

# Go Tell America Crusade coming to Brandon Amphitheater

*By Lindsey Williams*  
*Staff Writer*

All are invited to the Go Tell America Crusade with evangelist Rick Gage October 15-18 at the Brandon Amphitheater in Brandon, beginning at 7 p.m. each night. Admission is free.

The Crusade has brought over 300 churches across the Jackson area and multiple denominations together in preparing for and promoting the event. With a different Gospel-centered message and worship music each night, people of all ages and walks of life are welcome to attend every night.

“We have great churches doing great work, but there are a lot of folks that never get touched by church ministry. The idea of the crusade is to energize our churches, but also to be able to reach into some other avenues to touch people’s lives,” said Don Lum, director of evangelism at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB). The MBCB Evangelism Department is serving as one of the crusade sponsors.

The idea for a crusade in the Jackson Metro area began years ago when members of New Liberty Church, Morton, and Leesburg Church, Morton, took their students to the Go Tell summer camps. Gage told the group if churches were interested in forming a crusade in the Jackson area, he was ready to begin that process.

Members Lynn Irby of New Liberty Church and Dennis Ellingburg of Leesburg Church began to envision the idea for the Jackson area. Then four years ago, the Go Tell crusade came to Forest

with great impact.

Ellingburg, now pastor of Truitt Church, Pearl, got together a meeting of nearby churches to begin discussing the process for organizing a crusade. As there was a great need for a leader, Chip Miskelly and Percy Thorton stepped in as cochairmen of the committee.

With Miskelly and Thorton's leadership, Gage's blueprint for a crusade, and the faithfulness of 300 churches to God's mission, the vision gelled into the Go Tell America Crusade.

Joel Travelstead, a certified public accountant, and his wife Meredith, an OB/GYN physician, are Sunday School leaders at First Church, Jackson. They became actively involved with the crusade months ago.

They quickly realized the effort to bring the Crusade to fruition was going to be much larger than they initially thought. "We've learned so much," Meredith said. "You look at the old Billy Graham crusades and you think, 'Oh, people just showed up and they came to Jesus,' but we realized there's so much groundwork.

"We get a little piece of it. We're leading the youth team, but we've gotten a big vision for how much work goes into it, and prayer, logistics, and organization.

"All denominations and different races are involved. They have Hispanic translators, and they have the Deaf and Blind School coming, so it's really neat truly seeing the Body of Christ across our metro area."

"It's enormous," Joel added, "[There is] a lot of church participation ranging from large churches down to the small churches scattered all around the tri-county."

The Travelsteads are parents to two college-age sons and another son in high school. Before they ever knew of the

crusade, God laid a burden on their hearts for youth. "We're burdened for what's going on in our society and culture – what youth have to be faced with every day," Meredith said.

"Percy [Thorton] happened to be at our house for another ministry, and we were talking about youth and what's going on with our youth. He said, 'We have this Go Tell campaign coming to the Metro.'"

Having prayed for and grown engaged with the youth group at First Church, Jackson, Joel and Meredith became increasingly interested and involved in the crusade. When they were given charge of the youth team, they realized God had orchestrated every burden they had and circumstance they faced to include them in His work.

"There was always a concern of church leaders around the area, that this is just some national group that drops in, does their thing, and leaves," Meredith explained, "but the whole point – where their heart is – is, 'We're coming and we can help you, but it's a grassroots campaign and you do have to gather all the people because you don't want to drop these people off after they've made a profession. You want to bring them into local churches.'"

Joel added, "We have entire groups of people focused on, 'Once decisions are made, how do we filter them into the churches?'"

Go Tell participants have been in Jackson-area school assemblies every day since October 10 and will continue to do so until the end of the crusade to invite students, primarily for the service on the evening of October 18 when a young Christians emphasis will take place.

A large Go Tell youth rally was held at Pearl Junior High School in Pearl on October 1. "Specifically, we invited youth pastors to bring their youth groups," Joel said. "The concept was to bring Christian youth to the rally, fire them up, give them all the information about the crusade, then send them as

missionaries into their schools to invite lost friends.

“That’s what happened. The facility we had in Pearl would seat 680 kids and 900 kids showed up. They were standing in the room – lined up the sides, all around the back, all through the middle rows and open spaces, They had to ask the adults to leave the room so there would be enough room for the kids.

“There were about 200 adults in the parking lot and over 900 kids inside the building. It was awesome,” he said.

“When they gave an evangelical message and had an invitation for those kids, there were 34 professions of faith that night – and these were churchgoing kids,” Meredith said. “Over 400 made rededications of their lives.

‘People have asked us, ‘How do you invite your Christian friends, churchgoing friends, or your lost friends? How do you know if you should invite someone?’ I’d just say, ‘Invite. Invite anyone because you never know’ This is our whole community coming together under the name Jesus to share the Gospel with the lost world and make disciples,” she said.

“God gives you an opportunity and says, ‘Come join Me in My work,’ Joel pointed out. “The question is, will the churches do that? Will you join Him in His work?”

For more information and to get involved with the Go Tell crusade, visit <https://metromsgotell.com/>.

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