

More than four decades after arriving in America from his native Argentina, Luis Palau is more intent than ever to follow his calling to spread the powerful word of God throughout the world.

Whether on stage speaking to massive crowds at his festivals; through his radio messages heard daily in more than 40 countries; or in counsel and prayer with leaders from the local church to the White House, Palau remains one of the world's most effective and compelling spiritual communicators.

Born and raised in an affluent family in Argentina, Palau discovered Christ during his childhood. His father died when Palau was 10, and in a few years he became the family's sole breadwinner. He entered the banking industry, becoming a successful executive while preaching the Gospel on weekends on the streets of his hometown. With the help of a mentor, he came to America to study at Multnomah Biblical Seminary, where he met the Oregonian who would become his wife – Patricia.

Upon graduation, they embarked on a missionary journey that took them throughout Latin America. They began building an evangelistic team and assisted other evangelists – including Spanish language translation for Billy Graham, a primary influence upon Palau's own ministry.



Luis Palau

In the 1970s, invitations started coming from Europe and other parts of the world. By the early 1980s, Palau's ministry had made a great impact in Western Europe and new doors were opening around the globe. In the 1990s, Palau began focusing on the United States, and by 1996 he had led evangelistic crusades in 15 U.S. cities. Yet despite continuing invitations, something was not working.

“We were on the verge of saying, ‘Maybe somehow God doesn't want us in America.’ The crowds were okay, but we weren't getting through,” Palau says. “We began to realize that the classic campaign model—uniformed choir, the suits on the platform, the old hymns—wasn't

the way to go for us. We want to attract the un-churched and the seeking; we want them to encounter God. We also want to unite and energize the church community.”

Three of his four adult sons, Kevin, Keith, and Andrew, who lead the day-to-day operations of the Luis Palau Association headquartered in Portland, Oregon, saw the fast-approaching new millennium as the prime time for change. They exhorted Luis to take the less traveled road, to embrace contemporary life and culture in order that more souls might be won to Jesus Christ. In 1999, the current model of festival evangelism was born. This nontraditional and “open arms” approach has now seen more than 7.7 million people worldwide effectively reached with the Good News.

“We wouldn’t ever go back to the old method. This is for today,” Palau says.

His festivals have all the best elements of today’s most popular music festivals—everything from hot contemporary music performances and festival fair foods to a world-class action sports venue. Though these elements help attract huge crowds of young people and families of all races and beliefs, Palau never loses sight of his ministry’s ultimate goal: to share the truth of Jesus Christ with a troubled world in troubled times.

“A nation will not be moved by timid methods,” says Palau, explaining why his free festivals of family-friendly entertainment are making such an impact. “Today’s young people understand music and technology, but few have an understanding of what a life walked in faith can produce. They don’t know the person of Jesus Christ—that He is alive, that He is divine, and that He wants every one of us to know Him personally.”

Each year, festivals are staged in the United States and abroad. In each city another Palau ministry called Livin It® brings a skateboard, BMX, and FMX demonstration showcasing top Christian athletes. For children, characters from VeggieTales, one of the most popular family video franchises in history, make an appearance in a highly interactive entertainment area just for kids. For the community at large, a season of service leads up to the festival. Service projects welcome groups of every age, race, faith, and economic status to participate in neighborhood cleanups, food collection, home building, and more for the betterment of the community.

Palau festivals are always free and open to everyone. Finances are raised behind the scenes, and there is never a financial offering requested from the massive crowds. This is made possible through a highly professional and strategically organized operation that spends as long as two years preparing in a city.

“Once we’ve been invited to a city, we work hard to find Christian leaders who are committed to evangelism,” Palau says. “We start with the area churches, and we’re blessed that financial support comes from businesses and individuals as well as the church community. From start to finish and top to bottom, we work to assure that there is total integrity throughout the operation.

“We emphasize Christ more than Christianity or denominations,” Palau says. “We focus on what Christians are for, not what we might be against. As an evangelist, my role is to share the Good News of our Savior; we leave the politics to others. We want people to know answers to: *Who is the person of Jesus Christ? Can He really change my life? What does it mean to be a Christian?* We want people to think of Christianity differently. And of Christ differently.”

Luis Palau’s 40+ year ministry now involves more than 100 fulltime staff on four continents, and thousands of local volunteers and supporters who join in as the festival in their city approaches.

“I’d love to see a massive breakthrough,” Palau says. “An international revival of Christianity. I’d love to see the nations truly reawaken where not just a few thousand, but millions discover Christ again. That is my dream.”