

Bethel Students See 'Open Heaven' in Missions Outreach

✖ As part of an intensive missions thrust, 55 teams from the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry spanned the globe earlier this year, serving the poor, praying for the sick and reportedly seeing miraculous healings. From Nicaragua to Norway to Thailand, 1,189 students spent up to two weeks in March serving others and expecting an "open heaven" for ministry during the outreach led by Bethel Church in Redding, Calif.

Photo by Julie Peters: Bethel students play with children in a trash dump in Managua, Nicaragua after putting on a concert and feeding the hungry.

"Everything we do is about taking ministry beyond the church, whether it is at Starbucks or in the bush of Africa," said Eric Johnson, director of Bethel's student missions program and the school's second-year students, who graduate Sunday. "We want to equip and deploy revivalists."

This year, which was Bethel's 11th year of sending, eight teams traveled to Mexico, 10 teams to Africa, five teams to Asia and nine teams to Western Europe. The other 23 teams were scattered around the world, from inner-city spots in the United States to the Middle East to Tahiti. The outreach varies from location to location, and can include feeding the poor,

meeting with government officials or ministering through creative arts. Bethel missionaries also pray for healing and impart a message that heaven can invade earth, causing believers to regularly experience the supernatural.

"Everywhere we go we see signs and wonders," Johnson said. "We pray for the sick, and God heals them. Our students learn this prophetic ministry as they lead."

Johnson led a team to Chile, where they linked up with one of the nation's largest evangelical churches. "It was a revival hot spot with Azusa Street manifestations," he said, referring to the revival that launched the modern Pentecostal movement.

"We walked into the churches and God was moving so much that the people just asked us to stay. Miracles happened in every meeting, but that is pretty normal for us."

One man who had been diagnosed with cerebral palsy got out of his wheelchair and started jumping.

His mother testified that he had never been able to do that, Johnson said.

Julie Peters of Bethel Church reported similar healing miracles in Nicaragua. "Amazing things happened," she wrote on the Bethel missions Web site.

"Deaf ears opening, metal disappearing from an arm, a prosthetic eye beginning to see and a paralyzed man feeling his feet being tickled for the first time since he fell out of a mango tree."

Bethel student Ryan Harris reported similar miracles occurring on the streets of Beirut, and Daniel Henderson said he witnessed signs and wonders at an orphanage in Tecate, Mexico.

“We had miracles happening inside our churches and in crusades before, but the distinct Bethel influence is unplanned, spontaneous healing adventures some of our people are doing on their own, in schools, in the workplace and in the streets,” said pastor Miguel Que of Freshwind Global Ministries in the Philippines, who hosted a Bethel team.

Bethel pastor Bill Johnson and prophetic minister Kris Vallotton launched the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry in 1998 with 36 students. As the message of revival and transformation has spread, the school has grown, now attracting 1,250 students from around the world.

The school runs a three-year program, with the first two years including intensive training and a third-year internship tailored for each student. The annual missions thrust is available to every student, provided they raise the money and can clear visa requirements.

Bethel students go to nations that teams feel are open to a prophetic move, and there is usually an invitation to come.

“We go to places that are open, and we see results,” Bethel pastor Bill Johnson told *Charisma*. “Instead of emphasizing how dark the place is, we go expecting an open heaven. Sometimes faith is strongest in darkness. We are not called to be a reaction to the devil. We are called to live lives where we draw more on God.”

Johnson said 30 to 50 students will be deployed for a full year in 2011 as part of the internship program, and many more graduates are expected to go out to the missions field on their own. Second-year students graduate this week, and there already are 840 applicants for 800 first-year slots for the next school year. Some 580 prospective students have applied for 380 second-year slots.

Correction: This story originally named pastor Miguel Que as part of the Cathedral of Praise in Manila, Philippines. He currently leads Freshwind Global Ministries. Charisma regrets the error.