

My Hope Haiti Helps Rebuild Broken Nation

With the full impact of My Hope Haiti not known for months, over 15,000 decisions for Christ have already been registered—with about 10 percent of the churches reporting—after last weekend's My Hope broadcast reached the nation through TV, radio and projectors.

Standing in front of a mirror, Francois primped her flowing red dress. She applied her mascara and blush, then combed her short black hair. She took one more look at her reflection and turned to head out the door to meet her friends for the evening.

Abruptly, she stopped dead in her tracks. The invitation to attend a *My Hope Haiti* program at a nearby church pierced her thoughts.

I haven't been to church since I was little, so why should I suddenly go now? Francois thought. *But I know I must.*

Francois glanced at her watch. It was shortly after 6 p.m. The program would begin in about 30 minutes.

The 28-year-old abandoned her original plans and instead walked the short distance to Eglise de Dieu Philadelphie (Philadelphia Church of God). She seated herself among the nearly 230 people gathered in front of the church under an expansive canopy of banana and coconut leaves.

Francois gazed at the crowd of children and teenagers, along with some people her age and many much older. They joyously sang about God's unfailing love and never-ending forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Though these words were foreign, Francois somehow felt at home here.

When the sun finally descended and darkness enveloped the area, the crowd hushed as the 30-minute *My Hope* program was

projected onto a large white sheet hanging on the front concrete wall of the church.

The testimony of hope and faith by an international soccer superstar arrested Francois' attention. The star described how at the age of 18 he suffered a career-threatening spinal fracture as a result of a swimming pool accident, then remarkably made a full recovery. The soccer player attributed his recovery to God and praised Him for His continued leading and provision, especially for his wife and their two young children.

Can God possibly work in my life, too? Francois thought. Her heart stirred.

Following several musical numbers by prominent Haitian singers, the program next featured a powerful gospel message by Billy Graham, which was dubbed into Creole. Graham emphasized that God loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross for our sins and that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

Graham's message seared Francois' conscience. When a local pastor invited people to commit their lives to Christ, Francois walked forward. She confessed her sins and received Christ by faith.

"I wasn't planning on coming tonight," she said after the program. "The Spirit of God led me here, so I changed my plans and attended."

Francois acknowledged she wants to see Christ change her heart and her life. "I want to follow Him," she said, her face now graced by a warm, engaging smile.

In addition to Francois, 42 other people surrendered their lives to Christ last Saturday night at the Philadelphia Church of God, located at the foot of a hillside village outside Miragoane, a coastal town in western Haiti. The church was

among 5,288 Haitian congregations participating in the nationwide *My Hope* project, sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Haiti is the 54th country to host *My Hope* since its inception in 2002.

Churches are now reporting how many Haitian men, women, boys and girls accepted Christ as Savior or rededicated their lives to Him as Lord during the recent campaign. To date, based on figures received from 518 churches—mostly in the capital city of Port-au-Prince—15,613 decisions for Christ have been recorded so far.

One such commitment was in a downtown Port-au-Prince church. A middle-aged woman who has been married for many years has been praying for her non-Christian husband. She first came alone to a *My Hope* showing at her pastor's home. But the next night she brought her husband. After hearing Graham's message, he asked Christ to come into his heart, to forgive him of his sins and to give him the strength to live as a loving husband and godly father. The couple left holding hands.

Church leaders said they are not only excited about the number of new believers who are following Christ as a result of the *My Hope* project, they're also enthused by how many of their church members are now equipped to share their faith effectively. Up to 80,000 Christians across Haiti were trained to serve as "Matthew" hosts. Matthews are Christians who invite family and friends to their homes or churches to watch the *My Hope* telecasts before sharing their personal testimonies of God's love.

Rev. Sylvain Exantus, president of the Protestant Federation of Haiti, said *My Hope* helped ignite new life in his church. "Our members are now more motivated to proclaim the gospel," he said.

Rev. Jean-Claude Dorlean, president of the Church of God of Prophecy in Haiti, expressed thanks to BGEA for how 600

Matthews were trained in his church alone and how more than 200 people accepted Christ into their lives during the three-day *My Hope* campaign—to date, a partial count.

“This project has completely changed the way we do evangelism in our church and throughout our denomination,” he explained. “Not only were our members serving as Matthews during these three days, they will remain Matthews the rest of their lives.”

Hosting a *My Hope* program in his home the final night was Rev. Robert Jean Bilda, president of the Council of Evangelical Churches in Haiti and pastor of the First Evangelical Baptist Church in Saintard, just north of Port-au-Prince. He also served as national coordinator for *My Hope*.

“If this project could work for the whole nation, it should also work very well in our church and in my own home,” Bilda said.

He and his wife, Mona, invited 10 relatives, neighbors and friends to their home. Among them were his aunt and two of his cousins. For years he had prayed for them and often witnessed to them, encouraging them to yield their lives to Christ. They each said they were not ready for such a commitment.

But on Saturday evening, following Franklin Graham’s message on the prodigal son, Pastor Bilda’s prayers were finally answered as his aunt and two cousins received Christ as their personal Savior. And a friend from high school and another from the university he attended rededicated their lives to Christ.

“As I think about the impact of *My Hope* in my own life and in our church and throughout my country, I thank God for His harvest,” said Pastor Bilda, whose church had 42 Matthews and saw 123 decisions for Christ.

“With all that Haiti has gone through since the earthquake on

Jan. 12, 2010, I now see a new Haiti emerging,” he added. “As people’s hearts are being transformed, a new spiritual Haiti is being built. I praise our Lord for this special blessing.

Used with permission of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.