

Spiritual Lineage

Imagine yourself watching a football game at a sold-out stadium with a capacity of 80,000 people. That's a lot of people, all watching the same game. That same number of people – 80,000 -- is an estimate of how many people the average person will meet in their lifetime. That's 80,000 opportunities to interact with others.



Now, change the scene, and picture yourself in Heaven. What if 80,000 souls came up to you and told you that you were the reason they were in Heaven? It was your influence, your pointing to Jesus Christ, and modeling Jesus' behavior that inspired them. *Because of you*, they accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Living in the eternity of Heaven is a lot more significant than a 60-minute football game. At the football game, win or lose, when the final whistle blows, everyone goes home to resume their earthly (and yes, sinful) life. In God's Kingdom, there is no final whistle. Followers of Christ *are* home.

For certain, unless we are Billy Graham speaking to thousands each night, we share our faith one person at a time, but we have 80,000 opportunities. How you influence others is your "spiritual lineage."

Your spiritual lineage is not a straight-line mathematical equation but the result of a multiplication of influence. Many of the people you "win for Christ" will do the same for others they meet. It is your ministry, and it will have a positive effect for generations to come. Look at Billy Graham, for example. How did he get his start in the ministry?

- In 1855, Sunday School teacher **Ed Kimball** had a student named **D.L. Moody** in his class. Kimball led Moody to Christ and Moody went on to be one of the great evangelists of all time.
- In the 1870s, a man named **J. Wilbur Chapman** heard Moody preach and became a follower of Jesus Christ. Thanks to Moody, Chapman devoted his life as a Presbyterian evangelist, traveling the country for Christ.
- In his ministry, Chapman hired a former Major League Baseball player, **Billy Sunday**, to lead revivals in Charlotte, North Carolina. Sunday became one of America's top preachers in the early 1900s.
- In 1934, Billy Sunday brought radio evangelist, **Mordecai Ham**, to preach at a revival in Charlotte. Ham was a well-known Baptist evangelist, who began his ministry in 1901.
- Sixteen-year-old **Billy Graham** was converted to Christianity after hearing Ham preach at that Charlotte revival. Graham was initially reluctant, but became the best-known evangelist of our generation, leading crusades all over the world that have led many people to Jesus Christ.
- The lineage continues. Graham's son, **Franklin Graham**, frequently preaches at revivals worldwide and is the President of Samaritan's Purse, an organization that provides emergency relief to people impacted by hurricanes, famines, earthquakes, and wars.
- It continues: **Jonathan Lotz**, Billy Graham's grandson, has dedicated his life to sharing the Gospel worldwide, including a Christian Leadership Conference that I helped coordinate in our area.

The point is the spiritual lineage of Billy Graham started with *one* man – a Sunday School teacher named Ed Kimball. The “domino effect” of Kimball’s effort continues today. How about you? You don’t have to be the CEO of a Christian organization or be an eloquent worldwide preacher to have an impact on others. Our church recently honored a retired staff member who, for more than 30 years, stood at the door to welcome and connect with people seeking the Lord. A motto of our church is “connecting people to Jesus, for eternity.” She never preached, but people are headed for Heaven because of her. You can inspire others by sharing your faith, teaching Sunday School, talking with people in your neighborhood or workplace, and informally having spiritual conversations over coffee with a friend in need. You can bring others to Heaven with you. It doesn’t take a divinity degree. Just be you, and God will do the rest. Then, when you get to Heaven, people may crowd around you, saying, “I’m here because of you. Thank you!” We won’t lead 80,000 to faith, but each one is a victory.

The Bible Says: *We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:20).*

Exercise: Look up 5 scripture verses about sharing your faith. (Type: “sharing your faith scripture”.)

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to share our faith with others. We pray that others will come to faith through us. Amen.

