

REVIVAL IN HIGH SCHOOLS

THE WHOSOEVERS SHARE CHRIST IN DOZENS OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Story by Christmas Beeler
Photos courtesy of The Whosoevers

Filled to capacity, the gym at Calvary Chapel High School in Santa Ana, CA, reverberated with heavy bass while nearly 600 students happily munched pizza and cheered for free skateboards and T-shirts. Stepping forward, Ryan Ries smiled and said, “I used to be one of you. I just want you guys to know that God has a plan for each of you.”

Son of Calvary pastor Raul Ries, Ryan told how he got into the rave scene in high school then traveled the world as a pro skateboarding manager, seeking thrills but growing emptier. Finally one day in 2008, his friends found him passed out, his face covered with cocaine in a hotel

room in Costa Rica. They had left him for dead but called his parents, who then prayed fervently for their son.

Tony, a senior, was enthralled. Little did his Christian friends know, Tony used to smoke marijuana, drink, fight,

and fool around with girls. But none of that had fulfilled him. Then a Christian wrestling trainer invited him to transfer to CC High School as a junior. Tony had left his old lifestyle behind to pursue athletics but never dealt with his past before God. He stayed clean and worked hard out of respect for his coaches who told him about Jesus. Today he was mesmerized by Ryan’s total transformation.

Ryan recounted that, alone in his hotel room, “I realized, I gotta change my life.” He prayed, “Jesus, forgive me of my sins. Come into my life. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Show me You’re real.” He found a Gideon Bible and read it for hours. “I felt peace for the first time in my life.” Then he shared how God had helped him overcome a struggle with pornography, brought him his wife Crystal, and miraculously answered their prayers regarding infertility.

Ryan added, “God is calling you today. You may be a messed up, broken person. Maybe you’ve suffered a lot—but God still has a plan for you. God loves you, and His arms are open wide to you. He wants to come into your life. Will you give your life to Jesus today?”

Tony’s heart was pounding. “I wanted that grace: I wanted to deal with my past, to move on from it, and be saved. I wanted to have a super close relationship with God like

Ryan did,” Tony recalled. “I made my decision that day.” Tony was one of the first to walk forward to turn his life over to Jesus Christ. Nearly 200 others joined him, and Ryan led them in a prayer of repentance, praying that the Holy Spirit would fill them.

Since then, Tony has been going to church, reading his Bible, and reaching out to his old friends to share the hope of Christ. ***But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*** (Romans 5:8).

Running to Christ

A year after giving his life to Jesus, Ryan Ries co-founded The Whosoevers in 2009 with Sonny Sandoval, lead singer of the alternative metal band P.O.D. Other radically saved Christian friends joined their outreach to lost and hurting students. Usually speaking in public schools, they see teens who are hungry for hope. “Teen suicide, depression, and anxiety are at an all-time high,” Ryan explained. “Students are struggling with gender identity, porn addiction, broken homes.” Initially, the group of recording artists, skaters, athletes, and others began by doing large concerts, but then sensed the Lord directing them to go into schools. “When we go into these public high schools, we share Jesus Christ. It’s the first time many of them have



Left: Nearly 80 students at Brampton Christian School in Caledon, Ontario, CAN, came forward to receive or rededicate to Christ. Nearly half of BCS students come from non-Christian families, such as Sikh and Hindu, as BCS is a missional school.

“THEY ARE LITERALLY RUNNING FORWARD TO RECEIVE JESUS.”

RYAN RIES



Top left: **Ryan Ries shares the Gospel at Santa Ana High School, CA.**

Left: **More than 250 teens came forward at San Pasqual High School in San Diego, CA.**

Bottom left: **Ryan prays for a teen.**

Bottom right: **A student at Escondido High School was given a "Kill the Noise" skateboard.**



heard what He's done on the cross; they are literally running forward to receive Jesus," Ryan said.

In today's tech-addicted society, Ryan related, the theme of the Kill the Noise Tour is "to kill all the distractions: what they are hearing from [secular] music, seeing on their devices, watching on TV. All this stuff is just a bunch of noise that is not furthering their relationship with the God of the universe, Jesus Christ. They need to tune out that stuff and tune into the King of kings and hear what He has to say—that's when they find their purpose, identity, and destiny."

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

New Identity in Christ

Tony's friend Luciano Arroyo was impacted by the Kill the Noise message. Luciano testified, "The Lord changed my life. I went from being a failing middle school student to now being recruited by Ivy League schools as a wrestler. It blows my mind. The Lord did it all." Like other teens, Luciano spent hours every day on social media: "Seeing what other kids were doing, I would get so depressed." His dad gave him the book *Digital Invasion*, about tech addiction. "Getting 'likes' from a screen, you crave it more and more. But the only thing that can fill that empty void in your heart is Jesus. I felt the Lord telling me just to cut

it off. I said, 'Lord, take over my life.'" Luciano unplugged from social media, poured his time into Bible study and school, and focused on wrestling. He testified that God has opened doors to college. "Devote yourself to the Lord; He is knocking at the door of your heart. He loves you."

Craving connection leads many to tech addiction, said Ryan: "Their brains are getting reprogrammed—not only because of dependence on electronics but also by the porn epidemic. These experiences release the same endorphins as heroin releases. It's super addictive."

Finding their identity in Christ is critical for teens, said Youth Pastor Josh Gallegos of Calvary Chapel Tustin, CA, who partnered with The Whosoevers at Tustin High School. "Teens are trying to sort through who they are, who they want to be. Satan tries to strap fake labels on these kids—make them think that's all they are ever going to be." Josh added, "But Jesus Christ gave His identity for ours when He gave His righteousness for us on the cross and took our sin. Christ puts His label on us."

But now, thus says the LORD, who created you ... "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine." ISAIAH 43:1

Spreading the Word

Over the past three years, The Whosoevers have visited 84 schools (mostly public) in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Nearly 22,000 students have responded when invited to come forward to receive Christ. More than 17,000 students chose to take home a Gideon's Life Book, containing the Gospel of Mark and tools for growth.

"We always partner with student Bible clubs," Ryan explained. "They get us into the schools and disciple students who give their lives to Jesus." They are already booking tours for the 2018-2019 school year, with a goal of 150 schools.

At Tustin High School, 350 students filled the entire gym, and nearly 250 came forward to open their hearts to Christ, leaders estimated. Pastor Josh reported, "The Lord started a work that day, and it's still going." The Bible club revamped their format, serving free food and bringing in guest speakers to share the Gospel. Josh added, "Before, we were meeting in a classroom with about 20 students. Since The Whosoevers came, we've moved into the gym and have stayed at 200 students." Bringing the Gospel into the schools reaches many unchurched students, Josh noted: "Then when they hear the pure Gospel, God's Word pierces their hearts."

Samuel Sandoval, a student leader with Fellowship for Christian Athletes at Segerstrom High School who attends Harvest in Orange County, CA, noted, "A lot of the students in our area live in low-income homes, broken homes. Most are hooking up, in drug wars and gangs. Many suffer from depression. This message really spoke to them—how Ryan knew what it was like to mess up,



how he tried to fill that hole in his heart with the world, and it didn't work; so then he opened his heart to Christ." So many students responded that the Bible club leaders added a weekly meeting just for new believers.

Stories of Hope

Ryan hosts guests with compelling stories on his radio program, "Live with Ryan Ries," aired on 50 stations coast to coast. Speaking directly to tough issues that students struggle with, guests share their stories of freedom from homosexual relationships, drug dependence, self-harm, and porn addiction. "These are the stories students need to hear—how God can change your life, no matter what you've done, no matter what label or gender you think you are," Ryan said. "They need to know that their identity doesn't come from who they are sleeping with, but from who Jesus Christ is." To help teens come to freedom in Christ, his website (www.ryan-ries.com) offers archives of the show and videos of Ryan teaching new-believer Bible studies in John (called Shine).

He cited Romans 10:13 (KJV), which says, "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**" Ryan added, "That's why we're The Whosoevers—because whoever calls on Jesus can be saved." 📌

The Whosoevers
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"THE LORD STARTED A WORK THAT DAY, AND IT'S STILL GOING." JOSH GALLEGOS