

59,000 Gather to Wage War Against Spiritual Inaction at The Send

If Christians want to pray for awakening and revival, then they need to actually go out into the world and get to work. That was the message of The Send, a charismatic mega-event that continued without ceasing for nearly 12 hours straight on a sweltering Saturday in Orlando, Florida. According to Youth With a Mission's Andy Byrd, 59,000 people attended the free event, held in the Camping World Stadium, and peak attendance at one time was 40,000.

"We are here because we are crazy enough to believe that we are here for the greatest move of God in human history," said Byrd. Though The Send is not led by any one individual or ministry, Byrd has been one of the event's primary collaborators and acted as emcee, transitioning speakers and artists on and off the stage.

That was a full-time job, particularly since the exhaustive guest list included Byrd, Francis Chan, Daniel Kolenda, Bill Johnson, Hillsong Young & Free, Lou Engle, Todd White, Jeremy Riddle, Jesus Culture, Mike Bickle, Lindy & the Circuit Riders, Michael Koulianos, Matt Gilman, Banning Liebscher, Darwin Hobbs, Cindy Jacobs, Loren Cunningham, Dunamis Music, Teo Hayashi, Tasha Cobbs, Steffany Gretzinger, Heidi Baker, Yasmin Pierce, Marco Barrientos, Nick Brennt, Amy Ward, Claudio Freidzon, Ruddy Gracia, Dominic Russo, Ben Fitzgerald, Sammy Rodriguez, Brian Barcelona and Loren and Darlene Cunningham. Frequently, multiple speakers would share the stage simultaneously, passing off the microphone to one another as someone indicated they had a new thought or prophetic word to share. At one point during his message, Chan wryly remarked how unfair it was that The Send attendees got

"20 speakers and 15 bands" while there are people around the world who have never heard the gospel.

Fixing that disparity was the main goal of The Send, to hear its speakers explain it. Evangelist Kolenda said he's used to seeing crowds this size in countries like Africa or Asia, quipping that in Africa, "We do our counselor training in a stadium this size." But he said he regularly fields questions about when a similar evangelistic outpouring would happen in North America. Kolenda said he believes wholeheartedly a new era of evangelism started Saturday in Orlando. He hoped The Send would be responsible for 5,000 people registering for missions training: "the greatest number of people who have ever signed up to go to the nations of the earth with the gospel."

Kolenda taught out of Luke 9, saying he felt empathy for the man who asked Jesus if he could bury his father or say goodbye to his family before following Him. But he now understands why that was impossible. He compared the world to a man drowning: You can't delay or wait, or he'll die. With Jesus, you cannot negotiate or procrastinate when it comes to evangelism. Kolenda later led the crowd in a prayer of salvation, which yielded more than 500 decisions for Christ.

Todd White went a step further when he spoke, saying that even some Christians still need to encounter the Father because they cling to liberal views regarding sexuality and abortion.

"The only way you can think abortion is OK is if you're still an orphan and don't know you're a son," White said. "The only way you can think killing a baby is OK is if you really don't know the Father. The only way you can say children have the right to change their gender is you're believing in the wrong God. The only way that you can be OK with same-sex marriage is you don't know the Father. I looked out in the crowd and saw some of you are upset about that. Get over yourself and believe the gospel. ... God doesn't hate people. I encounter

people who are in the wrong relationships all the time. I'm not condemning them. They need to know who their Father is, because all that is fixed through the love of their Abba Dad."

Having established the evangelistic need in America and the world, Byrd laid out the primary mission fields that The Send wants to equip people to evangelize. These five fields are high schools, universities, neighborhoods, the mission field and the foster care system.

Barcelona, who has been preaching at high schools since he was 18 years old, shared incredible testimonies of starting "Jesus clubs" at high schools nationwide.

"Throughout prayer and worship, I feel the Lord gave this word to me: today high schools are being put on the missions maps," Barcelona said. "Today people will recognize the 15 million high school students as a missions field. ... All across America, we are singing with one voice in Jesus clubs. A little over 12,000 students gathering in gymnasiums and auditoriums. High schools are now on the missions map."

Yasmin Pierce of Circuit Riders said God is raising up Christian women at universities.

"Jesus is absolutely moving in the university campuses of America," Pierce said. "He's also absolutely moving through the lives of young women in America. A movement is stirring of women who are breaking silence off their lives. Women are stepping out who are filled with the faith, with the risk taking, with the brave love of Jesus Christ. And they are saying, 'I am willing.' ... Across college campuses, women are stepping out in this great love of Jesus Christ. Entire sororities, entire dorm buildings, entire campuses are getting turned upside down by the gospel."

And YWAM Kona's Shannon Casteel followed up Pierce's remarks with an evangelistic exhortation for all sexes.

"You are the plan," Casteel said. "Christ has passed His purpose onto us. You are the plan to seek and save the lost. You're the plan for your high school. You're the plan for your college and your university. You're the plan for the nations."

Regarding neighborhoods, Liebscher and Chan urged Christians to take everyday evangelism seriously, emphasizing it as a matter of personal responsibility. Liebscher said many believers, without knowing it, approach church with a worldly mindset rather than a kingdom mindset. He says people often come into church not wanting to be equipped but wanting the church to do their Christian life for them. He compared it to eating out.

"We approach the church more like a restaurant where I'm coming because I don't want to do certain things," Liebscher said. "I don't want to cook. I don't want to clean up. So I pay you money, and you do that."

But Liebscher said that doesn't work for church, because God explicitly demands certain things from every one of His disciples: praying for the sick, widow and orphan care, discipleship, generosity and evangelism.

"It is not your pastor's job to see your friend saved," Liebscher said. "One of the biggest prophetic words God wants to give to the church right now is two words: 'personal responsibility.'"

Chan said he loves the next generation because it's enthusiastic and ready to serve the world in big, radical ways. He gave the example that if he called in a helicopter and announced he was leaving everything that night to evangelize a remote tribe and bring them the gospel, he could expect many attendees to join him. But many of those same people will fail or refuse to wake up early for Bible study.

Chan, teaching from Luke 16, said this generation must learn how to be faithful with small things before taking the leap to

big things.

"I believe God's message today is first be faithful in your neighborhood," Chan said. "Do the people on your block know what you believe and that you love them? Have you warned them about who they're going to face? Have you told them they can have peace with God? If not, why would he want to send us somewhere else—to not do the same thing in another language? ... This generation, I love you, because you have dreams of great things God can do. But the struggle this generation sometimes has is waking up the next day and going to work—or waking up early so you can study God's Word. We have to be faithful with the little.

"I so want to see God do huge things, but he's not going to pick you unless you're faithful in the small things: with forgiveness, with relationships in the local church, with getting the pornography out of your life, with getting the immorality out of your life, [with] the discipline of studying the Word of God so you know what the heck you're talking about."

Several missionaries graced The Send's stage Saturday. Hayashi introduced Abe Hubert, a missionary to Brazil who said America's years of sowing missionaries into other countries has led to spiritual harvest in recent years.

"A great revival is happening," Hubert said. "We realize we are the result of years and years of missionaries from America and Europe who gave their lives like my parents did. Both my parents gave their lives in the Amazon serving Jesus. Now it's raising up a revival of young people to take this legacy, this heritage, to the nations."

But America's legacy in other countries is not always so positive. Jacobs said a common complaint she hears from foreign pastors and evangelists is that Americans come in with arrogant attitudes, like they can save the whole world without

the help of nationals. She affirmed the truth of these complaints and apologized for it.

Regarding the church's treatment of Latinos, Jacobs said, "We have been paternalistic. We have not acknowledged your great moves of God."

Jacobs added, "It's going to take the whole church to evangelize the whole world."

Loren Cunningham encouraged The Send's attendees to help missionary efforts in Mongolia and other countries. He said the church is "on the brink" of having enough workers to get the Word of God translated, at least orally, into every language on Earth by next Christmas.

Darlene Cunningham encouraged anyone on the fence about entering the mission field. She called herself a witness of the truth that "over 50 years ago, saying 'Yes, we'll go to the nations,' there's no greater adventure. If you don't feel qualified, none of us ever do."

Finally, Byrd called attendees' attention to the mission field of adoption and foster care. He related his own story of adopting two daughters from the foster care system (in addition to four biological children). He said he wants the Millennial generation to be known as the "adoptive generation," standing in the face of the foster care crisis.

"You realize [the people in] this stadium could take in a third of all children in the foster care system?" Byrd challenged attendees. Instead, he said, only two percent of American adults adopt.

In response, Byrd announced the launch of the ministry 1MillionHome, with a goal to put one million foster children in permanent homes within 1,000 days.

"May adoptive love rise in Jesus' name," Byrd said.

"I want to pray for the end of abortion in America," Engle added. "But you cannot stand for this if—we have no authority unless we want children more than those who don't. Will you be the end of the abortion crisis in America? [If so,] let us adopt every unwanted child in America."

Francis Chan concluded the segment with a prayer reminding all in attendance they are adopted too: "You are a Father to the fatherless, and You want us to be the same. How can the love of God be in us if we pass by those who are in need? I ask your forgiveness, Lord, for not thinking about all these children who are in need."

"Every time we cry out 'Abba, Father,' from the depth of our souls, we are reminded of the many children who would love to say that."

As an array of speakers and artists took the stage, the crowd numbers held strong—and in fact even grew—in the face of an unusually hot February day. Temperatures surpassed 88 degrees Fahrenheit in Orlando, with few clouds in the sky when the sun was its peak. Byrd and other speakers repeatedly exhorted attendees to drink water, and lines for drinking fountains at the stadium were longer than most lines for food and restrooms.

At one point, when sunset caused the west stadium walls to cast a shadow over most of the stadium's seating, Engle told attendees still in the sun to drink water and not worry: "Soon the shadows of heaven will cover you."

Yet despite the heat, over 17,000 people committed to join the Jesus Fast, a 40-day fast from March 1 to April 9. Engle said the fast was called because "before there was ever an original Jesus Movement, there was an original Jesus fast."

Freidzon also spoke to the importance of fasting.

"In Argentina, a great revival started," Freidzon said. "How

did that start? God spoke to my heart saying, 'It is time to get yourself locked in and to fast.' I'm calling this generation to make decisions, to seek God, because the Lord will bring the rain upon this earth. He will bring rain upon this generation. The times of dryness, of sadness, of desperation, of fear, all that's binding you, of oppression, it's falling down today when you start to seek God."

Johnson and White later received words of knowledge, and White promised healing for every sexually transmitted disease and scars from past suicide attempts. At White's prompting, several people indicated in the crowd that they had checked and found their scars were gone. Bolz received words of knowledge that perfectly matched certain people in the crowd (Bolz, who was on his phone, promised he was checking notes and not researching or texting anyone feeding him information). Bolz called sharing those words of knowledge the most "nerve-wracking" thing he's ever done. Other leaders joined the three on stage to intercede for healing for everyone in the audience and live-streaming from home.

Projections by The Send's primary collaborators at the start of the day may have sounded incredible to onlookers. Koulianos called The Send a "burning bush moment" when Jesus would "walk up and down every single aisle," triggering a mass baptism of the Holy Spirit that would infect entire schools, cities and nations. White said "many, many thousands of people" would get supernaturally healed. And Brian Brennt said he believed The Send would ultimately lead to 80 million coming to Christ in America, 200,000 people entering the missions field and the greatest gospel movement in the history of America.

Byrd was right when he said this group was "crazy enough to believe that we are here for the greatest move of God in human history."

But by the day's end, when Gretzinger and Riddle led tens of thousands in a primal shout of joy, the word "crazy" no longer

seemed appropriate. The numbers had already started to trickle in. It wasn't 200,000, but by 8 p.m., Byrd revealed that 4,604 pledged to reach their neighborhoods, 2,017 pledged to reach their universities, 2,288 to reach their high schools and another 2,708 to reach the nations.)

Time will tell whether The Send really does kick off the greatest gospel movement in America's history or reinvigorate world evangelism. But for the tens of thousands of people who braved the heat and screamed their lungs out in Camping World Stadium, Byrd's closing prediction—delivered to thousands of cellphone lights swaying in a dark arena—rings true: "I believe we've crossed the threshold today and what we've begun today cannot be stopped. ... Five years from now, we will be in a Jesus Movement beyond anything we could have imagined and a missions movement beyond anything we could have imagined, and it all starts tonight."

Correction: An earlier version of the story listed total attendance as 90,000 people. While 90,000 people registered online, actual cumulative attendance at the stadium totaled 59,000.