

Evangelist Rick Gage sees harvest of 1,900 souls

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Nearly 2,000 people made commitments to Christ in Van and Paris, Texas during two recent Rick Gage GO TELL Crusades.

During the Red River Valley GO TELL Crusade in Paris, Texas, about 1,000 people made spiritual decisions for Christ in four nights "and two of those nights were hampered with cold and rain," said Joe H. Iglehart of Paris, Texas.

Of GO TELL Ministries, Iglehart added, "This organization is incredibly organized and does a fantastic job of working with the local people. The big key to having a successful Crusade is having good local leadership that will properly prepare with prayer and fundraising. The music is awesome and the preaching powerful, making for an incredible worship experience."

As Prayer Chairman of the Free State GO TELL Crusade in Van, Texas, Dr. Mike Burns, senior pastor of Victory Church in Canton, Texas, for 23 years, said 158 people signed up for the prayer team. "We had nine prayer walks at the stadium and schools, where the events would be held. There were prayer captains from different churches who led prayer meetings in their churches as well as at weekly home prayer meetings. Before each night of the Crusade, prayer meetings also were conducted" at Van Memorial Football Stadium.

Ashley Simms, one of the 350 counselors in Van (with 300 more in Paris), recalled, "An excitement filled the air on the first night, especially after we watched a storm that had produced tennis ball-sized hail in the surrounding areas split in two and go around the stadium where the event was hosted. God was already showing off, and we loved it!"

Dr. Burns said, "We wanted the kind of prayer that brought results. Souls saved. Families restored. Freedom and restoration in hearts and lives. Youth and churches set ablaze. This is what we wanted for our county. And this is what we got!"

Concerning the hundreds of salvation decisions instead of the rededications he was expecting, Dr. Burns observed, "I was so grateful, but somewhat surprised, at how many 'first-time' decisions for Jesus Christ were made during the Crusade. This revelation has made me reevaluate what biblical content I am preaching and to whom I am preaching on Sunday morning and any other time for that matter."

Shelby Davidson, principal of Van Middle School, recalled, "What a joy to see people in our community and adjoining communities worshiping and praising the Lord together. At the invitation the first night, the response was overwhelming. I was amazed at watching the invitation each night as hundreds came forward to make decisions. On the last night of the Crusade, our home side of the stadium was almost filled to capacity of over 3,000 for the first time ever. I told my 15-year-old son, on the way home that night, that in my 50 years of living in this community, I had never seen anything like this."

The next morning at his school, Mr. Davidson said, "One of my teachers eagerly shared with me that she had led three of her students to Christ the night before as a counselor at the Crusade. Students were bringing their Bibles and having Bible study at lunch. What an awesome outpouring of God's Spirit on this community. I can only hope and pray this is only the beginning. I also look forward to future crusades.

"Thanks to Rick Gage for being faithful in God's call in his life. God has used him in a mighty way in our little community. To God be the glory!" he added.

Also, 17 people made commitments to Christ at the jails and over 60 made spiritual decisions at the pre-crusade youth rallies.

Gage, an international evangelist for 26 years, said of both Crusades, "We really had a great move of God' with people of varying ages telling him they "had never seen anything like it" in their communities. Gage, of GO TELL Ministries in Atlanta, was joined by guest speakers Scott Camp, Adrian Despres and Ken Freeman.

Musical guests were Chuck Sullivan, GO TELL's music director and worship leader for the past 20 years, at both crusades. Sullivan was joined by Malissa Smith at the Van crusade and Joy Fowler at the Paris crusade.

Accompanied by the Real Encounter BMX Bike Team, Gage and his team spoke to more than 7,000 students at every middle school and high school in the counties about the dangers of drugs, alcohol abuse and premarital sex.

Regarding the Van Crusade, Cynthia Harris said, "There has been such a concern for the youth in our area. We have had several young people take their lives over drugs or teenage relationships or just plain hopelessness. I am hopeful that the effects of many decisions for Christ will give renewed hope to youth and their families across our county. We are now involved in plugging people into churches and following up with them. None of that would have come about without the GO TELL Crusade.

"I personally know one mother in her 30s, who was saved during the Crusade and who, since then, has had a very serious brain surgery for cancer. It was thrilling to know, when she went into surgery, that she was saved! Thanks to God, she is recovering from the surgery and they got 85 percent of the tumor," she said.

Mrs. Harris stated, "One thing I really thought was wonderful regarding the GO TELL Crusade effort was how all the churches, NO MATTER WHAT DENOMINATION, worked TOGETHER in unity to share the Gospel and bring people to Christ! I believe that is what the Body of Christ is for, thus, GO TELL! The Crusades are such a wonderful tool to bring unity to area churches and believers as they carry out The Great Commission."

Rhea Lene Nations said, "The Crusade was the MOST powerful event Van has ever seen. The response to Jesus was overwhelming. God only knows the true impact that was made in the lives of those who came. I never, in my wildest dreams, thought I would see responders to Christ lay prostrate out on the football field! Amazing."

Mrs. Simms said she and her husband Elmer were able to talk to a young man who had been among the 100 who had attended a former free gym at their church that they had coordinated. "Oftentimes, we didn't get to see big transformations, but the whole time we knew God was doing more than what we could see. When I found Elmer, he was talking to one of the boys who attended our gym for a while. Immediately, I knew this boy's life had been changed that night. There was no denying it because his face shined with excitement! I said, 'Keaton, you made a decision for Christ tonight, didn't you?'

"He then told us his testimony. That evening, Keaton was on his way home from work when he almost got into a car accident. He didn't even know about the GO TELL Crusade until he saw a sign on the side of the road. He knew he should go but talked himself out of it. He was tired from his labor-intensive job and was still in his dirty work clothes. He told himself he would go on the next night. Then he said he got about a mile down the road before immediately turning around and driving straight up here."

Paris Crusade Youth Chairman Nathan Law of the First Baptist Church of Paris said one young teen, who had been reared in a Muslim family, decided to trust in Jesus for salvation during the Crusade. "How awesome is God for this change." The girl had been forced to quit school by her parents, Law said, and is now living with her aunt.

A retired Nazarene preacher and a son of a Baptist preacher, John D. Hansen of Grand Saline, Texas, said of the Van Crusade, "It was phenomenal and beyond words what was accomplished. I attended every service to see hundreds find Jesus. It was extremely exciting to observe what God was doing in a town I love."

Going forward, Dr. Burns said, "Finally, a lasting effect of the Crusade is the unity among the churches and pastors in the region. This is phenomenal. Already, since the end of the Crusade, pastors have met twice for prayer and discussion as to 'where do we go from here.'

To follow up with the 847 people who made decisions for Christ in Van, "GO TELL Follow-Up" includes pastors who will be meeting at least once a month for prayer and discussion about how to follow up and work at unity and a GO TELL Follow-Up Prayer Walk at the Van Memorial Football Stadium, site of the Crusade, that met on May 18.

As he did during each of the ten weeks before the Crusade, Dr. Burns will continue to send out Go Tell Follow-Up Prayer Blasts through emails each week through the summer.

Also, Rick Gage plans to return to Van for a Go Tell Follow-Up Rally on June 8 at Community Christian Fellowship.

Dr. Burns said he has been invited to visit and share with churches and pastors from several different denominations who are located in two counties south but were not involved in the Crusade. "They have heard and want to know more. God is up to something in East Texas, and it is good. The Fire is still burning, and we are doing all we can to fan the flame. BUT we all know it is the work of the Holy Spirit, who fills us daily, that is working in the hearts of people and pastors."