

When 10 Percent of a City Prays for Salvation

Jequié, Brazil, is located deep in the interior of the state of Bahia in northeast Brazil. The population of the city is 150,000, and on the final night of our gospel crusade this week, more than 15,000 people gathered in the center of the city to hear the gospel. Virtually every hand was raised when I gave the invitation to receive salvation. For the local pastors who often work for years without a single conversion, this is a harvest of unprecedented size.

For the past month, excitement has been building in Jequié. Billboards and thousands of posters announced that Jesus would do miracles. A huge stage was erected in a parking lot in the middle of the city, and people streamed to the grounds anxious to see what God would do. Lively music greeted them. The atmosphere was full of excitement.

On the first night of the crusade, Jesus did not disappoint the expectant crowd. Three people who were deaf in one ear claimed they were miraculously touched by God and were able to hear. Because of the miracle testimonies, the crowd size doubled the next night.

On the final night of the crusade, I preached a simple gospel message contrasting the kingdom of darkness with the kingdom of light. I asked, "Why come into the kingdom of God?" Then I answered, "Because there is joy, forgiveness and healing in the kingdom of God."

I invited those who wanted to receive Christ to come to the front of the crowd. Counselors from the local churches greeted them. The new believers gave us their names, phone numbers and addresses. We presented each of them with a beautiful Bible.

The next day, local churches used the decision cards to call

each person who made a decision to follow Jesus. The churches formed teams that went out two by two to visit every person who got saved. They arranged a time to meet together to study the Bible. The ultimate goal is to get every new believer plugged into a local church so he or she can be discipled.

The church in this part of Brazil seems weak. Small neighborhood churches of 15 to 20 members are scattered around the community, but it is estimated that before we came to Jequié there were less than 9,000 believers in the entire city.

In São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, the evangelical church is growing quickly. Megachurches with thousands of members are flourishing. However, in the northeast of Brazil, there is a great untouched harvest field of souls waiting. The church in the northeast is anemic, and it is estimated that only 2 to 3 percent of the people in the interior of northeast Brazil are saved.

More than 50 million people live in northeast Brazil—6 million on the coast, with the rest living in the interior of the country. The rural area is affected by constant droughts and plagued by great poverty. Approximately 16 million people live in villages. Thousands of these villages don't have a single Christian witness. The landmass of northeast Brazil is three times larger than all the Central American countries combined.

Salvador, the largest city in the state of Bahia, was the center of the Brazilian slave trade during the mid-16th century. African slaves were captured and taken to Brazil, and they brought their traditional tribal religions with them. Today their descendants continue to practice ancient superstitions. They often mix tribal and indigenous religions with Catholicism and evangelical Christianity.

Witchcraft is common. One woman who came to the crusade was unable to walk because of a curse her neighbor placed on her.

She got saved on the first night of the crusade and started to walk. Many people here are afraid of curses, are hyperaware of the spiritual world and practice rituals similar to Voodoo. Dozens of demonic manifestations took place as we took authority over the powers of darkness. Jesus set people free from a lifetime of demonic oppression.

I worked with Rubens Cunha, a Brazilian evangelist who has done over 40 crusades in the northeast of Brazil. He says, "If I was to do a crusade in every city in the state of Bahia with a population of between 30,000 and 100,000 people, I could do one crusade a month for 7 1/2 years. If you have a passion for evangelism, please come and help us reach this ripe mission field."

Over the next three years, the eyes of the world will be on Brazil as first the World Cup and then the Summer Olympics are held there. As people stream to Brazil for sporting events, it is important for the church to come to northeast Brazil to evangelize. The harvest is ready. Will you help bring in the harvest?

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