

Icelanders Sense Revival in Reykjavik

It normally takes a lot to move Skúli Barker to tears. But what he witnessed on Sunday night in his country? He'll be the first to tell you that simply doesn't happen in Iceland.

"My wife was sobbing next to me," Skúli says. "And I started to cry. It's just amazing."

It started off as a few souls responding at the end of **Franklin Graham's** gospel message, and before Skúli knew it, throngs were flooding the stage, elbow-to-elbow, hundreds of people packed in, aisles backed up.

People wanting to meet Jesus. And willing to say that out loud. **Pray** that out loud.

Skúli doesn't want to be overdramatic, mind you, but he's a native Icelandic in his 40s now, and he's seen the state of Icelandic people when it comes to talking about God or anything spiritual.

"There's a joke here that we are the 'frozen chosen,'" he says. "But it's really true. In Iceland, people don't show their feelings. So for Icelanders to come forward to receive Jesus ... "

His voice goes silent. His eyes turn red.

"It's just been a real fight here for Christians," he says. "And *this* gives us hope."

Revival?

In one sentence, Skúli sums up five years' worth of **prayers** from a core group of pastors and business leaders. He manages to put into words what this means to the Iceland

Festival of Hope executive committee members who put in nine months of hard work.

“It was like a child has been born in many ways,” says Ragnar Gunnarsson, Festival of Hope director. “A tremendous experience. This is what we have been praying for.”

And while nobody wanted to say it beforehand, Sigurros, an usher at the Festival of Hope, finally put into words what everyone has been thinking.

“I’m hoping,” she says, “this will be the first step for revival.”

Sigurros, a believer for two decades, works for the government’s environmental department. She signed up to be a festival usher but on Sunday night was called into emergency duty at Laugardalshöll Arena after a counselor shortage on Saturday night.

Government worker by day, usher by night—and now counselor in a pinch.

“It’s been very encouraging for my spiritual life,” she says. “Such a blessing seeing so many people come forward.”

On Sunday, Sigurros counseled Soffia, a mother in her 50s, and her teenage daughter, Sara. Both attended church once in a while, not untypical in Iceland.

“They had both been exposed to the gospel, but they needed a push to make the decision,” Sigurros says.

Franklin Graham, preaching out of Luke 15 on the prodigal son, gave a clear **gospel** presentation, weaving in candid tidbits about his own rebellion in his teenage years. “If I embarrassed my parents, well, too bad,” he said.

“Both [Soffia and Sara] said they wanted to receive Christ into their hearts,” says Sigurros, who is overwhelmed at how

God used her. "It was just tears of joy. I was so happy.

"I was praying when **Franklin Graham** was talking that God would open the hearts of the people to hear the truth.

"He's a good preacher—that's all I can say."

'He'll Change a Nation'

After two powerful Festival of Hope nights—and nearly 6,000 in attendance—one question lingered as Icelanders filed out, spiritually charged from a weekend filled with a top-notch choir, a plethora of local artists, two Michael W. Smith worship concerts and hundreds of new believers.

Is this the start of **revival**?

Perhaps the singer said it most succinctly on Saturday night, just before his final song: "He'll change a nation."

While only God knows the answer, the signs are already encouraging. Prayer for revival has multiplied in the Iceland evangelical churches. Many of the 41 involved churches at the festival are now closely working together—with **pastors** praying together weekly.

"It means a lot for Iceland," Festival of Hope committee chairman Ómar Kristjánsson says. "This will be a new beginning. Something very big."

Kristjánsson—a humble businessman who five years ago followed a call from God to gather pastors and leaders and start praying for Iceland—is able to sum up the weekend in one word.

"Magnificent," he says. "We have no words to express our thanks and appreciation to Franklin Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association."

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