

80 Countries, 65,000 College Students, One Location – Passion 2020

By Calyssa Richie March 29th, 2020

Passion conferences started in 1995 in hopes of attracting students from colleges globally to learn life skills, grow as a person and live for Jesus (Passion Conferences). Passion believes that the generation of college students have high potential in moving the climate of faith around the world. From ages 18 to 25, millions of students have attended Passion's conferences (Passion Conferences). The program has used up to three different locations in Atlanta, Georgia to have enough space to hold all of the students. Passion's goal is to use these spaces to transform lives through the power of the Holy Spirit and bring light to the world through music and famous guest speakers.

Passion 2020 was a different experience than the previous conferences held every year. Previously it was held at three different locations the day after New Year's Eve. This year it was going to be in one location during New Year's Eve. College students from 80 different countries attended Passion 2020 at the Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia. It became the largest gathering in the history of Passion with more than 65,000 people were in attendance including a small youth group from New Berlin, Illinois.

The New Berlin Youth Group had been looking forward to Passion 2020 at the Mercedes Benz Stadium all year. Immediately after Passion 2019, the group purchased their tickets for the following year. They had previously attended two years of Passion and could not wait to experience this one. They knew it would be lifechanging with all attendees gathering in one location. After a year of preparation, it was finally time for the New Berlin Youth Group to start traveling towards Atlanta.

After almost a ten-hour car ride, the group arrived at their Airbnb in Atlanta. Everyone had a lot of energy from sitting in the car and was anxious to get going to the stadium, so they did not stay at the house for very long. They arrived at the stadium for Passion 2020 two hours before the doors opened so they could lower level seats inside. It had felt like they were waiting for five hours, but they knew it would all be worth it to be up close. As they entered the stadium, they were astonished with how large the facility was and how quickly every seat started to fill up.

A student named Dylan said, "I knew as soon as I walked in what I was about to experience was going to be life changing. Back home all my college friends were excited to spend their new year and new decade at a bar getting wasted, but I was excited to spend my new year here. I mean, what a better way to start the new decade off with a fresh mind and clear soul". The night had begun as every seat in the stadium was full. As multiple famous Christian bands such as Hillsong and Elevation Worship performed, time was quickly passing. A large countdown then appeared on the screen. While singing their heart out along with 65,000 others with their hands held high, they were ready for the clock to change and take on what 2020 had to offer them.

Once the clock struck midnight the whole stadium went crazy. The band continued as fireworks were shot inside and outside of the stadium ([Live from Passion 2020](#)). Looking around you could see thousands of people on their knees giving their heart out to Jesus and praying for a successful new year. This was the moment they had all been preparing for. Another student named Abby

said, “I never wanted that moment to end. It was the most amazing thing I have ever been apart of. What I had witnessed that night cannot be described. It was something one would have to experience to fully understand.”

The group was speechless after they had left. They knew that they were never going to experience a moment like that every again. However, their time there was not finished. The next few days they had heard from various famous speakers such as Sadie Robertson, Christine Caine and Tim Tebow. They continued to learn valuable life lessons that would help them be successful in the new decade. Along with preparing college students for the new decade and strengthening their faith, another goal Passion had was to raise money to help get a Bible translated for every person on the planet ([Bible Translation](#)). In many countries, some are not able to study the scripture because it is not yet published in their language. Passion strived to raise 1 million dollars to help create these Bibles. After counting all of the donations, all 65,000 college students managed to surplus the goal of 1 million dollars and raise \$1,214,05 to get Bibles translated.

The final day had arrived, and the students were not ready to return to their life back home. Reflecting on their experience at Passion 2020, they knew they had would return with a new perspective. Knowing that they made a difference in the world gave them a feeling of comfort. The New Berlin Youth Group Leader Mason said, “Instead of partying with their friends, they chose to spend their new year strengthening their faith and make a difference in the world and for that I am proud”.

References:

Dylan Smidt: 217-891-8892

Abby Stockton: 217-725-5642

Mason Whickham: 217-341-9135

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