

Ruth Graham & Friends Fire Up New Yorkers With October Conference

“Ladies and gentlemen, let’s get real.”

With those words on Friday evening, Oct. 13, Ruth Graham launched the first-ever Ruth Graham & Friends Get Real conference in New York City. Held at historic Calvary Baptist Church, a 150-year old church located in the heart of mid-town Manhattan (just a stone’s throw from Carnegie Hall), the conference attracted a wide range of attendees from across the New York metropolitan area – and drew star power support from the nation’s entertainment industry as well.

Nearly 400 people attended the event, filling the church for both the Friday evening plenary session and Saturday’s full agenda of plenary speakers and seminars.

Friday’s night session featured special Ruth Graham friend Naomi Judd, of country music and television fame. Naomi credited her faith in Christ with helping her overcome many difficult challenges in her life, including a near-fatal bout with Hepatitis C that tested her courage and convictions on many levels.

Kathie Lee Gifford made a special appearance as part of Saturday’s concluding plenary session. She performed “We Can Depend On His Word,” from her Gentle Grace album, and noted that she also wrote the song, “In Our Loving Eyes,” especially for Ruth’s parents, Billy and Ruth Graham. Kathie Lee’s appearance was indeed a special one, as she took time away from rehearsals in Florida for her role in the Broadway play, “Annie,” to attend the conference.

New York’s own Damaris Carbaugh also performed at the conference, thrilling the audience with her praiseful songs – the same numbers that she performs as a featured soloist with the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. Sylvia

As promised the conference delivered an array of speakers and seminar leaders willing to dig in and talk about sensitive issues such as divorce, depression, addiction, pornography, homosexuality, domestic abuse, and anger that people deal with on a daily basis.

Interest in the conference seminars was intense, indicating that people found the topics compelling. More than one person said the hardest thing they had to do all weekend was to choose which of the seminars to attend – many said they wanted to hear them all!

Conference attendees praised the event for truly living up to the promise of transparency among speakers. Among the comments from attendees were the following:

- “The speakers are really high quality and they are just talking so honestly.” – Kathy
- “All of them (the speakers and seminar leaders) are going through things that I can relate to...now I don’t feel so alone.” -- Patty
- “The diversity of topics is so encompassing, so practical and so comforting.” – Joan
- “I think it’s wonderful that these are the real issues in the church – issues that people cover up.” – Veronica
- “This conference is very motivating, very real...great for growing and learning.” – Gisela
- “The most important thing that I learned was that God’s plan for my life is not my plan for my life – and I had a pretty good plan.” – Michael

Perhaps Yolanda summarized the value of the conference best in saying, “I enjoyed it. It was healing to the soul. It touched me.”

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