

7,400 Saved at Los Angeles Harvest Crusade

John Cid arrived at Dodger Stadium on Sunday, decked out in Dodger blue, but he wasn't there to watch Cy Young Award winning pitcher Clayton Kershaw throw a baseball. Instead, Cid came for the final day of the two-day 2012 Harvest Crusade. He was present to hear a soul-winning message delivered by evangelist **Greg Laurie**.

Cid and the crowd of about 28,000 worshipped God, led by musicians Phil Wickham, the Katinas and Steven Curtis Chapman. They said "amen" to the testimony of **Nick Vujicic**. And when Laurie started talking, they prayed for the unsaved, ready to see what God would do.

Laurie was at his best, speaking life-changing words—relevant and non-threatening. On Sunday alone, more than 2,300 people responded to a call to commit or recommit their lives to follow Christ. Add that to the number from the Saturday night altar call and those participating online at , and the total count of people who made professions of faith this weekend was 7,389.

"I love the Dodgers, but we are here today for a greater work," Cid, a volunteer on Harvest Crusade's decision follow up team, told *Charisma News*. "We have prayed with husbands and wives. We have prayed with families. We have prayed with children. God breaks down the barriers. It doesn't matter what the problems are. Jesus is the answer."

It's a simply strategy. Rent a stadium or arena. Bring in top Christian musicians and personalities with an inspiring testimony. Team up with local churches for pre-crusade **prayer** and **evangelism** training. Erect a colorful, but simple stage and show some video testimonies on a huge screen. Give away

some T-shirts, and then preach a solid **gospel** message. Have an altar call and give each person who responds a New Testament. Then have someone from one of the local churches follow up with each profession of faith.

Laurie is senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, Calif., and his Harvest Ministries organization has been putting on arena and stadium-sized crusades since 1990, mostly in Orange County, Calif. Called the Harvest Crusade, the events annually fill Angel Stadium in Anaheim for three consecutive nights, and this is the second year Laurie and his team has also come to nearby Dodger Stadium. In addition, Laurie has led Crusades in cities around the nation and internationally. Over 22 years, an estimated 4,781,000 people have participated. This year, Laurie expanded his online outreach, and called the entire effort Harvest America.

“I was so moved by seeing all of the people come forward to accept Christ in their lives I literally started crying,” said Tamia Drayton, 27, of Fontana, California, who attended both nights at Dodger Stadium. “It was the most beautiful thing to be able to pray that people’s hearts would be open to God so that they too could be family and go to heaven.”

Others in attendance agreed and spread the word. The Harvest Crusade hashtag trended at number one on Twitter both days.

On Sunday, during an on on-stage interview by Laurie, **evangelist** and author Nick Vujicic put forth his message of being unstoppable with God—despite the fact that he was born without limbs (no arms, no legs). “He [God] set us free from the biggest two challenges we will ever have—sin and death,” Vujicic said. “You don’t know what God can do with your broken pieces until you give God your broken pieces.” He went on to tell about surfing in Hawaii, getting married and how he and his wife are now expecting their first child. The Dodger stadium crowd responded with robust applause to the latter announcement.

Laurie and Steven Curtis Chapman have faced their own broken pieces. Having each lost children in separate accidents, at the crusade they extended a message of God's care for troubled hearts. Chapman dedicated a song to his adopted daughter, Maria Sue, who died in 2008. "Our future is greater than our past," he said, assuring everyone that he knows that he will someday see her in heaven. In a video message, Laurie told of the most difficult challenge he had ever faced, the day—also in 2008—when his son Christopher died.

Laurie's live preaching followed the video. He was at times humorous and at times very serious. He quipped about phobias, his bald head and an article in which Simon Cowell was quoted as saying the he desperately needed peace. "Yes, Simon, you do," Laurie said. "We all need God. Let not your heart be troubled."

In the stadium Sunday were about 30 people from Metro Calvary Chapel of Santa Monica, Calif. "We are all up here in prayer, and seeing those prayers answered and seeing lives being touched and changed," said 25-year-old Aaron Hammond of Metro. "I look back on my life and who I was before I was a believer, and I look at how God has changed me. I want that for other people. I want other people to experience the love, the forgiveness and God's embrace that met me exactly how I needed to be met."

On Sunday, the call for people to follow Jesus was clear. "This is a holy moment at Dodger Stadium," Laurie said. "You are making the most important decision you will ever make." Once the prayer of **repentance** and acceptance of Christ had been issued and repeated, Laurie then added, "We don't want you just to come forward. We you to go forward—there are many great churches in Los Angeles."

Four years ago, Wes Lockhart was standing in the outfield grass at Anaheim Stadium, responding to a similar message and saying a similar prayer along with Laurie. On Sunday, Lockhart

, 20, was at Dodger Stadium with friends. "What you just saw down on the field is really what this is all about," Lockhart told *Charisma News*. "People coming down and accepting Jesus, and that's why I wanted to be a part of this. I was saved four years ago when I was 16 at Angel's Stadium. God just pierced my heart. He made me realize that I wasn't a partier or a terrible kid, but I was still a sinner, I was still going to go to hell. I was up in the nosebleeds, but as soon as Greg Laurie made the altar call I knew that I had to go down to the field."

Stephanie Turcio has a similar story. "I was one of those people," said Turcio, 23, of Long Beach, Calif. "I went down to the field to receive Jesus Christ last year. My cousin had invited me to the crusade. I came because of the music. I heard that there was going to be amazing artists. Then God began speaking to me through Greg. You don't know when the last day is that we will be on Earth and we really have to be ready and right in our heart. Whenever that day is whether He comes back or He decides to take us, we have to be ready."

Abel DeCastro was ready on Sunday. He gave up a planned day at Disneyland to come to Dodger Stadium, accepting an invitation from his 19-year-old sister, Macie. "Everyone at school [Azusa Pacific] was talking about it, and I just knew we had to see what God would do," Macie DeCastro told *Charisma*. Before Laurie had preached his first word, 15-year-old Abel knew why he was there. "This is the day I will renew my faith," he said. "I am going forward."

Also making commitments on Sunday were thirteen teenage girls from Mandarin Chinese Church of Los Angeles. "It is not a one-time decision, it is a race," said Sandra Shieh, the adult mentor and teacher of the young girls. "I am thankful that the Lord moved their hearts. This young generation can be apathetic. So I want to see these girls become difference-makers and be an example of faith."

Laurie launched Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside as an outgrowth of Calvary Chapel and the **Jesus Movement** nearly 40 years ago. He was 19 at the time. He started with a Bible study attended by 30 people. Today more than 15,000 people gather on Sundays for services at Harvest and it is one of the largest churches in the nation. Laurie is a prolific author, with his best seller being his autobiography titled Lost Boy. He also hosts a national radio and television broadcast. Last year, Harvest Christian Fellowship launched a second campus, this one located in Irvine, California.

Annette Garcia is a member of Harvest in Irvine and was at Dodger Stadium on Sunday. She described the event as “amazing,” “powerful,” “life-changing,” “a place where God is pouring out His Holy Spirit” and “bold.” Then she paused to consider why it was amazing, powerful, life-changing, a place where God is pouring out His Holy Spirit and bold. “It’s all God,” Garcia said. “And I think God uses Pastor Greg because Pastor Greg makes himself available.”