

Living Sacrifice

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Photos by Randy Gonzales



Believers perform a skit outside during an outreach at CC Downey. The drama's conclusion involved signs indicating how Jesus had changed each individual.

The reenactment that took place this past fall at Calvary Chapel Downey, CA, drew a crowd of around 8,000 people. It wasn't the typical October 31 gore—but the bloody reality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Every year, the church south of Los Angeles hosts an event on the last day of October. The gathering includes games, concerts, a Gospel presentation, and candy. It is open to everyone in the community and has been drawing bigger crowds each year, many of whom are unbelievers. Residents learn about the event through word of mouth, fliers around the city, and local Christian radio stations.

Recently added was a reenactment called *The Living Gospel*. "Our focus was to make a Gospel impact," said Ashton Trujillo, youth Bible study leader at CC Downey and organizer of *The Living Gospel*.

Throughout the drama, volunteers who had trained to be part of roving evangelism teams stopped and inquired whether people knew what they were watching and whom the actors represented. They also asked what the Gospel meant to attendees.

"Drama and street performance really have a way of getting people's attention," commented Ashton. "Instead of trying to get the crowd to come to the stage for the Gospel, we took the Gospel to them."

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

Matthew 4:23a

In the show's first scene, an actor portraying Jesus staggered through the crowd in a bloody robe. Flanked by Barabbas and soldiers, the figure was responded to by various viewers with sneering, horror, pity, or resignation. Some spectators shouted at the guards to stop—but they didn't. "People were shouting 'Crucify Him!' Ashton said. "It was intense."

During the second scene, Jesus carried a cross and fell to the ground. One of the soldiers reached into the crowd and grabbed a man dressed in modern attire. He was an actor, but not in costume. "We had him playing Simon [of Cyrene], but it was like a reach into the modern world," said Ashton.



Portraying Jesus Christ on His final journey to Calvary, actor Angel Salas carries a cross in the parking lot of CC Downey, CA. Others depicting Roman soldiers cleared the way aggressively while actors dispersed among the crowd yelled, "Crucify Him!"

A light-and-sound show during the final scene depicted Jesus' crucifixion; fireworks then symbolized His resurrection. The event culminated with Youth Pastor Chris Lopez inviting the listeners to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Nearly 400 people responded.

Modern skits also took place every half hour. One involved people holding signs with various sin-related conditions. One-by-one, the Jesus character interacted with them. After each visit, the participants turned their signs around—and the words changed from *lost to found* or from *blind to sight*.

Gospel Presentation Draws Community Participation



Angel Salas and Andrew Sharp, right, show how Jesus can heal hatred. The back of Andrew's sign says "loving," and he reversed it after meeting Jesus.

"We're hoping that people who wouldn't normally come to church will see, through these stories, how Jesus can change their lives," said skit writer Tara Escandon, daughter of CC Downey's pastor, Jeff Johnson. "It was neat to see people's reactions to the character of Jesus and His suffering. It really caught people's attention." The church plans to hold the event again this year. 🙌

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