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35,744 Respond at Daniel Kolenda Crusade in Venezuela as Storm Fails to Clear the Field

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Tonight was my first time ever preaching in Venezuela,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Evangelist Daniel Kolenda preached two nights of open-air gospel meetings on 30-31 October at the Hipódromo, the horse-racing grounds in Valencia, Venezuela, and 35,744 people responded to the Gospel, according to his ministry, Christ for all Nations. About 150,000 people attended over the two nights, the ministry said. On the second night, a thunderstorm broke over the field with thunder, lightning and heavy rain - and nobody left.

It was Kolenda's first time ever preaching in Venezuela. "Tonight was my first time ever preaching in Venezuela," he wrote after the Friday meeting, asking supporters to pray for the closing night that Saturday. The campaign, called "Faith, Love and Miracles," drew about 50,000 people the first night and 100,000 the second, according to Faith News Network, the news service of the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Kolenda was driving to the grounds on the second night when the storm blew in.

"The storm came and everyone stayed!" He wrote in a report on 4 November.

More than 30,000 people had arrived by bus, and more than 1,013 vehicles gave free rides to more than 53,000 people over the two nights. The field stayed full through the rain.

Of the 35,744 decisions for Christ, 15,852 were adults and 19,892 were children. That split is part of what made the weekend stand out: more than half of the people who responded were under 18. A team of 5,883 councellors served across the two nights, and 68,626 follow-up books were handed out so local churches could keep in touch with the people who had responded.

The ministry also reported healings shared on the platform both nights. A woman who it said had not walked without help for more than two years walked on the stage.

A woman deaf from birth who it said began to hear told her story to the crowd. A man who had used a wheelchair for three weeks ran across the stage. Twelve testimonies were given on the second night alone.

One of the stories came from a woman named Naïve, who had been diagnosed just the day before the campaign started with a tumour on her ovary more than half an inch wide. On the Friday night, as someone prayed for her, she suddenly lost consciousness.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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