

Devotional Thoughts :: REACHING THE LOST by Nicky Cruz

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Even now my mind is fresh with the faces of helplessness I saw in the heart of the Bronx. Faces of all shapes and colors and ages. Boys and girls, men and women, blacks, whites, Spanish, Asian. So many were lost. So many needed Jesus.

We were in the final stages of a six-week outreach to the inner cities of New York. For weeks we had been evangelizing in the streets, conducting events on neighborhood corners throughout the city, all the while inviting people to our final outreach in the Bronx.

I remember standing on the platform in front of several thousand people. Our stage was set up at the end of a long, narrow street in one of the most drug-infested neighborhoods in all of New York. High rise apartment buildings towered overhead on either side.

For several seconds I just stood, surveying the crowd. Gang colors were everywhere. Prostitutes, pushers and addicts were scattered throughout the crowd, waiting to hear what I had to say. I glanced at the buildings and noticed people hanging out their windows, children crowded together on fire escapes. Teens huddled together as mothers and fathers watched.

I prayed in my heart, "Dear Jesus. Look at them. So many poor and hurting people—people who need You. Open their eyes, Lord. Touch their hearts. Use my words to bring them to You!"

As I began to share my testimony, I sensed a calmness falling on the neighborhood. I couldn't get over how attentive the people became. The feeling is impossible to describe. It is the presence of God. It is the wholesale retreat of the enemy as God's Spirit moves in and settles on a crowd of people.

As I spoke I could feel the Holy Spirit enveloping the crowd, working on their hearts, bringing so many to conviction. Before I had a chance to invite people forward to accept Jesus, dozens streamed toward the stage, falling on their knees to the ground in repentance.

Hundreds came forward to receive Jesus that night. God brought such a wave of conviction that we were overwhelmed by the response. We were completely in awe of the work that God was doing in this hurting, forsaken neighborhood.

"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).