

Miami's ONE Conference Unites Christians from 200 Local Churches

What happened in Miami this past weekend was once considered impossible in South Florida.

Stepping out in **radical faith**, a group of forward-thinking Christian leaders in the local area brought together Christians from 200 churches of different denominations across Greater Miami to **worship God** at the ONE Conference, which was held at the BankUnited Center on the campus of the University of Miami.

The city's **charismatics**, Pentecostals and Spirit-sensitive evangelicals joined with traditional Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and other Christian denominations under a common vision brought forward by Pedro Garcia, senior pastor of Calvary Chapel Kendall: Unite as Christians to ignite a **passion for Jesus** in order to impact the world for the glory of God.

Rich Wilkerson Jr., young adult pastor at Trinity Church in Miami, said, "The devil is not afraid of a big church, but he is afraid of a united church."

Putting aside theological differences between different denominations, the crowd of approximately 6,000 people shared a common focus on Jesus Christ.

The three-day conference was the first of its kind in Miami, mixing teachings from more than a dozen well-known Christian speakers (local and from outside South Florida) as well as worship music by **Hillsong United**, Dominic Balli and the Rebel Band.

Each speaker challenged the body of Christ in Miami to rise to a higher level of experiencing God and making a greater difference in the world out of a **spirit of unity**.

“Let’s stop letting people talk us out of living and believing biblically,” said Francis Chan, author of the best-selling books *Crazy Love* and *Forgotten God*. “We have to fight to live biblically when other people are telling us to live comfortably. For generations, we preached safe Christianity. That’s not Jesus.”

Christine Caine, who directs Equip & Empower Ministries and the A21 Campaign, which fights human trafficking, echoed Chan’s comment: “The goal of Christianity is not safety, it’s freedom.”□

She added that Jesus did not come to earth to make people “nice.” He came to make those who would follow and obey Him as a “threat” to spiritual darkness. She warned that “there is an alarm clock across the earth, and Christians keep hitting the snooze button.”

Ed Young, senior pastor of Fellowship Church, said that many Christians are too busy working on their “spiritual tans” while other people are drowning, spiritually-speaking. He challenged the believers at the BankUnited Center this past weekend to be a “rescue society.”

He summed up his message in a tweet-worthy point: “The radically rescued rescue radically.”

According to **Britt Merrick**, pastor of Reality Santa Barbra, the call of the church is to look more like Jesus.

However, he shared a statistic that 84 percent of what he terms “not-yet-Christians”—in other words, everyone who is not currently a Christian—personally know or are in relationship with at least one Christian, but only 15 percent of these not-yet-Christians see any value or a real difference in those

Christians whom they know.

He declared that it is time for Christians to look more like Jesus.

Merrick challenged the Christians in Miami to see themselves as “the sent,” adding, “Don’t wait for someone else to win the city for Christ. And the best ministry flows out of **intimacy with Jesus.**”

He also quoted **Jonathan Edwards**, the great New England theologian of the 18th century: “The task of every generation is to discover what the Sovereign Redeemer is doing and then do that thing.”

Brian Houston, senior pastor of Hillsong Church, urged, “You’re alive for something bigger than yourself. There is something powerful about being around people who have a sense of purpose. Don’t just live by a spirit of requirement. Nothing great has ever been built that comes from a spirit of obligation.” He encouraged the audience to pursue their God-given “glorious obsession.”

Carl Lentz, lead pastor of Hillsong New York, shared three important keys related to living out one’s purpose: (1) willingness to do whatever it takes, even if it is not spectacular; (2) openness to receive direct instruction from heaven; and (3) love so deep it overcomes one’s own discomfort.

Greg Laurie, senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, asked the audience at the ONE Conference, “Is it a calling or an alarm clock that gets you up in the morning?” He punctuated his message by saying, “The holiest moment is when Christians leave the church building and go impact the world.”

The ONE Conference provided plenty of opportunities for Christians to make a difference in the community, including involvement in and support of charity: water, The A21

Campaign, Samaritan's Purse, Gospel for Asia, Acres of Love, Feed My Starving Children and With Open Eyes.

These ministries address everything from clean drinking water to **human trafficking** and other types of human suffering. The vision is to have charismatics working alongside Evangelicals and other mainline Christian denominations in Miami to demonstrate the love of Christ with strength and unity.

Bob Coy, senior pastor at Calvary Chapel of Fort Lauderdale, encouraged the Christians in Miami to continue to lower the barriers between denominations: "It must break God's heart to see Christians divided along denominational lines."

Church leaders in Miami agree that the Lord Jesus is already on a mission in Miami. The ONE Conference was intended to connect with what God is already doing in Miami and to urge Christians to "do that thing," no matter what church a person attends.