

# Hoover Tells Graham of

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover discussed how his Christian principles shape his life and the FBI in a copyright interview in the July issue of "Decision," a publication of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The interview is reprinted here with permission of "Decision" and Hoover.

**Q.** Mr. Hoover, what does Jesus Christ mean to you personally? That is to say, how do you regard him, and how does he affect your life?

**A.** For me Jesus is a living reality. He is truly man's hope for joy and salvation. No matter what problems confront me, I know that I can count on our Redeemer for strength and courage.

**Q.** Could you describe the Christian atmosphere of your childhood?

**A.** Ours was truly a Christian home. Both of my parents took very seriously their responsibility of providing for the spiritual as well as the material needs of their children. We attended church as a family, and my father and mother accompanied us to Sunday School. The Bible played a vital role in our home life, and we gathered regularly for family worship.

**Q.** Was there some point in your youth when you made a commitment to Christ by faith? Could you tell us where and when?

**A.** Because I grew up in a Christian home, I feel that Christ has always been a part of my life. My commitment to him has been strengthened through the years because of the many dedicated Christians I have been privileged to meet and know. For example, a young Presbyterian minister, Dr. Don-

ald Campbell MacLeod, provided a truly Christ-like example for me as a teen-ager. The courageous and selfless efforts of my associates in the FBI continue to renew my faith. And the countless living testimonies of citizens who work tirelessly for the betterment of society are a constant source of strength in my own commitment to Christ.

**Q.** In what church did you grow up? How did it influence your outlook on life?

**A.** As a young boy I attended Sunday school at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Washington, D.C. I also sang in the choir there, and occasionally I was a soloist. As assistant Sunday school superintendent I was given the opportunity of assuming responsibility in my church. Later I attended the Presbyterian church of which I am now a member. My early life in the church helped me to understand the personal responsibilities each of us must accept in providing a moral and spiritual example for others, both in word and in deed.

**Q.** Could you tell us about the way you were taught the Bible?

**A.** My parents read the Word of God aloud and explained its meaning to us children. They made it relevant to us so that we could look to the Bible as a guide for our daily lives. For me the Bible is a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

**Q.** Could you relate for us any particular instance in which you remember prayer being answered in a way that was helpful?

**A.** Yes, I can. I recall vividly an instance just before Christmas, 1968. A college student, Barbara Jane Mackle,

was kidnaped on Dec. 17 in Decatur, Ga. Kidnaping is one of the most atrocious of crimes. Every available resource of the FBI was mobilized to locate the young girl. Time was of the essence and clues were few.

Three days later an anonymous phone call was received by our Atlanta office. In an excited voice the caller gave directions for finding a "capsule."

FBI agents raced to the location given by the anonymous caller. It was an area wild and uninhabited, with many vines, scrub bushes and trees. I was informed by telephone of the tip given by the anonymous caller. It was my associates, I knew we would need help beyond ourselves to find the young girl.

Our agents searched frantically. They were alert for any possible clue—a spot of disturbed ground, a broken twig, a scarred piece of bark. As the December day began to grow dark, the agents wondered, "Was the anonymous call only a cruel hoax?"

Then there came a shout from an agent deep in the woods. He had found what appeared to be freshly dug earth. Agents quickly converged on this spot and could hear a knocking noise from under the ground. They began to dig furiously with shovels and boards, even with bare hands. Soon a wooden box was uncovered. In it was Barbara Mackle, shocked and hungry, but alive. She had been buried in the "capsule" for some 84 hours.

We in the FBI believe that our prayers made the difference that day.

**Q.** What are the Christian qualities you seek to inculcate in the young agents whom you train, and how do you go about it?

# Christian Influence

A. The FBI plays a critical role in American society. Our investigations affect the lives, reputations and status of many citizens. For that reason we must have special agents of unimpeachable personal character, integrity and honesty. Their investigations must be scrupulously fair and impartial, reporting the facts without prejudice or error. They must be above the temptations of bribery and dishonesty. We carefully investigate the backgrounds of applicants for FBI employment to determine their reputation, character and ability. The success of the FBI stems in large part from the high moral standards required of all our personnel.

Q. How can the churches help reinvigorate character and morality in people today?

A. One of the great tragedies of the free world today is a decline of moral values—honesty, integrity and fair play. Crime rates have jumped drastically. An increasing number of people—both youthful and adult—feel that the law need not be obeyed. Many are disrespectful toward law enforcement officers and our judicial system. Often they are selfish, arrogant and disdainful of the rights of others.

Church men and women should speak out forthrightly for what is right, good and noble. The voice of the church is a powerful and meaningful voice—and it should ring forth loudly and clearly on behalf of those moral principles, which underlie our society. Too frequently today Christians are silent in the midst of injustice when the law is violated. Too frequently Christians are not ready to do their share as

citizens. Christians have an obligation, both individually and through their churches, to stand up for freedom, the dignity of the individual, and those moral principles, which alone make life worth living.

Q. Do you see a connection between the subversion of morality and the threat to the national security from outside enemies?

A. American's best protection lies in the integrity, morality, honesty and patriotism of its own citizens. The foreign enemy is always hoping to find the disloyal person, the individual who for a few pieces of silver or other material reward will betray his country. To a large extent this is how the Soviets, for example, attempt to recruit spies inside the United States. They contact a prospect, and endeavor to find a weakness in his personality that can be exploited. If they discover that this individual is willing to steal confidential data from his employer or to help them in other ways, they will readily pay him money. A nation that has lost its reliance on moral values is a nation doomed to extinction.

Q. What would you say to a young person today who is considering the claims of Christ upon his life?

A. I would tell him to accept Christ fully and joyously and to do everything humanly possible to follow his principles. This is a lifelong commitment. It means that every decision you make, large or small, at home or in the office, touching your own life or the lives of others, must be made in the light of that commitment to a higher authority. In this way, I believe, personal faith is nurtured.



J. EDGAR HOOVER  
... 'accept Christ'

In my career as director of the FBI, I have seen too frequently what happens when young people forget God, scorn the teachings of Jesus, and mock the moral laws. Crime is today ruining the lives of thousands of young people who feel they are above the laws of society and the universe; they lack a personal faith based on morality and divine teachings. The time to acquire this knowledge of God is in the home and at Sunday school and church. This knowledge becomes the measure of our daily lives.