

Graham, Christian Artists Get Youths Excited for Christ

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Evangelist Franklin Graham concluded his monthlong Rock the River evangelistic tour on Saturday with more than 8,000 youths in Western Canada.

The Edmonton event saw 332 decisions for Christ.

"There's nothing more refreshing and amazing as you're sitting on stage after you play your set and see kids come down," said Jason Dunn, lead vocalist of the Christian pop/punk band Hawk Nelson. "They're coming to the front and they're giving their lives to Christ. That's an amazing thing. It'll never get old. I get chills just thinking about it."

Hawk Nelson was one of six bands that drew thousands of young people to Telus Field. Many more watched the summer concert and evangelistic event through live Web streaming.

Though Edmonton is a relatively churched area, local youth pastors believe many Christian youths have been left desensitized.

"We are so blessed in North America to have these types of events, but you also can look on the Facebook pages of some of these churched kids and see that they are often the most vulgar and cynical," said Randy Young, a youth pastor, according to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. "We have seen a lot of depression and suicide attempts among the younger folks here – even the Christian students. They are dealing with a lot of issues, and they are looking for hope."

Though youths have been taught at church and at home and are able to quote Scripture, Young wants them to come to a place where they will not regurgitate information, but rather tell their friends what makes them different.

"Then, I want to see the other young believers catch on, get excited about the Gospel and be spiritually contagious," he said, according to the BGEA.

Dunn of Hawk Nelson, whose latest album is titled Live Life Loud, expressed a similar hope for today's young people.

"I think our message right now as a band is that true religion or true faith in Christ ... it's all black or white; there's no hanging out on the fence; you're either serving Jesus or you're not serving Jesus, so stop playing in the middle," the vocalist said.

Graham, son of the famed evangelist Billy Graham, believes many youths know nothing about God, given how secular society has become.

Thus, he feels a greater sense of urgency to reach young people.

"This is about reaching out to a generation that doesn't know God," Graham said, according to the BGEA. "[I]f we don't reach them, we'll lose them."

Edmonton was the third stop in the Rock the River Tour West. Graham and a host of Christian bands, including Skillet, Starfield and Flyleaf, spread the Gospel message in Fraser Valley and Calgary earlier this month.

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