

Nearly 1 Million Make Decisions for Christ in 'Great Awakening' Tour

✖ **May 15, 2009** – South African evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne is on a mission to spark another great awakening that is marked by a wave of evangelism in the U.S. and abroad.

Since February 2007, the pastor of Revival Ministries International (RMI) in Tampa, Fla., has taken his Great Awakening Tour to 50 cities across the U.S., Latin America and Eastern Europe, mobilizing churchgoers to evangelize their communities. So far, the ministry has registered more than 950,000 decisions for Christ.

"I feel I have a mandate from the Lord to mobilize every believer to win souls," said Howard-Browne, who has been leading a Great Awakening training conference at his church this week. "It is not the job of just the evangelist; it is the job of every born-again believer that loves Jesus to win souls. ... One hundred years from today, the only thing that's going to count is souls. Nothing else."

Howard-Browne became well-known in the 1990s for leading revival meetings where participants often laughed uncontrollably after being touched by the power of God. Today Browne's services are still marked by what he describes as joy, and he sees his current emphasis on evangelism as part of the same move of God.

"[Evangelism] was always the focus," said Howard-Browne, who with his wife, Adonica, came to the U.S. as missionaries. "There were always people flocking the altars, but I didn't know how to get them outside."

"People are being touched, but we are now attaching a purpose

to their touch,” Howard-Browne added. “I don’t see this as anything different in my mind. ... I would say it’s the same, and God’s taken us on a journey and it’s evolved into the mobilization of the church to bring in the harvest.”

Howard-Browne said the vision for the Great Awakening tour began in 1999 with his six-week Good News New York evangelistic campaign in Madison Square Garden. Roughly 48,000 people reported decisions for Christ during the event, which was followed in 2000 by a similar outreach in Shreveport, La.

But the cost—more than \$2 million in New York alone—became prohibitive, and Howard-Browne halted the campaign. He re-launched the effort in 2007, partnering with local churches for smaller-scale, 15-day Great Awakening events that each cost roughly \$150,000.

A week of “upper room” revival services is followed by a week of “power evangelism” training and one-on-one ministry in neighborhoods, nursing homes, malls and other gathering places. Volunteers are given a “Gospel Soul-Winning Script” that opens with the question, Has anyone ever told you God loves you and has a plan for your life? The evangelism tool also explains the plan of salvation and takes listeners through the sinner’s prayer.

“The people on the streets are more open to getting saved than the churches are to go win them,” Howard-Browne said. “People are desperate.”

RMI reports that in Baltimore, more than 20,000 people reported decisions for Christ, and in Phoenix some 46,000 people made professions of faith.

“A lot of people wonder why does the script work,” said Eric Gonyon, who with his wife, Jennifer, organizes the Great Awakening conferences. “The script only works ...because it’s the gospel. It’s not anything other than the proclamation of the gospel.”

“People’s reliance upon their personality, their witty, enticing words—all of that withers away and becomes very dim, and the power of the gospel becomes very big,” added Jennifer Gonyon, who developed the script and many of the other evangelism resources used in the training. “[They realize that] all the power is going to come from when I open my mouth and preach the gospel.”

Those who accept Christ are given a DVD explaining what it means to be a Christian, and their names are added to a prayer list and passed along to a local church, unless the teams are evangelizing in schools or nursing homes. Although some question whether the people the teams evangelize have genuinely accepted Christ, Howard-Browne said he ultimately trusts the Holy Spirit.

“Salvation is of the heart, not the head,” Howard-Browne said. “Salvation is not a 16-step process.”

“The work of the Spirit of God is a spirit work,” he added, pointing to Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus in Acts 9.

Mary Fields, a 66-year-old grandmother from Knoxville, Tenn., said after being saved for 24 years she had led only two people to Christ—her son and her granddaughter. But she added that since attending a Great Awakening conference in Chattanooga, Tenn., in October 2007 she has led 344 people to Christ.

The first time she went evangelizing with a team from RMI, she witnessed to a woman in a Chattanooga housing project.

“I read the gospel script, and I didn’t even do a good job reading it,” Fields said. “But you know what, it was the Holy Spirit. And she heard the gospel. She didn’t hear me or even see me, she heard the gospel, and because she heard the gospel, her heart was touched.”

"It is the most amazing thing. And it doesn't matter how many people you talk to, it's like you've never done it before and you're seeing this miracle happen right before your very eyes. So she got the gospel and received it in her heart and she got saved, right there, even though my mouth was like cotton and my knees were knocking."

Fields said she has been a lay minister in her church, leading a home group and even opening a 24-hour prayer room. "I was very involved in ministry," she said. "I was all about Pentecost, and I had been baptized in the Holy Spirit the day I got saved. So how did I miss the message that the purpose of Pentecost is to empower us to be a witness? I sat in the [GAT] meeting that night, and when I heard pastor Rodney say that I almost fell out of my chair. It was a total revelation to me. It was like all the dots started to connect because now I knew what this power was for."

Howard-Browne plans to visit a new city each month and wants to mobilize churches worldwide that will do the same. Next week, the Great Awakening Tour will be in New York, where participating pastors believe they will see 20,000 people come to Christ.

"We can't stop until America is touched," Howard-Browne said. "We've got to bring in this harvest-300 million people. We're close on a million now, but it's not even touching sides. But if we could mobilize the church, it would jump."