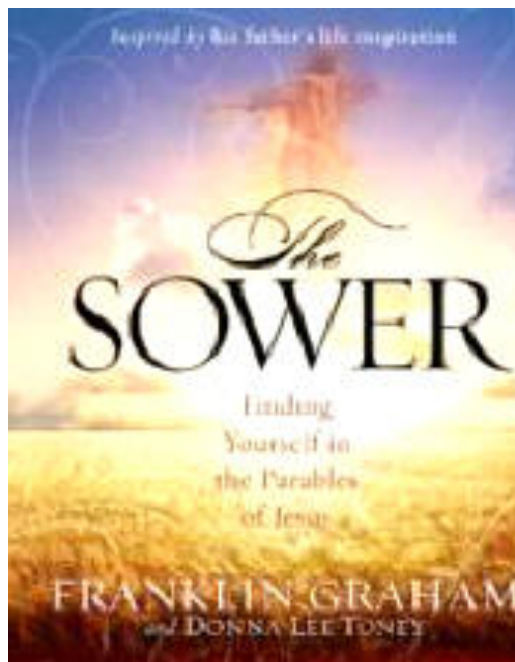


The Sower: Finding Yourself In The Parables Of Jesus

By Michael Ireland
Special Correspondent, ASSIST News Service

INSPIRED by his father's example, Franklin Graham encourages readers to follow in Jesus' footsteps in his new book, *The Sower: Finding Yourself In The Parables Of Jesus* (Worthy Publishing), due in stores October 2012.

Focusing on Jesus' famous parable of the sower, Graham challenges Christians to find greater purpose through a practical 31-day devotional.



Cover artwork for 'The Sower'
(Courtesy BGEA).

'In his new book, Franklin Graham speaks to the life work he and his father, Billy Graham, have undertaken in spreading the Gospel through an examination of one of Jesus' most poignant parables,' said Byron Williamson, President of Worthy Publishing. 'The parable of *The Sower* is one of the Graham family's favourite Scriptures and is representative of their meaningful ministry.'

Using traditional and social media and speaking opportunities,

Franklin regularly speaks to current moral and social issues, challenging Christians to make a difference in the world. As an evangelist and relief worker, he has met the physical and spiritual needs of those suffering in more than 100 countries.



Franklin Graham
(Courtesy BGEA).

Franklin Graham serves as President and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the international relief organization Samaritan's Purse – respected not-for-profit organizations with combined annual budgets of more than \$464 million. He has met privately with five US Presidents, as well as world leaders from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In an interview with ASSIST News, Franklin Graham first gave an update on how his father, Dr Billy Graham, is doing.

‘Well, you know, my father is ninety-four, he’ll be ninety-four next month. He is still doing well and he just finished a book which will be out later next year, and is now working on another one. So he’s staying busy.’

Franklin Graham said he turned 60 this year, and on his birthday asked Dr Graham what time of day he was born, ‘in the morning, the afternoon, the evening, do you remember?’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘it was in the afternoon.’ He said he was talking about a crusade in England ‘and they came in and said “you have a son”. And so I couldn’t even believe that he could remember the man’s name much less the time of day!’

Franklin then described what the new book is about.

‘Well first, it’s just taking this parable in Mark, which is Mark chapter four, and Matthew thirteen and Luke eight. It’s an important parable because first of all I think it’s to remind us

Christians of the responsibility that we have in taking the seed, the Word of God, to the ends of the Earth, realizing as we go and as we distribute God's Word that some of it is snatched away, some of it doesn't grow in people's lives. Some of it withers after a time, but yet it does produce a crop. And Jesus just took this parable of a farmer sowing that seed and illustrated it – how it impacted the lives of the people who get the seed.



The sculpture of The Sower and The Soils at the Billy Graham Library (Courtesy BGEA)

‘Now my father has always thought that he was a sower. There was an artist rendering of my father years ago in Yugoslavia when my father preached there back during the communist times and they did an oil painting of my father, and it was a Yugoslav farmer, but yet he had my father's face painted on this Yugoslav farmer's clothing and he was out in the field and it was Billy Graham sowing the seed. My father looked at that and he said “that's really what I am. I'm a sower. I'm taking the Word of God and sowing it to as many people as I possibly can.” So that's kind of the inspiration (behind the book and sculpture).’

He explained: ‘But it's a thirty-one day devotional just taking the sower, breaking it down as some of the attributes of Christ, and how we can use it in our own lives. So it's meant for someone just to pick up and spend a few minutes with each day. I hope it can be used as a way to encourage a person to understand that we have a responsibility every day to take God's Word to share with others.’

What does Franklin think the Parable of the Sower meant to its first hearers and what does it mean for us today?

‘Well first of all, I think for the first hearers they didn't understand it – the disciples didn't understand it. Jesus had to explain it to them. So it's interesting – He sits by the water and He's sharing this parable with those that are on the ground sowing seed on the ground and He's sitting on the water and shares this parable. Of course, when He shares the parable He goes back to explain that the seed is the Word of God, the field is the world, and then how some seed doesn't land in good soil but it lands on the byways and the birds of the air come and pick up that seed and do away with it. And then He explains how the devil will take the Word of God and he will snatch it away from a person. And then some seed falls on shallow ground and it doesn't grow, it doesn't have any root, it doesn't have any depth. Some seed falls in the thorns and the thorns are the cares of this world and a person can be deceived by the deceitfulness of riches and the Word of God is choked out of a person's life. And I think for the believer we have to understand that as we read God's Word and study God's Word this happens to us. It can happen to us every day. So we have to be aware of it.

‘I found in my own life that I can listen to a great message at church and can go home and forget it within a few minutes. When asked what did the preacher preach on this morning – well let's see, it was, let's see what was that now? And it's already snatched away.

‘And I find that we as believers, we have to practise, and we have to read and reread. Sometimes when I go home from church I'll pull out the Scripture that the pastor went over and I'll read it again just so that I've driven it into myself. If I'm out on the road and I listen to a good tape, I'll sometimes listen to it two or three times just so it takes root in my life. And I find for myself sometimes just reading a passage one time is not enough – I have to read it two or three times and really meditate on it. And I think as we meditate on it, this is when it begins to take root, and it begins to go deep into our hearts and into our lives.

‘So for all of us believers I think this soil is played out in our lives every week, maybe every day, and we have to be conscious of it and be aware of it. And then how do we see a harvest as we share the Word of God with other people. We are all called to be

sowers ... You know, I have people sometimes say “well Franklin your father was an evangelist and you're an evangelist, but that's not what I do. That's not my gift.” I'm not talking about a gift, I'm just talking about being faithful.'

Franklin was asked why is this parable so meaningful to his family and what meaning does it have for him personally?

'Well I think that because of my own father and the effect that he has on my life and still has at ninety-four years of age – he is still concerned about seeing people come to faith in Christ. He's working on an evangelistic program for this next year, It's called *My Hope With Billy Graham* for his ninety-fifth birthday. And it could possibly be one of the largest evangelistic efforts in the history of the USA. Here my father at ninety-four isn't stopping, he isn't quitting. He may be slow. Sometimes I'll ask 'Dad let's go out and get a hamburger today.' 'Oh son, I don't think I want to do that.' 'Oh come on let's go.' Then I'll try to egg him on and he'll say wait till you're ninety-four (laughs). So he's slowed down, but he hasn't stopped – he still sees himself today as that sower. So this parable means a lot to our family just because of our father and watching him throughout his entire life being faithful in taking the Word of God and sowing it wherever he goes.'

Franklin concluded: 'Well again we have a responsibility, and I'm just thankful that my son Will preaches the Gospel and all of my children love the Lord and are a witness in the fields where God has placed them. And that's important – it's the field that God has placed us in to be faithful in sowing that field. We still have a great job to do, and it's not done yet.'

** ANS would like to thank Robin Frost for transcribing this interview.

Michael Ireland is an Internet Journalist who served as Chief Correspondent and Senior International Correspondent for ASSIST News Service [ASSIST News Service](#). between 1998 and 2012. Michael now writes news and feature articles for ASSIST News as a Special Correspondent. He is an international British freelance journalist who was formerly a reporter with a London (United Kingdom) newspaper and has been a frequent contributor to UCB UK, a British Christian radio station.