Are you vulnerable to the competing worldviews today? Are you willing to compromise Bible values because of the opinions of those around you? Are you willing to overlook certain sins just because it’s considered normal in our world today?

Listen, as Christ-followers, we need to extend compassion and understanding and tolerance toward others, even toward those who do things and say things we don’t agree with. There are a lot of issues that are not cut and dry, and people face difficult decisions and impulses. But at the same time, we cannot condone sin. We can understand the struggles people face, empathize with them,

and support them. But we can't condone sin.

Okay. I'm sure Billy Graham would have a few other things to say, too, but those are four of the things I think he would say to Justin Bieber. They're four things he would say to us, too.

[POWERPOINT – Review main points]

Remember that people are looking up to you. Even the most introverted of us, like me, will impact 10,000 other people during the course of our lives, so set the best example possible. One way you can do that is by taking advantage of opportunities to do good. Get involved in acts of compassion, not because of any personal benefit but because you want to express the love of God to the people around you. So, remember our offering later on for the typhoon victims.

Be careful, though, not to let it go to your head. No matter how much good you do and no matter how much you accomplish in life, stay humble and considerate of others. Don't look down on anyone.

And most importantly, do not neglect your faith. Consistently seek after Jesus. Get to know him better all the time. Don't allow him to be pushed to the sidelines; keep him and his ways central in your life.

Let us Pray.....