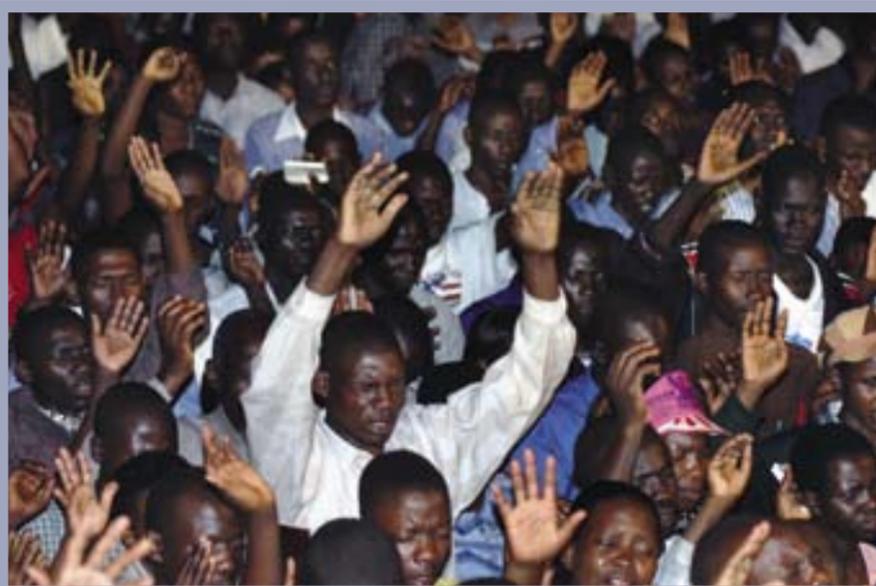


*Pastor Ray Bentley shares Jesus with the Ugandan crowd.*

# LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS



*Hundreds of people come forward to receive Christ.*

“Not only was I surprised at the response to the message, but I was actually a little scared,” Pastor Ray Bentley of Maranatha Chapel, CA, laughingly recalled the invitation he gave to receive Christ at last year’s Crusade in Kampala, Uganda. “People were spread out

*story by Sean Lawrence  
photos by Ed Compean*

across this large soccer stadium, and when we gave an invitation to accept Jesus, thousands of people ran forward. They didn’t walk; they ran! I thought maybe something bad was going on, but then I realized they were running to God. I’ll never forget that moment.”

While CC Kampala has been experiencing incredible growth since its inception four years ago, Pastor Brian Kelly felt God calling them to take a step of faith to reach out further to Kampala. “We’re a pretty young church, but we really felt that God wanted us to reach out to the city,” recalled Brian. “So many evangelists come through Uganda teaching a false doctrine that we felt there was a need to expose people to the truth.”

Brian and his church had no idea the fruit that step of faith would produce.

Preparations for the event began six months before the date, with CC Kampala visiting other sound local churches to build a consensus of Bible teaching churches that desired to teach people the Word and disciple new believers. “We didn’t want this to be an event where thousands of people came forward, we write home about all the converts, and we never see them again,” said Brian. “We wanted to be able to plug them into churches.”

Building a team of churches that could disciple these new converts was vital. “We

Uganda



*Many Ugandans enthusiastically embrace the simple message of the Gospel as Ray shares the truth of God’s Word.*



*Kathy Priest plays with children in Segaku before the outreach.*



*Ugandans sing and dance while worshipping the Lord.*



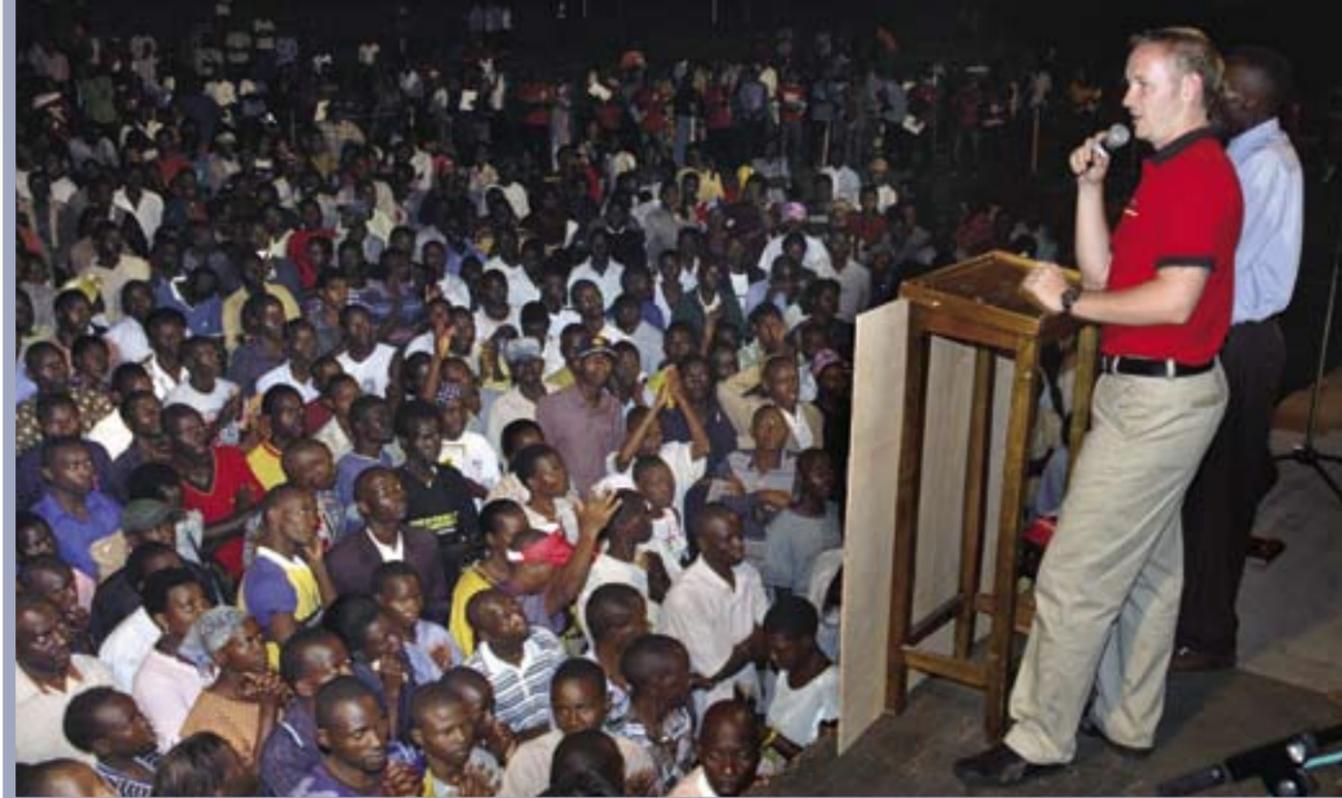
*New believers receive encouragement after receiving Christ as their Savior.*

were't sure how they would respond to our request to partner with us, but we were really surprised at their gracious reception of us and our goals for the crusade," recalled Brian.

With some of Kampala's larger churches committed to the crusade, the logistical problem-solving began. While planning can be a daunting task in any scenario, the roadblocks and red tape of the Ugandan government sometimes bordered on comical. Posters put up across the city with the appropriate permits and permission would all be missing the next day because communication of permission was never passed on. "We just had to laugh at some of the obstacles we encountered," remarked Brian. "We hired a taxi company to advertise on their cabs, only to realize later that the owner of the company was a Muslim who never put up any of the signs. There were days that I began to wonder what we had gotten ourselves into. But as always, God was faithful."

Before the crusade, the team from Maranatha Chapel had opportunities to hand out flyers and share in the city and outlying villages. Jo Dee Ancheta said, "I ran out of flyers within minutes, and the Lord led me to share with two men nearby, inviting them to the crusade. One answered by saying, "... but I am Muslim." I got a look of surprise from them both after I informed them that they were still invited to attend. This gave me an open door to share the Gospel message. They were surprised that we were Americans; they could not comprehend why we would come across the sea to share the love of Jesus with them."

Another team member, Tom Vaughn, recalls his experience during the outreach, "My translator and I were sharing in a village and encountered a lady who was Muslim. She told us that she was fasting because of her Muslim faith and did not want to hear about Christianity. I told her God desires a personal relationship with her and she could have eternal life and true peace with the Lord while she is here on earth. Tears came to her eyes. After taking her through verses in Romans, she confessed Christ. She came to the crusade and received a free Bible."



*Pastor Brian Kelly of CC Kampala shares with the new believers on the last night of the outreach at Nakivubo stadium.*

Finally, with the soccer stadium and all the equipment ready and the churches on board, the weekend of the crusade began. While rain clouds filled the Ugandan sky, the team prayed for a covering over the vast, open soccer field. As the evening progressed, nature's fury poured down throughout Kampala, with the exception of the area of the soccer field. While a downpour probably would not have discouraged the thousands who had gathered to hear the message, the clear skies brought confidence to those putting on the crusade that once again God was in control.

The evening began with the sound of worship filling the well-worn stadium. A worship team from CC Sarasota led the audience in songs of praise, as well as a variety of local hip-hop artists and traditional Ugandan artists sharing their gifts. Ray delivered the theme of "Living in the Last Days." The challenging message was soaked in by the receptive audience.

"I've never witnessed such open hearts," recalled Ray. "It was like walking into a field that someone had plowed, turned the soil, and was waiting for the seeds to be dispersed. Much like the soil in Uganda is known for its richness, so are the hearts of its people."

Wes Bentley of Far Reaching Ministries confirmed the mass reception to the Word and the ensuing altar call. "There were people literally pouring up front. Over the two nights, there were some 7,000 converts. Ray's message was so challenging."

"Even Muslims came to the event," recalled Ray. "They weren't antagonistic, just curious. We had the privilege of praying for Muslims who wanted to know Jesus. One Muslim man shared that 'he wanted to serve God,' so he had become a Muslim, but he had become increasingly discouraged as he tried to maintain the regulations and rules. He stated that the news of Jesus was like water to his soul. He also said that when he returned home to tell his family of his conversion experience, he would be kicked out and disowned. But he had considered the cost and made a decision to follow Jesus."

"Africa is having a season of harvest, but there are so few laborers," continued Ray. "There is real need for depth in their spirituality and for discipleship. We need to face the news that is coming out of Africa and become emotionally involved and act on it. If every Calvary Chapel planted a church in Africa, there still wouldn't be enough laborers. The time to respond to this continent is now."

CC Kampala and the other churches involved in the crusade have seen an influx of new worshipers who made decisions at the crusade to follow Jesus. To further disciple them and the rest of the nation, CC Kampala and Far Reaching Ministries will offer pastoral training throughout 2006. They also plan to host another crusade in 2007. ☞



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