

The Spirit of God Descends on India

“The whole stadium is filled with the spirit of God—you can feel God in this place.” As the Rev. Mohan Babu welcomed the crowd to the first night of the Hyderabad Festival with Franklin Graham, the pastor’s words proved to be prophetic. The Holy Spirit stirred the hearts of 1,240 who responded to the Gospel message at the end of the evening.

Early arrivers enjoyed the sounds of the Millennium Methodist Band, Sion Fellowship Band, the Festival Choir and Orchestra, and a colorful performance by the Seva Bharath Dance Team.

Sound of the Nations performed later. The popular group formed in India in 2003 as a brainchild of founder Dan McCollam’s vision to raise worshipers and leaders across the globe: “We seek to carry people on a heavenward quest through the medium of indigenous music.”

Anil Kant next performed his hit “Pray for India” and several other songs to the delight of the crowd. “It is not about the songs we sing in worship. It’s about the heart we offer to the Lord,” the artist shared. “God can use anybody and He uses us all, exactly where He has planned to use us.”

At the official opening time, the Festival’s Executive Chairman Rev. G. Samuel said to the audience: “There is great joy in Hyderabad that Franklin Graham is preaching the Word of God in this place.”

Anjushree, a 24-year-old professional who lives in HITEC City said she agrees: “I feel that great joy now.”

Born to Christian parents, Anjushree never felt the closeness of God. “We would go to church,” she said, “but I was always bored.”

By the time she got to high school, all she cared about was

finding a boyfriend. "I wanted the love they show in movies," she said, shaking her head. Anjushree's quest did not have a Bollywood ending. Going on date after date, she never connected with anyone special.

Even more desperate for love, she yielded to pressure for a physical relationship. "I am ashamed now, but I did many horrible things." Thursday night, when Franklin Graham talked about the depth of God's love and how sex outside of marriage is a sin, Anjushree knew it was time for a change.

"When the preacher said that Jesus died for people who sin, that God loves me, I was so happy," she said. "All I have ever wanted is to be loved."

Samuel, a 30-year-old visiting from Bangalore, said he related to the biblical story of King Mannaseh. "Franklin Graham told us how that king had idols but then God forgave him when he became humble," said Samuel. "I am so proud and really like my money and credit cards—yet I am not happy."

Thursday night Samuel humbled himself too and decided to accept Jesus into his heart. "I now know I didn't come to Hyderabad by chance," he said happily.

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