

## **Red River Valley GO TELL Crusade: Paris, TX**

More than 700 commitments for Christ were made during the Paris, Texas GO TELL Crusade May 15-18, 2016 in the football stadium of Paris High School.

Around 8,000 people attended the four-night crusade.

In February, about 400 pastors and church members from more than 20 churches across Paris, Texas attended the GO TELL Crusade Kick-Off Banquet in preparation for the crusade.

“It takes time, money and involvement to reach lost people; and that’s what GO TELL Crusades are all about – reaching the unsaved,” said Evangelist Rick Gage, founder and president of GO TELL Crusades based in Atlanta, Georgia.

Pastor and Director of Missions of the Red River Valley Baptist Association in Paris, Texas, Mike Fortenberry said, “In January of 2015, a group of Christian laymen and pastors met to discuss the possibility of a second areawide crusade with Evangelist Rick Gage. Rick and his team led a very successful crusade in May of 2014 with almost 1,000 spiritual decisions in four nights. It is unusual to have a second crusade in only two years, but God burdened our hearts with the lost condition of those in our communities.

“A date was set; the crusade team was enlisted; and for 18 months, the Steering Committee met nearly every Tuesday morning for prayer and crusade planning and preparation. In this crusade, God led us to do some pre-crusade events in an effort to prepare the churches of our area for a move of God,” Fortenberry said.

“We began with a Hispanic rally, which brought area Hispanic churches together in order to reach an ever-growing population in our community. Next we focused on men in the church being revived. Dr. Johnny Hunt did a Saturday morning Men's Conference, and God moved in a mighty way. Lisa Harper came to First Baptist Church Paris to a full house on a Thursday night and called the women of God to a deeper walk and a more personal intimacy with the Heavenly Father. A time of brokenness and prayer followed the challenge,” Fortenberry said.

Just days before the crusade, Dr. Fred Luter came to an area prayer rally and preached on the power and need of prayer if we were to see God at work in the crusade as well as in bringing a spiritual awakening to America. God allowed special assemblies to be held in more than 20 junior high and high schools as gifted speakers Ken Freeman and Steve Paysen gave a message of hope, happiness and power for those students who understood the importance of making wise choices. “The voices you listen to will affect the choices you make’,” Fortenberry added.

“Finally, Sunday night, May 15 arrived; and from the beginning, we knew we were in God's presence as He moved in the hearts and lives of thousands of people. The 25-plus sponsoring churches followed up with hundreds of people. There were around 500 salvations - many who wanted to be baptized - as well as those who came forward for rededication, repentance, etc.,” Fortenberry said.

“Beginning in September, our steering committee will begin meeting again to see what new adventure the Lord has for us. I am sure another Rick Gage GO TELL Crusade lies ahead in our future!” Fortenberry added.

At the pre-crusade youth rally when more than 60 commitments to Christ were made, the rally was held inside the North Lamar High School Auditorium, where GO TELL Associate Evangelist Steve Paysen shared the Gospel.

The Rick Gage GO TELL Team also held around 20 ON TRACK school assemblies with a total attendance of 16,000 students, warning them of the dangers of alcohol, drugs, sexual abuse, bullying and sex outside of marriage. The GO TELL Team spoke to two football teams and saw 27 football players make commitments to Christ.

Along with the Rev. Gage, speakers included Tony Nolan and Ken Freeman. Worship was led by Chuck Sullivan, and illusionist Bryan Drake performed during the school assemblies.

Callie Coursey said, “The first night of the crusade, when the altar call was made, I was standing with the counselors when my neighbor (middle school age) walked up to me with tears streaming down her face. I know her family, and their relationship with God is very strong; so I asked her what was wrong. Her response broke me and made me see there IS hope for the generation we are raising.

“She said, ‘I'm worried about my best friend. She says she's a Christian, but I never hear her talk about church and she doesn't act like it much. I just love her so much and I don't want to spend forever without her,’” Coursey recalled.

“She made a promise that night to be praying for her friend. The last night of the event, she came running up to me with her friend in tow, wanting to introduce her. That sweet baby's prayers were answered, and her best friend was saved that night,” Coursey said.

Chris Kelley, pastor of The Gospel Lighthouse in Powderly, Texas, said, “On the first night of the crusade, Christopher Dickson, a 14-year-old young man who had attended our church sporadically, responded to the message and recommitted his life to Christ. The following night, Christopher brought his mom, stepdad and three young cousins to the crusade with him. That night, two of his cousins, Jeremiah and Marcus, who are 8 and 12, accepted Christ!

“Christopher's mom, who was dealing with the effects of cancer treatments, became ill and had to leave the service early. The following night, she told Christopher that she would like to come but, due to being sick, couldn't attend but wanted someone to come talk to her about Christ. So after service, we went and shared the message of Christ with her and she accepted Christ into her life!” Kelley said.

“We praise God for the ministry of GO TELL Crusades and, most of all, for the saving power of Jesus Christ!” Kelley added.

Wade White said, “There was a man who had come to the Cowboy Church in the camp to attend his dad's funeral a while back. He felt welcome at the funeral and asked where his father's seat was. He told me he was going to fill that seat every week, and he did.

“Well, a few months later, it was crusade time, and he attended the crusade. On the second night, he said he knew something was different. He found himself down on the field, seeking to know his Heavenly Father that night. The next day, he came over to my lot to tell me he wanted to be baptized. He said he was camping out at the lake, and we could go out there and get it done. I talked him into waiting until the following Sunday; so his aunt, who had prayed for a very long time for him to accept Jesus as his Savior, could come in from out of town to see him get baptized,” White said.

Lonny Parson recalled, “I had the privilege of counseling a young man who was an athlete at Paris High School. This young man attends a local church but just needed to talk to someone to be reassured that his salvation was real. He knew he needed to give some things he had been holding onto over to God, and he wanted a closer relationship with the Lord. After a long talk, he prayed to rededicate his life to his Lord and Savior and was excited to share his decision with his own pastor for accountability.”

Stephanie Anderson-Leonard said, “One night during the 2014 Rick Gage Crusade, the crusade had to be moved inside the Paris Junior High Auditorium due to rain, and none of my friends were able to come join me to check out what this was. I ended up sitting all by myself that night and almost left. Brother MikeFortenberry invited me to stay and enjoy the service anyway. As Rick Gage was speaking, he seemed to be talking to me like he knew exactly what I was struggling with. My whole life, I was raised by friends and family members, which resulted in me not being able to be a member of a church too long. I knew I was missing something in my life and just never knew what it was.

“When the altar call came, I ran right up there, tears falling down my face. Despite the hundreds of people there, I couldn't stop myself from going up there. As we were being led out, Brother Mike (a man I had met earlier who did an interview for the radio station when I was selling ads for the 2014 crusade) had tears in his eyes as well as hugged me. He told me he knew I was

fighting something when we met and had been praying for me throughout the service. I was saved that night, and it changed my life forever,” Anderson-Leonard commented.

“This year I returned to the crusade as a counselor and volunteer. Over the whole week of the crusade, I was hooked. I showed up to every noon luncheon and every night service. It was the greatest experience of my life. I got to work with young children to elderly adults. I was blessed enough to witness God make a difference in our community. Hundreds of people got saved that week. Every night I made it a point to invite everyone I knew” she said.

“The last night, I was shocked to see one of my best friends get saved and not because she was a troubled, too-far-gone person – quite the opposite actually. She was an avid church member who sang in the choir every Sunday. I was shocked because, all of this time, I had been putting my energy into helping my ‘troubled friends’ when she was fighting a silent battle the whole time. That goes to show you that everyone needs God – even the ones you assume might already have Him in their lives. I was able to pray over her that night. Right after that, the two of us noticed a group of young girls with no one to talk to, and we joined them and were able to pray over them and lead them to the Lord as well. The GO TELL crusade is an amazing experience and will change the lives of everyone involved,” she added.