

Lessons learned in Egyptian mission

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

Joining North Africa with Asia at the infamous cross-section glibly called “the Middle East,” lies a geographical zone that is a hot bed of controversy and world news. Among the nations bordering Israel, the epicenter of meaning and mayhem, there is perhaps no other place that is so pronounced in the Scriptures, branded with historical significance, and central for getting a message of hope into this desperate region, than the land of pyramids and pharaohs: Egypt.

Mentioned in the Bible over 600 times, Egypt plays a role in the big picture story from Genesis to Revelation. Chronicles from the lives of Abram, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses are the context of rich messages heard on Sunday mornings throughout the world. And, of course, God chose this to be the home where Jesus would spend part of his childhood. “And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and remain there until I bring you word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (Matthew 2:13).

Metaphorically, this ancient land of abundance and opulence, idolatry and slavery, would represent to God’s people the life to be avoided, the sin from which to repent. Through prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, God spoke about the great humbling that this nation would experience. As with all of God’s pronouncements, everything he spoke was fulfilled. Today, Egypt is a mere shadow of what it once was.

For most Americans, school curriculum includes studies of world history and ancient civilizations. Many grade school students became fascinated with pictures of King Tut and the Sphinx at Giza from an early age. Most people who travel to Egypt are on tours, not missionary ventures. Five years ago, when David Cuff of Calvary Chapel Mid-Valley first shared about his plans to do mission work in Egypt, it intrigued some and scared others. The Lord used him and then opened more doors than David could walk through.

As a country dominated by a Muslim government, life is not easy for Christians in Egypt. The days as a mission headquarters and center for Christian training and Scripture copying have long been over. Today it is illegal to evangelize, or convert any Muslim to Christ. For the last three years, we have done this together. This is a strategic mission to equip the people who have the ability to go places throughout the Arabic speaking world where we cannot.

With hundreds of thousands of refugees from Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia living in the Cairo area, having been displaced by Islamic persecutions in their homelands, there is tremendous need to bring strength, encouragement and training. The first leg of the mission is with pastors and church leaders in what has been coined by its founder, Dr. Messgina of Biola University, as the African Leadership Conference. We spend a few days with these leaders, most of them greatly impoverished in the

world’s eyes, yet rich in Christ, to worship together and journey through the word of God with them. We teach them how to exposit the word in a verse-by-verse way, and we get the blessing of sharing in deep worship together and in building genuine relationships.

Traveling by train into upper Egypt, the team would get reacquainted with old friends in the city of El Minya and add new stops to the itinerary, Luxor and Assuit, which were renowned for the terrorism and violence against Christians not long ago. In all, we taught three separate leadership conferences and at seven different churches, in addition to various other opportunities for smaller gatherings with local tribal leaders, missionaries, and even some specialized services for women, youth and children. Intent on building up the body of Christ in this critical corner of the world, the team is praying about what next year will mean. We have been invited to more places than we can go. By God’s grace, we pray He will send other churches to join in this important work.

Isaiah 19:25: “Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”

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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.



Sunday Worship:
9:00 & 10:45am
 Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
 195 Mahoney Ave, Oak View

Mid-Week Study:
7:00pm Thursday
 Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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