

Egypt influenced early Christianity

Dan Nelson - pastor

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There is more to see in Egypt than Pyramids and archeological icons; there are living beacons of light amidst an otherwise dark place of despair and despondency. Living among the overshadowing of Muslim rule and terrifying threats, Christians comprise a real spiritual force in that volatile region of the world.

Many people do not realize the important role that Egypt has in the story of Christianity. From Genesis to Revelation, Egypt is mentioned in Scripture over 600 times. In both historical accounts of events recorded and in metaphor and imagery to depict a spiritual message, Egypt is found throughout the writings of the Bible. Further, early Christianity was heavily influenced by the role of Egypt in influencing people to follow Jesus Christ.

Ever since I was a boy I was fascinated with Egypt. I remember studying about the pharaohs in school and being amazed at the pictures of King Tut. When I was a kid I went to the Los Angeles Museum to see his golden adornment on display. Today, I have a different view of the most impressive things about Egypt.

Upon my recent return from Egypt, where I had spent two weeks with some of the most faithful people in the world, I was contemplating how I might bring to you a piece of what I had experienced. So I will share with you about my new friends Mathew and Fadi; they are father and son.

After service one evening, I was asked to go to the house of a woman who wanted me to pray for her husband. Upon arrival, I learned that the man had experienced a stroke while living in Iraq. He had a retail store and did what many see as unthinkable; he hung Scripture verses in his store. He was a man of faith in Christ living in a tumultuous and dangerous place and everything he stands for would get tested.

Five months ago, his adult son was also living in Iraq when his taxi was randomly stopped in the street, along with another cab, by Muslim extremists who kidnapped him and the other passengers and put them in their trunk. Fadi spent the next six days in a small cave in the desert. Each day, some of his co-prisoners would be missing. Fadi saw one of his fellow captives get decapitated. The demands were simple; profess allegiance to Mohammed, and give money. My friend was willing to give whatever money he had but not deny his devotion to Jesus. He was willing to go to his death rather than deny Christ. The kidnappers couldn't understand why he wouldn't falter. His boldness struck fear into their own hearts and on the sixth day, Fadi, who was the last remaining captive, was set free.

In the midst of all the turmoil, Fadi's father, Mathew, had a stroke and lost part of his mobility. This is the reason we were at their home, to pray for Mathew. But in the process I had the privilege of meeting a whole family who understands what it means to have their faith tested and be spiritually purified. The Bible says that we are like gold; precious and valuable but only really pure upon being put into the furnace to

be tested and to get the junk out. My friends were put through the furnace this past year and are still being given the opportunity to choose in whom they will put their trust.

Now living back in their home in Egypt, these men don't see themselves as heroes, but I do. Fadi said that when the captors used their victims' cell phones to call friends and family for ransom money, the good news is that his call list was filled with Christians from his semi-underground church. This, in turn, sparked a network of prayer around the world that is estimated to be in the millions. When was the last time you had millions of people praying for you? But it took an extreme situation to provoke a radical spiritual response.

Fadi and Mathew are the kind of guys that I usually only read about in missionary newsletters or hear of on a radio broadcast. This time I was in their living room and wishing I had a video camera to record the whole interview. But we were there to pray. So now I have this article to communicate with you about a family, and I am sure there are many others like them, who have passed through the fire and have found themselves alive. I hope that you and I will live a bit stronger, a bit deeper, with a little more meaning and more faith today as a result of knowing about people like Fadi and Mathew.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View