

A Tour Of Roses Final Report Budapest 2015

by
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“I will unlock the key of joy upon the peoples stuck behind the bars of lies and injustice. The lock will not turn immediately or easily at first, but I will work the mechanism until the freedom comes. Bring my joy!” (A word for the Budapest trip from Eric)

Sometimes there is more to a trip than what it initially seems to be..At first it seemed like it was all falling in place quite easily, but then as it got closer to departure, it was not so easy. Almost everyone struggled physically at some point during our time in Budapest, but it didn't deter us.

There were 7 of us on the team, ranging in age from 18 (Emily Fry) to 76 (Marlys Nunneri). Esther, Emily, and Lauren were all related and had been backpacking for 6-8 weeks prior. Alex flew out a month or so before the project, to spend time with his family just outside Budapest. Marlys, Amalia, and I flew into Budapest together...

Amalia:

On my flight from LAX to Chicago, I spoke with the man sitting next to me. He was flying to Ottawa and had just recently lost his wife to cancer. They had been together for about 30 years, and he told me that he didn't know what he was going to do without her. I told him that God was with him wherever he went, and I want to continue to pray for him and that he would find comfort in the Lord.

Marlys:

I feel like the whole team connected immediately. We were just instantly family. The younger girls have been traveling for over 40 days, and they are tired, but they have such warmth to them. The rest of the team has known

each other for years, but these girls don't know us, but we just clicked together. I'm grateful for that.

Lauren:

I was amazed by the instant unity of the group. I expected there to be some awkwardness, but we were just instantly a team and started to work on preparing the roses.

This was definitely an answer to prayer—the unity that we all felt on the team!! We immediately experienced some difficulties as we landed in Budapest during the hottest days on record. The girls had a one-bedroom suite to themselves but the a/c wasn't working and they had to do without for the first 3 days. Alex, Marlys, Amalia and I were in a 2-bedroom and although it was very hot upstairs where the 2 bedrooms were, the downstairs was very cool—sometimes cold—because of the portable a/c unit and that was where we kept all the roses.

Sally:

The first morning after our arrival, when I went to the front desk, they had the tables set up for breakfast. I offered to put a rose on each table. The lady at the front was surprised and delighted by the offer. She found some tall beer glasses to put on each table to hold the roses, and it reminded me that generosity is an ongoing thread of A Tour of Roses.

We woke up early and had a time of worship and devotion before breakfast. After breakfast, we prepared to take the first batch of roses out into the city. Esther, Lauren, and Emily still didn't have a/c, and Emily slept very poorly and did not feel able to go out. She rested. Marlys, Alex, and I took the roses and keyboard in a cab down to the local movie theatre, and Amalia, Lauren, and Esther took the tram down. We had an interpreter to help us overcome the language barrier, but many people spoke English. We took around 700 roses, and they were gone in an hour. Afterwards, we all hopped back on the tram to the hotel to have lunch.

After lunch, we still had about 300 prepared roses. Emily felt better after resting. A young 14-year-old girl, Ponka, came and helped us prepare roses for the afternoon. She only spoke Hungarian, but had such a sweet spirit and wanted to serve. Alex helped translate our conversations with her. In Hungary they start job training very early. Ponka is studying to be a massage

therapist, and she offered several members of the team massages as she noticed we were becoming stiff... a sweet blessing for our tired muscles. Amalia, Emily, Esther, and I took the remaining roses out on the busy street near the hotel. Later we enjoyed a Shabbat dinner with the campaign team from Jews for Jesus.

What follows are mainly team-member accounts of encounters with various people on the street and in the concerts during our time in Budapest...

Alex:

I saw people waiting for the other shoe to drop and their surprise that it really was a free gift. One lady stopped and just started praising God as we were singing on the street. She didn't know any English, but I think she recognized the music and just started singing along with us with her hands raised. She told me that she was 82 years old, and I said she couldn't be that old. She said "You're right. I'm only 22. I died 22 years ago and was reborn."

Marlys:

We have our aches and our pains...and we're hurting. When we go out to give those roses, we don't feel any of that pain. I only feel God's love when I'm out there.... God's love is amazing.

One of the first people I encountered was a man named Ingnac. He was from Romania, and he was so happy to get a rose, and he kept making the sign of the cross. Joy was on his face. He has four kids, and I told him I have four kids too, and he just had a big smile. He said he's been trying to get money to feed his kids. I told him that God would provide, and I prayed over him and his family. I would appreciate any prayers for this family and that God would provide for them.

I met a young girl. She asked what the rose was for and I told her it was to show God's love for her. She asked me where I was from, and I told her the United States. She asked if I was a Christian, and I told her "Yes, are you?" She said she was searching, and I told her that she needed to keep searching, but she needed to be searching for Jesus. A big smile broke out on her face as she left.

Then, this older lady came up to me. She came with a younger girl who spoke English. The younger lady wanted the older lady to have a rose. I

gave them both roses, and they both were so happy. They asked "Why?" I told them because God loves you. The older lady had tears in her eyes. I felt prompted to ask the woman her age. She said she was 92, and that she knows God loves her, and I said "I'm 76, and I know God loves me too." I stopped her before she walked away and asked her name, and she told me her name was Margaret, which is my mom's name. My mom died at 92, and I don't know if she knew Jesus or not, but I thought it was amazing to meet this woman who was the same age as my mom when she died with the same name who did know the love of Jesus.

Amalia:

I started by handing out the flowers to whoever wanted one with a smile. When I went to get the second batch of flowers, I remembered I'd better pray and ask God to go with me, so I prayed God would use me as a tool to show His love. I experienced people's surprise and amazement...a little bit of rejection. One man agreed with me that Jesus was the way and that made me very happy. The men were the most surprised at receiving a flower, and their smiles just warmed my heart when they realized that it was a gift from God for them.

Lauren:

Today was really cool. I really liked that the purpose of the day was just to love people. I think a lot of times we are just doing life. I'm watching my bag...I'm trying to get somewhere...I'm thinking about work. Today was just focusing on others though.

I was amazed by the reaction of "You're just going to give this to me?" People were amazed that we were just doing something to show love.

As we got off the tram, a lady stopped, and she started speaking to me in Hungarian, and I told her I only spoke English. She told me "I love your Jesus!" She was so excited to tell me that after she read the verse on the back of my shirt that she chased after to tell me that she was also a believer.

Emily:

I thought it was really cool how people were surprised that it was a free gift. I could tell they were interested in what we were doing. They didn't just grab a rose and go. It was cool to see their smiles and receive their hugs. Our mission wasn't to shove Jesus at them, but to show them that Jesus loves them... that they are precious.

Esther:

I couldn't believe how fast the roses went. I went to give a rose to a lady, but she said she was a believer. She wanted others to know the love of God, so she wasn't going to take a rose. About 15 minutes later she came back and asked if she could have a rose. She said she wanted it for her adopted son. She said his name is Leslie, and he doesn't know the Lord, and she wanted to give him the rose to show him God's love. On the side of the road we prayed over her son. She had tears in her eyes as she walked away. Please continue to pray for Leslie as his mother ministers to him.

Sally

Amalia and I came across two young German women. They were a little tentative at first to receive the roses, and I told them it was because God loved them. I could tell they were German. I pointed to my necklace, and I told them I was Jewish and wanted to show them the love of God. One of the women was really moved and said "For me?!" She couldn't believe a Jew would want to give a German anything, and she gave me a big hug.

Amalia and I were walking earlier in the day, and decided to go in the Starbucks. We gave the baristas roses, and I told them it was just to show them God loves you, and they were all smiling. When Amalia and I walked back, we saw people coming back with roses, and we knew they had received roses from Emily and Esther. It was cool to see roses spreading throughout the city.

Set up the roses and keyboard in front of the Franz Liszt Music School in the square and immediately were confronted by the police. Fortunately, our friend Bogi had already taken care of getting permission to be there. They were very accommodating and we offered roses, which they accepted a little uncertainly, but appreciatively--especially one of them. But pretty soon the security guards from Franz Liszt were telling Alex Pistyur that we couldn't be there. It's their property and we had to move. I didn't take that too well and had to ask the Lord to help me "let it go--let it go"... etc. Ironically, or not, we moved to a much better spot where my voice was amplified naturally between the two sides of buildings. Lots of wonderful interactions for everyone. I also took a turn with the roses right at the end. The last young woman I gave a rose to was so surprised and pleased. I didn't have a card for that rose, so I explained we were giving the roses out as a way of expressing the love of God. She fanned herself with her hand because she

got kind of emotional when I said that--and then she hugged me. She was very touched... I thought my face would crack off--I haven't smiled that much for months... God is good!!!

Emily:

Today was really cool. There were less people than yesterday, but we got to have some longer conversations with people. Lauren and I met one of hop-on bus employees and talked to him about his theology. We also talked to some of the waiters. One waiter we talked to told us he believes that love is god, and God doesn't exist. Many of the waitresses were so excited to receive a rose, and they gave us lots of hugs. This one man came up to me about three times to talk to me. At one point, he asked for a second rose and a concert flyer to invite his neighbor to the concert.

Esther:

I decided to go into the bars that surrounded the square. The first bar I went into was a very traditional Hungarian bar...Hooters. I offered a rose to the woman behind the bar, and she asked why. I told her because God loves her and because she is precious. She seemed to be really touched by the rose and said it was such a sweet, simple gift.

Later on, I moved down towards the busy intersection where a lot of the hop-on, hop-off buses stop and pick up, so many people walking by were tourists. I approached the employees of the bus companies, and-at first- they waved me off. Then, they noticed that the roses were really free, and one of the employees approached me and asked me why I would do this. I told him that we were showing the love of God. He took a rose and put it on the windshield to take home after work.

When Lauren and Emily joined me, I decided to cross to the other side of the street to spread out a little. I stood there for 10 minutes offering roses, and nobody would take one. I thought about returning to the other side of the street, but I really felt that I was supposed to stay on that side. I started to quietly sing to the Lord as I stood there, and I just held out my hand with a rose, but I didn't offer it to any particular person. Within moments, a woman came and took the rose. Over the next 10 minutes, all my roses were gone without me even having to offer.

Lauren:

We passed them out to the tour guides, and one of the guys was like "Really? Really? No one has given me a rose before." I told him we just wanted to tell you that God loves you. He came up to me later and said "I just wanted to let you know that I'm coming to this concert, and I'm bringing my girlfriend with me."

We gave a rose to this couple, and the man seemed disinterested. I told him it was a free gift. They walked away, but the woman came back and she asked "Why?" When I told her it was because God loves her, she started giggling and smiling and gave me big hug.

Amalia:

The first store Marlys and I went into was an ice cream store. Marlys let me hand out the first rose because she knows I like ice cream so much. I gave her the rose and told her "God loves you, and I love ice cream", but she didn't understand why I was giving HER the rose. She kept saying "Really? Really? This is for me?" She asked me if she could give me a hug, and she seemed to be really touched by the rose.

There were many men who didn't want to take a rose, but I would explain that it was just to tell them "God loves you." I just thought it was interesting that the women would accept a rose and appreciate it, but the men want to know why first.

I wasn't feeling well before going out, but once I got there, all of the discomfort left as we passed out roses. The Lord gave me power to love on people. The discomfort returned later in the day, but I was totally fine when we were on the street.

Sally:

We went to the Dohany Street synagogue-all of us walked over. It is the largest synagogue in Europe and the second largest synagogue in the world. It was a very long walk. Marlys took a fall. It must have been angels protecting her because Marlys only had a little bump on her head. Alex prayed for her and his hand was hot. Marlys was fine afterwards.

We walked through a good part of the Jewish Ghetto on our way. All of the wall has been taken down as of 2006. There was a line of people waiting at the synagogue to buy tickets to go in. We decided not to go in. The synagogue functions as a museum at this point.

I brought my keyboard because I thought I may worship, but there were a lot of people around the front. We eventually went around to the side of the synagogue and found a quiet corner, and there we gathered together and prayed through the 18 blessings of the Shemoneh Esreh which is usually said during the High Holy Days. I recited the blessings, and after each blessing, someone else on the team interceded in prayer. It was a very meaningful time.

During this time, I found myself crying, and felt for a moment, as I was touching the stones of the synagogue, that I was somehow connecting to Jerusalem. I didn't feel like I was actually in Budapest. It wasn't until after we finished Esther informed us the synagogue was built over a mass grave of Jews that were killed during the Holocaust.

Emily:

When we went to the synagogue, we spent an hour in solid prayer, and I thought it was such an amazing hour. We prayed quietly, but the Lord heard all of our prayers. The Willow Tree memorial was a powerful symbol to me of all those who died from the ghetto.

Alex:

As we prayed at the synagogue, I was given an image from God where I walked through a gate and saw a very long table set with many plate settings. At the end of the table, there was a tree. I didn't really know what the image meant, but I shared it with the group, and Sally interpreted the image that the tree was the Tree of Life and the places at the table were for believers in heaven and the places are prepared for us for the feast of believers.

When Marlys fell, we stopped and prayed over her. I laid my right hand on her back. During the prayer, my hand started burning, but my left hand did not. I believe my hand started burning from God's healing power as we prayed over Marlys.

Sally:

The first concert was an educational experience. There were many technical difficulties that needed to be overcome. I ended up struggling with all of them. We left the keyboard stand behind, and the bar didn't have an extra one. I was hoping to use a better keyboard for the concert, but that didn't

work out either. The bar staff at The Grund didn't really know we were going to be there, so they were not prepared and somewhat surprised when we showed up. Fortunately the translator showed up and made communication much easier for all of us.

That said, the staff did everything they could to help us, but they didn't have a mic stand. Fortunately, they had a mic. My team graciously took turns, becoming a living mic stand, making it possible for me to play and sing. God was incredibly faithful. While there were very few people who came, the people who stayed were very touched. During the concert, I noticed the woman at the bar was really listening as I shared some of my story.

After the concert, I asked if she wanted a CD, and she seemed very interested and appreciative when I gave her one. At one point during the concert, a family came in, and their little girls in tutus danced to the music all around the bar. It was quite beautiful.

After the concert I was approached by a man who told me he was a Romanian pastor of a congregation of 150 Gypsy Christians. He also said he hadn't been in a pub in years, but heard someone preaching and decided to come in. He was blessed by the concert, and I was able to give him a stack of CDs to take back to his church in Romania.

Amalia:

After Sally talked with this pastor, the pastor was blessed by this concert. Being on this side of the ATOR mission trip, I see all the efforts put into organizing the concert at the Grund. He received the blessing, but he didn't see all the work that went behind it. I thought about the blessings I have received without ever realizing how much effort God has put into orchestrating a blessing. It's like an iceberg. We receive the tip of the iceberg, but we never see the bottom.

Emily:

We had a couple logistical issues at the Grund, but we sat there and prayed before the concert. We didn't have a big turnout, but the people there were really paying attention as Sally performed.

On the way home, we passed out roses on the tram. These people are just living their daily lives, and they get this little surprise to show them that God loves them. As we walked down the street with the roses, some of the street

vendors ran after us to get a rose. I thought it was just cool to see people seeking this free gift.

Lauren:

I am living an extrovert's dream. I just get to talk to people and tell them that they are loved! When we got off the tram, I offered a rose to a girl standing at the tram stop. She asked me "Why?" I told her it was a free gift to show her God's love. She said "Only the air is free in Hungary." I told her "Yes, but this rose is free and so is God's love." She had a big smile on her face, and she gave me a hug before I left.

Esther:

I love the wonder that you see in people's faces when they accept a rose. At first glance, everyone has a skeptical look on their faces. Then, they may hesitantly accept it. When we don't demand payment, they realize that it truly is a free gift, and their whole face transforms. It's such a sweet moment to share the love of God.

We decided to come back to the synagogue and hand out roses the next day. At chapel with Jews for Jesus, they prayed for us about it, and I was encouraged this was the right place to give out some of the roses. I cautioned the team, saying that people might not be as receptive in the area around the synagogue but we needed to be really open and sharing God's love.

Amalia:

I handed a woman a flower. When she read the card, she laughed a little. She said she thought this was funny that we were doing this in front of a synagogue. I told her it's the same God.

I was very unsettled....nervous...a little worried about going to such a Jewish area in front of the synagogue because I had been there. I had been a Jew that didn't believe in Jesus, and I didn't like people trying to convince me that what they believed was true. I didn't want to offend anyone.

A lady saw me and accepted a rose, and she invited me to go along with her. I didn't know where or why she wanted me to go with her. She only spoke Hungarian. She took me across the street to the place where she worked. It was a drapery shop. I expected to find a lot of ladies working there, but I only found one gentleman there. It was important for her that this man heard

what I had to say. As it turns out, he was a Christian who has a love for the Jewish people. When he found out I was Jewish and a believer in Christ, he told me the history of the Hungarian people, the Jews, and the area that we were handing out roses in. As a Hungarian, he felt shame for what his people had done to the Jews, and I told him that is exactly why we came ...for reconciliation. He continued to tell me about his act of love for the Jewish people.

He said at Christmas time he sets up a Christmas display with "Merry Christmas to All" and sets up the other window with a Jewish Display with the largest Chanukiah in Hungary lent to him by the main Rabbi of the synagogue. He told me Jewish people stop by the window display, and the children were moved to tears by it. He also told me many Hungarians came by the shop and were very resentful and angry, asking him why he would put this Jewish symbol in the window since Hungary is a Christian nation. I ended the conversation by telling him that he is a true Christian with a love for all people and invited him to Sally's concert. I took his card as a reminder to pray for him. His name is Michael. I was glad that God had answered my prayers for the day by allowing me to speak to this Hungarian man. For me, this conversation was an answer to prayer. He felt shame, and I was able to offer him reconciliation..

Marlys:

I gave a rose to a couple that came by. I gave the rose to the man, and he just had the biggest smile on his face, and he spoke English. He asked me "What is this for?" I told him "This is to show you that God loves you." He was just beaming, and he looked over at the lady that was looking at him. I went to give her a rose, but she was little hesitant to take the rose. She asked "What is this?" I said "To show you God loves you." She said "Maybe." I told her "No, He really loves you." Then, she looked at me and really smiled, and took the rose. She wasn't beaming like the guy, but she had a reaction like she was really trying to take it all in. It made me think that this girl was wondering if God really loved her. I prayed over her after she left that she would know that God really does love her. I did that with many people I gave roses to...whether or not they took a rose. I thought they needed a simple prayer over them to feel the love of God and know that God loves them too.

There was a young lady, probably in her 20s. She was standing with another lady under an umbrella near the entrance of the synagogue. I offered them

roses, and they said no. I blessed them and kept going. Another member of the team offered them roses, and they said no again. So, I stood under the little tree passing out roses with this lady who had refused a rose twice. She kept watching me handing out roses, and she eventually came to me and asked for a rose. In my heart, I was so happy because something in her had been triggered to make her want this rose. She stood there for a long time with her umbrella. She was later joined by two others, and she gave her friend her rose. I saw this, and I had one last rose. I went over to her to give her the rose, and she initially refused it. I told her that I wanted her to have my last rose. I felt good that she had seen what was going on, and it had changed her heart. I was glad that I was able to bless her.

There was one other lady sitting on a bench. She spoke English, and she asked me what we were doing and where did we get the roses from. I told her I wasn't sure where they came from, but we got them here. She asked what organization we are from. I told her we were A Tour of Roses and that we are from the United States, to show the love of God to the people of Hungary. She said, "That is such a wonderful thing." She was very excited about what we were doing. Giving out the roses yesterday, I could feel God's love shining through to the people. Yesterday and one other day, I felt such a good feeling in my heart.

Lauren:

I had a hard time at the synagogue, People kept refusing roses, and the verse "Be not dismayed." went through my head repeatedly. As much as you want to love people, you can't force them to receive love, but it can be hard to accept that. When we went to the metro station later in the day, it was a whole different story. We were surrounded by people who wanted roses and wanted to know why we were doing this. We were able to share God's love, and the people were willing to stop whatever they were doing to receive it. It was a major contrast.

I went up to one man, and he refused a rose. I told him it really was free. He asked me if I was Hungarian, and I said no. He asked me if I spoke English, and I said yes. He looked at me and forcefully said "I don't care." I told him "God bless you." and walked away. There was a Muslim family that was crossing the street. The dad passed me first, and he just said "No, no, no!" I could tell the mom wanted a rose, and the kids really wanted a rose. I told them that it was really free. The mom asked the dad if they could take a rose, and he said yes, so I was able to give roses to the whole family.

Emily:

I enjoyed passing out roses at the synagogue. I didn't know how receptive people were going to be. This one woman had taken a rose from Amalia earlier, but later, she came up to me and Marlys with another man. He asked what it was for. I told him it was because God loved him and to show the love of God to others. He gave us a big smile and a hug. He told us that he was 95% blind. He said, "Because I am blind, I know that God loves me."

Sally:

I was having a good time giving out roses after worshipping at the synagogue. There was a hop-on bus employee. I gave him a rose, and he said he was going to give it to his wife because she is 7-months pregnant. I told him that I wanted him to have a rose too because God loves him, so I handed him a second rose. After that, we went to pass out roses to others, and he came back up to me. He said that he had fought with his wife last night. As soon as we left him, she called him, and they made up. He then told us that he was Muslim, but he loved all people. I invited him to the concert, and he said he would come. Then, he looked over at Esther and pointed to me and said, "I don't know why, but I love this woman. I love this woman!" He gave me a big hug before going back to work.

The taxi driver who took us to the metro station had driven us before. On both occasions, it has been raining, and he pulled up on the sidewalk, so we could unload. When we got stuck in traffic yesterday, he shut off the meter, not wanting to charge us any extra money. I had made it a point to give a rose to each of our taxi drivers, as well as a generous tip—a way of continuing to express God's love and goodness.

In the underground: As I set my keyboard up, the police came and told me I couldn't play my keyboard. I told them it wasn't for any money, but they said we couldn't unless we had a permit from City Hall. He said we could pass the roses out. The younger guy seemed sorry that he stopped us. He told me that he got off at 6, and I could play then. I said we would probably be done with the roses before then. Later on, I was handing out roses in the station, and I came up to this officer again. He said he hadn't seen anything like this before. He said this is good thing, he didn't think he had ever seen people come running for a rose. I said "Yeah, it's because of God and His love for us." He said "Yes, it's a positive thing." I said, "It is because of the love of God." He responded with, "Yeah, but it's the way you were raised." I was

then glad to share with him: "I wasn't raised that way. I'm Jewish, and I wasn't raised believing in Jesus." He didn't realize that, and I was able to share a little bit of my testimony with him.

There was a guy standing at the corner entrance of the subway. He said he was waiting for his girlfriend. He asked what the roses were about, and I told him it was about God's love—and God's love for him. He gave me this big smile, and he said that's really good. He said he was going to give the rose to his girlfriend, but I told him it was for him, so I gave him a second rose for her.

There were also some people who came to different members of the team more than once to collect roses. It was difficult not to get angry at them, but it was important for us to maintain an open and loving heart before God.

Alex:

First, a waiter at one of the cafés came out and asked for a rose. He asked for another for his colleague. I remained with Sally as she played the keyboard. The waiter came back with two cups of water for us. I gave a rose to a young couple that I believe were residents. I gave the rose to the guy first. He asked, "What is this for?" I said, "It's because Jesus loves you." He said, "That's right!" When I only had one rose left, I saw this lady coming towards me. I knew she was coming towards us for a flower, and I came up to her and offered her my last rose. She was so happy to receive a rose. I was glad that I had one left.

I added another 500 roses to the final shipment because we were preparing them so quickly and they were going out so fast.

On Thursday, we went to the main train station in Budapest. Because of a little drizzle, I set up my keyboard underneath a staircase. Lauren, Amalia, and Emily passed out roses in the metro station. Marlys and Esther stayed above ground at the train station. We took about 500 roses with us, and they were gone in 30 minutes! One of the coolest parts about going to heavy transit areas is that you see the roses going into all different areas of Budapest as people board different trains. It is also cool to see people take a moment to slow down from their daily commute to receive a gift.

Later in the day Amalia, Esther, Emily, Lauren and I took 5 buckets of roses down to the Octagon intersection. Everyone took a few roses, and I was left

with the remaining buckets of roses at an intersection. As soon as the team left, I was approached by the police (again!) and told I couldn't be there. I moved the remaining roses, and we were able to pass the rest out without incident.

Amalia:

On Friday, we went to chapel at Jews for Jesus, and I was very moved by the chapel sermon led by Aaron. I've always shied away from taking the commission to heart because it's the hardest commandment as a Christian for me. He said it so lovingly and gently that it touched me. We had our own time of worship and devotions about always being present with the Lord while being obedient to his commission went deeper into my heart. So, when we went out to Blaha, I made a point as I looked at the flowers and passed them out that God would be present in my life. The way that God's presence translated and made itself known was that I would look deep into the people's eyes and allow my vision to rest on them with love. They, in turn, would look at me, and their vision would linger on me. I wasn't just passing on a rose. I was passing on His love in my look to them, and they looked at me with appreciation. One lady spontaneously gave me a hug and a kiss, which filled me with great joy.

Marlys:

On Thursday morning, I got up around 4 am because my back was hurting, and I needed to sit up. With the little bit of light from outside, I could see the roses, and I started praying over each rose that it would touch a person that they went to with God's love.

When we were at the train station on Thursday, there were a lot of people who approached us for roses and wanted to know what they were for. I walked around the area. I saw this young guy by himself, and something drew me to him like I felt like he was alone. I went over to him and gave him a rose. I don't think he spoke English, and he didn't really speak any language to me. He just looked at me with a puzzled expression when I gave him a rose. He didn't seem to quite understand, and I pointed up to represent God. Then, I pointed at my heart to represent love, and, then, I pointed to him. When I did that, he smiled, and I felt that he understood that I was sharing God's love with him.

Lauren:

When we were at the train station, I was passing out roses to people, and all of a sudden I was flooded with a crowd of people who all wanted a rose. I decided to make a conscious effort to make eye contact and talk with each individual I handed a rose to. I didn't want to just pass out roses to people without sharing the love of God with them. I wanted to be intentional. So, then, I took my time. There was a girl next to me that had Down's Syndrome. As everyone else was swarming around me, she just stood there waiting, so I turned to her and gave her a rose. She had such a look of appreciation on her face that I had noticed her...that I saw her.

Friday was a blessing. I was getting frustrated the day before with the gypsies that we kept encountering. They weren't accepting the love of God; they just wanted the benefits. When I went into the metro, I didn't want to be jaded, so I started praying for the gypsies that God would allow me to be kind. When I encountered them, I would pursue them to hand them a rose. Even when I had to tell them that they could only have one rose, I still wanted to share the love of God with them.

Emily:

It seemed people would come in spurts. When I didn't have people around me, I would try to look around and search for people. I would pray that I wouldn't become discouraged when people would refuse a rose. When people did surround me for a rose, I would try to be intentional with each person I gave a rose to. There was a man that approached us on Friday. He asked what it was for and I told him. He gave us a huge smile and said "I love God." He told us that he was a Christian too. It's been cool to meet Christians on the street who have the same beliefs as us and know the love of God.

Esther:

When we were at the train station, I walked along the street where the buses were parked. I saw this bus driver who had an older bus. I don't know what happened, but there was broken glass all over the floor of his bus. I watched him for a while. He would sweep for a bit. Then, he would stop and just shake his head at the mess. If anyone needed to hear of God's love, I thought it was this man, so I walked up to the bus. He came out of the bus. He was very skeptical that this was a free gift. Even after he took the rose, he said "Really? You want nothing else?" "I told him that I just wanted to bless his day, so that he would know that God loves him. He gave me a smile and a thank you before he returned to cleaning his bus.

When we went to Octagon later in the day, I had a woman come up to me for a rose. I invited her to the concert, and she asked me if I was Protestant. She said "Well, you don't want me there because I'm Catholic, and we serve two different Jesuses." I said "You're welcome to come. We would love to have you. I'm pretty sure we serve the same Jesus." She responded with "Really? I have never heard that in my life. I've always been told that we serve two different Jesuses." I told her I was pretty sure that it was the same guy. She said "My Jesus is from Jerusalem...Israel. Where is your Jesus from?" I said, "My Jesus is Jesus is of Nazareth, but He is in Heaven now." She pondered this for a while before saying "That is the same Jesus. You have given me something to think about. I have never heard this in my life." I invited her to the concert once again, and she responded with "Maybe. I will have to see what the weather is like."

Sally:

We were on our way to the train station, and we walked 5 back to Octagon to get tram tickets. We decided to stay there. Everyone took roses from the buckets, and I stationed myself across from this restaurant. I had three full buckets with me. The team had been gone less than 5 minutes when two police officers approached for me. I thought for sure they couldn't be coming for me because I didn't have my keyboard. We just had the roses, but no, they were coming for me. The one officer asked if we had a permit. I said "A permit to hand out free roses?" He said, "Maybe they are free; maybe they are not." They asked me again if I had a permit, and I said no. They said "You have to go." I said "Where should I go? Would across the street be better?" He asked "Where are you from?" I said "I'm from Los Angeles, California." He said "You can go back there. You can take them and go back there." I didn't get mad, which is remarkable in itself. I told him we were just trying to express God's love in Budapest...that's all. I told him we were at the train station earlier, and it wasn't a problem there. He softened a little bit. He told me I could go back to the train station. Then he walked briskly away. He didn't look back, which was good, because as soon as he walked away, people started approaching me for roses. It was a few minutes until I could get the buckets moved.

I looked across the street and saw Lauren. I consolidated the three buckets into two. I had a bucket in each arm plus my backpack and flyers. I had to cross a 6-lane intersection during rush hour in the city. I got across the street, and immediately started passing out roses. It seemed as the enemy

was trying to stop us- God multiplied the blessing. The roses were gone so quickly. For me, every time I gave a rose, I had an opportunity to say God loves you with words and gestures. Every time somebody really got what I was saying they would smile. It was really cool. When we had given out the last rose, those same two policemen came by again where we were standing with empty buckets and big smiles. I just waved. What the enemy means for evil; God will use for good.

Marlys:

Last night at the concert, it was at Bogi's church. We went in two cabs with one bucket of roses. I felt that there would be a lot of people. The cab dropped us off in what I felt was the middle of nowhere and told us the church was around the corner. We got to the church, and it was closed.

We walked back where the cab had dropped us off to find the right church. We walked around, and walked around, and walked around. We called Bogi a few times before we got a hold of her. We walked over there, and the church was upstairs. It was very nice church. The people were very gracious. A few people started coming. Then, it was time to start. Sally was really tired from all the walking around and setting up. She was really frustrated, and I could feel that, so I started praying for her. Sally asked if she should wait a few minutes to begin. We waited and a few more people came, but not a whole lot. Sally began the concert. Everything went smoothly, and Sally sang beautifully. I could see all at once that she relaxed.

After the concert, people had questions for Sally, so we stayed longer. There weren't very many people there, but the people who were there were touched.

Sally:

After the concert, I was immediately asked if I would answer questions, and I was happy to do so. There was a woman who was there who is married to a Jewish unbeliever, who is the son of the chief Rabbi of Russia. I was able to talk to the group in more detail about my conversion to faith, and pray for this woman specifically afterwards. Her name is Yohanna. As we prayed, she was in tears. Two of the women at the concert talked to me about how they had gone through seasons of depression, and that God had healed them of that depression. One of the women had been hospitalized for her depression. One woman, Lela, is a counselor and ministers in Budapest. She

told me, "God uses really wounded people to reach wounded people." This statement really stuck out to me.

It was a small crowd of about 25. A few people responded to the invitation of receiving a rose as a symbol of accepting the love of Jesus. I don't know if anyone accepted the Lord as their Savior, but I did pray for that. I also prayed that people could lay down their pain at the feet of the Lord.

The last Saturday we still had several roses to clean and prepare for the Sunday outreach with Jews for Jesus in the park and the final concert that evening. But I realized during our devotional time we would probably whip through them so fast there would be another opportunity for free time, since I wanted to hold onto some roses for Sunday. So I mentioned this before we got into prayer and worship and Esther asked me if we were going to see the Holocaust memorial of the shoes by the Danube. This was something I wanted to do, but felt it would probably take too much time and energy and people would probably rather have more free time. But that was not the case. I said I was fine with going to see the shoes, if everyone else was also. Then Lauren piped up and asked if we could collect the petals from the roses we cleaned and bring them to the shoes—maybe cast them out on the Danube... We were done with the roses pretty quickly and collected 5 trash bags of petals to bring with us to the memorial. There was even space for a couple hours of free time before we all met up to go to the memorial.

A friend of mine, Lisa, had recommended a wonderful gypsy restaurant for dinner and music. I asked Esther to map out the way to the shoes and the restaurant via public transportation. It turned out to be more walking than any of us realized, but no one complained.

It was a beautiful cool and sunny day, and the tram let us off near the Parliament building—very famous piece of architecture. We walked quite a distance, over some cobblestone as well, which wasn't easy for Alex with his walker or Marlys with her legs. But we finally got to the shoes memorial. There were several people already taking pictures... Esther had made the comment a day or two before that when we gave the roses out at the metro stations in the city it felt to her like they were going everywhere in Budapest. It really struck her that way. Personally, I didn't know. The memorial consisted of 60 pairs of bronzed shoes. And when we looked through them there were two of our roses—all dried up in the heat--alongside each shoe of a pair, with the cards propped up and displayed. That was a moment.

Alex took some of the petals from a trash bag and began sprinkling them slowly over the shoes, like a gentle crimson rain. I also took some and walked down the line of shoes, scattering the petals over each pair. I saw Amalia throw up handfuls into the sky and watched them fall softly into the Danube... “beauty for ashes” was all that came to mind. People all around us were snapping pictures but it was all background noise. I started singing “Oseh Shalom” as the rest of the petals were scattered and then we all came back together as a team. Lauren had her ukulele tucked in her bag. I asked if she could play “Amazing Grace” and pretty soon we were all singing to her ukulele. God is good—ALL the time—even when we don’t understand His ways. We closed with prayer and then began to make our way back to the tram.

It took some effort to get to the restaurant but it was definitely what the doctor ordered. They sat us down and we ordered. When we prayed the piano player took a cue and started playing “10,000 Reasons, Bless the Lord O My Soul,” and we all sang with him. It was like God gave us each a kiss that evening as he played and we sang. It didn’t even matter that there were a few other folks in the restaurant we had such a sweet time singing our thanks to God.

The next morning we met up at the park with the Jews for Jesus campaign staff. They brought all the sound equipment and set up special activities for the kids. We brought roses.

The outreach took place in a more Jewish neighborhood, lots of families with children. The weather forecast had been for rain on Sunday all week, but I believe God held back the rain for us. The worship team and I alternated sharing songs, along with people giving testimony and teaching. The team began handing out roses in the park and then walked around outside the park and down the street sharing roses wherever we went.

One woman I encountered with her daughter in the playground area of the park was very moved by the whole project. Her daughter had received a rose earlier in the week and it had touched her to the point of tears. She was having a difficult day when someone gave her the rose. She called her mom, crying, so moved by the idea of the beautiful rose given her to symbolize the love God has for her. I was able to give them each a CD later when they found us again outside the park handing out more roses. God is so good!!

One woman who received the Lord during the combined outreach was 93 years old and a Holocaust survivor. She was touched by all aspects of the outreach—the music and testimonies—the roses. One of the Jews for Jesus campaigners asked if she wanted to receive the Lord. Her answer was Yes.

About half an hour before the outreach was officially going to wrap up, the projected rain started putting in an appearance. So I sent most of the team back to the hotel with some roses in hand to give out along the way. Amalia and I made our way back in the rain, handing out the last of the roses to people in the cafes and along the sidewalks—even on the tram.

Later that night we walked over to Golgota church for the final concert. They meet in a lovely old theatre with the same seating and a complete stage and lights set-up. They even had a beautiful baby grand, but it was faced the wrong way and I knew that I needed to be able to communicate. So I settled for the keyboard instead, down on the floor with everyone. It created more intimacy. It was the largest crowd of the 3 concerts, which was nice. Only a few people responded to my invitation to take a rose as a symbol of laying down bitterness and unforgiveness, and taking the Lord's love more deeply into their hearts. It was a very thoughtful crowd. They were still coming up, here and there, into the next song.

At the end of the concert we invited people to come up for prayer if they had a need. Several people came over to talk and pray. The first woman was in tears and just hugged me a few times. God really ministered to her spirit during the concert. She had several losses in her life. A couple people from the Jews for Jesus campaign group came over and spoke with me and also prayed. I was amazed how deeply some of the people who came up felt impacted.. by what I shared. God is so faithful!!!

We still had roses left over from the concert, so on the way back to the hotel we gave them out to everyone we met. And as we rounded the corner close to where we were staying I had an idea. We were staying in a hotel around the corner from a whole string of strip joints. And this one particular place we had passed almost every day when we went out with the roses. And during the day, it was closed. But it was open as we went by at night. So, I stopped there with Amalia and we went inside, asking if we could give out the roses to the women. The “bounce”-lady was amazed. She couldn't believe we wanted to give her a rose—and also the ladies upstairs—and that

it was free—and it was about God’s love... Anyway, she allowed us to go up and see the ladies. Thankfully, they were dressed. We were able to give each of them a rose, and also the guy who was in charge. He was surprised by the whole idea, but very cynical also—and crass. But we explained that the roses represent the love of God—and it’s for them!! I couldn’t begin to tell you what it meant to each of them, but God knows and is able to speak to their hearts.

In summing up, the closeness and unity of the team was something beautiful. That we could all come together from different places and ages and even thinking—and genuinely engage with each other—and then with the people we met—that was awesome!!

I like what Esther had to say about the trip:

It’s difficult to summarize the Budapest trip with just words. I saw God’s love received with smiles of joy and amazement. I loved watching the roses spread through Budapest as we passed them out in transit areas. We saw roses in different places all over the city, and I’ve heard a rose even made it to Brazil.

There were attacks, but I also felt that our team was lifted and covered in prayer. Thank you to everyone who prayed during the trip. Even when our flesh was weak, the Lord granted us strength to persevere.

The Lord also blessed me on this trip with reminding me of His redeeming mercy. Sprinkling the rose petals at the Danube shoe memorial was a beautiful moment to remember the past but also pray that God would bless Budapest’s future. Our God is a redeemer, and I believe He can restore Budapest. Afterwards, at dinner, we were just sitting and talking when the pianist started playing 10,000 Reasons. We had an unexpected moment of worship right there in the restaurant.

In summary, I was reminded that I can show the love of God with a small gift, and the impact can be far reaching even if I don’t know the impact until I get to Heaven.

Letters from Budapest...

Dear Sally,

Some Hungarian friends came to me yesterday, and wanted to express to you how much your testimony and songs touched and helped them. They didn't want to interrupt you in your conversations, but they took some of your roses and blessings home to their families. They really needed them. You've been a blessing to Budapest.

God bless you all!

Feri

Hello Dear Sally,

Maybe you can't remember me, I was one of the stewards on Jews for Jesus campaign in Budapest and I was also there in Szent István park and also in your concert in Golgota church hall. I just want to say that you were an impact in my life indeed. I guessed it wasn't really a concert but rather an event of testimonies from you and you also served throughout your songs, stories, prayers with the participants and even with the beautiful roses. I wanted you to know I had many questions in connection with the role of music in Christian life. I am also a musician and music teacher so I've heard and seen different things in connection with music. I usually take part in worship groups and lead worship sometimes but I felt confused about it because even leaders weren't aware of the aim of musical worship or misunderstood it because of false teaching about it. Bands give concerts and make the audience entertain and jump but they don't even pray with them. This shows that they emphasise music not God. So since I have attended to your event, my questions were answered. Now I know that the most important thing is to serve others and point to Jesus and music should be subordinated to all. It's too easy to be focused on music especially when I am a musician but God and others are in the focus. Thank you so much to show how to do this ministry of in the right and only way. I also wrote songs so I want to learn how to serve the Lord and others with them. I wish many blessings to your ministry and upcoming events. I pray for your songs and testimonies may be blessings and tools in God's hand. Shalom, Ráhel

Thank You God, for the way You let us participate in different ways You are moving in hearts and lives!!!

