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National Day of Prayer / Delivering a motivational message

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HILL AIR FORCE BASE — Pastors may have offered the prayer, but it was Nick Vujicic who provided the miracle.

Vujicic, a 26-year-old motivational speaker and preacher from Australia, was born without arms or legs. He spoke at Hill Air Force Base for a special National Prayer Day observance Thursday.

"If I had hands, I'd salute you all for what you do for your country," Vujicic said to the audience at the base theater, which was filled to capacity.

Vujicic has been all over the globe on speaking tours, but Thursday's visit was his first to the state of Utah.

"Utah looks like a postcard," he said. "It's amazing."

While in town, Vujicic also participated in a community leadership breakfast, an afternoon community rally in American Fork and an evening speaking session at the state Capitol in Salt Lake City — all part of the prayer day observance organized by local Evangelical Christians.

"His message is something people of all faiths should hear," said Greg Johnson, a pastor with the Salt Lake City-based Standing Together Evangelical Ministry and the state coordinator for National Prayer Day.

Vujicic was born with the rare Tetra-amelia disorder. He's missing both arms at shoulder level, and has one small foot with two toes protruding from his left thigh.

"When I was a kid, I would go to school and say, 'Why did God let me have no arms or legs?' " he said. "All I saw was unfairness."

Vujicic tried to drown himself when he was 8 and spent much of his early years angrily questioning why he was so different. He said he was about 15 when he realized his mission in life was to use his condition to help others.

"I realized I was more complete than the average person," he said, "because "I knew the truth, that I am a child of God. I want others to know that truth, too."

Vujicic had the capacity crowd at Hill in hysterics for much of his time on stage and says he uses humor to make people feel comfortable with his disease.

"A lot of times, when kids would see me, they'd freak out a little," he said.

"I just decided to milk it and start having fun with it."

Vujicic told the story of a little boy who looked at him in horror and asked him how he lost all of his limbs.

"I looked him right in the eye with a straight face and just said, 'Cigarettes.' "

After a life spent overcoming the obstacles related to the disorder, he graduated from college with a double major in accounting and financial planning.

Shortly after graduation, he began his travels as a motivational speaker and began his nonprofit organization, Life Without Limbs.

Since then he's toured countless schools, churches, prisons, orphanages, hospitals and stadiums in 19 countries.

He's also become an Internet phenomenon by way of YouTube videos. He said he plans to come back to Hill again this fall.

Hill Commander Gen. Kathleen Close, Clearfield Mayor Don Wood and Lt. Governor Gary Herbert all attended the observance.

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