

# Wife of evangelist Billy Graham close to death

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## Ruth Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham, dead at 87

**By Matt Kennedy**

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MONTREAT, N.C. (ABP)—Ruth Graham, the wife of evangelist Billy Graham, died June 14 at her home at Little Piney Cove in Montreat, N.C. She was 87.

An author, philanthropist, Congressional Gold Medal winner and mother of five, Graham fell into a coma June 13. Her health declined rapidly from a bout with pneumonia a few weeks prior. She had been bedridden for several years with degenerative osteoarthritis.

At her request, Graham had stopped receiving nutrients through a feeding tube for the last few days of her life, a spokesman for the family said.

Graham was laid to rest in a private funeral June 17 in the recently dedicated Billy Graham Library. A public funeral service took place June 16 in the Anderson Auditorium at the Montreat Conference Center in Montreat, N.C.

Billy Graham, who has Parkinson's disease, prostate cancer and fluid on the brain, announced earlier this year that he will be buried beside his wife in

the garden when he dies. In a public statement, Graham discussed his love for his wife of nearly 64 years.

“I am so grateful to the Lord that he gave me Ruth, and especially for these last few years we’ve had in the mountains together,” Graham said. “We’ve rekindled the romance of our youth, and my love for her continued to grow deeper every day. I will miss her terribly and look forward even more to the day I can join her in heaven.”

In a 2005 interview with Larry King, Billy Graham was asked whether he would like to die before his wife.

“Well, I'd like to see us hold hands and go together because I love her so much,” he responded. “And I love her more now. Interestingly, I love her more now, and we have more romance now, than we did when we were young. We both agree to that.”

While her husband went on long crusades around the world, Ruth Graham often looked after their two sons and three daughters, who are all involved in ministry in some capacity.

Her eldest son, Franklin Graham, who leads the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association founded by his father, described his mother’s strength in a public statement.

“My father would not have been what he is today if it wasn’t for my mother,” Franklin said. “She stood strong for what was biblically correct and accurate. She would help my father prepare his messages, listening with an attentive ear, and if she saw something that wasn’t right or heard something that she felt wasn’t as strong as it could be, she was a voice to strengthen this or eliminate that. Every person needs that kind of input in their life, and she was that to my father.”

Ruth Graham had endured frail health since 1995, when she contracted

spinal meningitis. She previously had developed a degenerative back condition in 1974 that resulted in chronic back pain. Bedridden or wheelchair-bound since the late 1990s, Ruth continued to provide a source of inspiration and support for Billy Graham through her prayers and counsel, a statement from the family said.

Graham is survived by her husband, Billy; daughters Virginia, Anne Morrow and Ruth Bell; sons Franklin and Nelson; 19 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren.

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