

Why I'm Grateful for Reinhard Bonnke's 79 Years of Evangelistic Ministry

It was my privilege to know Reinhard Bonnke, the German evangelist who impacted so many around the world. He passed away a couple of weeks ago on Dec. 7, and tomorrow I will be attending his memorial service in Orlando, Florida, where he moved his headquarters 15 years ago.

Bonnke was 79 years old when he died. Soon after I heard the news of his death, I shared my thoughts on his life and legacy. Today, I'd like to share some different memories I have of his ministry.

The ministry he founded, Christ for All Nations (CfAN), says that more than 79 million people made decisions for Jesus at his massive evangelistic crusades, most of which were in Africa. He made such an impact in that continent that they named him the "Billy Graham of Africa."

His work in Africa started when he had a dream as a young man. When he moved to Lesotho at 24 years old with his wife, Anni, he had a dream of the entire continent of Africa being washed in the blood of Christ. He was so passionate about reaching people with the gospel that he built a tent that could hold 34,000 people.

Unfortunately, a windstorm destroyed it, which *Charisma* reported on when it happened. But the storm turned out to be a blessing in disguise. He ended up holding outdoor meetings that drew easily 100,000 Africans on a regular basis. And in Lagos, Nigeria, in 2000, a crowd of 6 million people came to hear him preach the gospel.

I remember attending one of his meetings and not believing my

eyes—I saw a million people in the crowd. One million people who were desperate to hear the truth of God’s Word. It was truly incredible.

Eventually, Bonnke moved his headquarters from Germany to the United States. I think this was a wise move because Germany, to my understanding, is more restrictive when it comes to ministries. Moving to the U.S. freed him up logistically, especially when it came to raising funds.

One thing I admired about Bonnke was he always seemed to have integrity. And his successor, Daniel Kolenda, appears to be the same way. It’s interesting to me that Kolenda is actually on the cover of *Charisma* this month. He started working with Bonnke as a young man, and after some time, Bonnke gave him opportunities to preach. Several years ago, Bonnke handed the reins of CfAN over to Kolenda, and it appears God is using him mightily.

The last time I saw Bonnke was in Washington, D.C., when Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro came and met with Christian pastors and influencers. I was privileged to attend the meeting, during which Bonnke prayed a powerful prayer. At that event, I was able to have one last conversation with that man of God who I have admired for many years now and even considered a friend.

I hope his memorial service tomorrow highlights just how great Bonnke truly was—not to glorify him, but to glorify the God who used him so powerfully.

Be sure to listen to my podcast today, where I share more of my thoughts and memories of this great man.