

Truth Hiding in Egypt

Dan Nelson – pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

Saying goodbye to Shelley and the children at the airport was unusually difficult this year. Karenna is 8 now and was a bit more emotional than during recent years. We have experienced a few deaths recently and she has come to be aware of our mortality. As we huddled in a family prayer circle at LAX, the bustling world of travelers disappeared for a bit while we turned our thoughts and prayers upward. I promised Karenna and the whole family that our time apart would be well invested for the purposes of God and his kingdom. You know, I think she understood this better than some of the adults I know.

I am writing to you from a fourth-floor flat above a house of worship in Upper Egypt. Nestled about 130 miles south of Cairo and resting alongside the Nile, El Minia is a city that has roots in history and boasts as the hub of the infamous reign of Neferiti. She, and her husband and co-regent, had inaugurated policy that would be unique in the annals of Egypt, they required the worship of only one supreme God. Today, two general forms of worship are permitted: Christianity and Islam. With Muslims in control of government and virtually all forms of civic life, Islam is significantly dominant, promoted, and funded. The existence of Christianity is tolerated in limited forms, but conversion from Islam to Christianity can find you in a whole heap of trouble; the kind that would make your worst nightmare feel like a day at Disneyland. It is hard to imagine that this was once the epicenter of worldwide Christian mission work and scholarship before the bloodshed and tyranny that brought the new regime.

Few back in America understand the dynamic of life in this region nor realize the context for complaints regarding how we are handling the Middle East crisis. Down below on the street, there are police carrying AK-47s positioned to protect me from the very thing that embodies a pandemic of dominance and violence that we, as Americans, are resisting. Back at home in our charming community, we are relatively lethargic to these kinds of issues. For some, tolerance and liberality remains the rhetorical mantra and maintain this to be merely a political issue to be handled in Washington circles, not in pastoral articles. Others say religion itself is the problem and choose to reject everything except self-centeredness in its various forms, such as humanism, hedonism and neo-Darwinism. Still, there are others, who realize that the existence of falsehoods and lies does not necessitate that there is no truth to be discovered. The existence of thieves does not preclude that there are no honest individuals. Likewise, the reality of various false religious systems does not denote the absence of

God's revealed truth to people. God is real, and revealed in Jesus Christ, despite the diverse alternative systems that are offered or demanded in various corners of the world.

Karenna and I spoke on the telephone the other day and I told her of some of the things that we are doing here. I hope to share with you some of those things later. You see, the freedoms that we enjoy daily are not granted here in Egypt, and I can't compromise the safety of the people that we are working with. What fascinates me though is the promise of freedom for the soul that Jesus offers that supersedes every trial and circumstance. At home, the closure of one's favorite ice cream place is a trial to some, while others face life and death issues boldly. Here, just like in our valley, some Christians live by the power and direction of the spirit of God and understand the message of Jesus; "the truth shall set you free."

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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.



P.O. Box 1443
Ojai, CA 93024
(805) 640-9498
www.calvaryojai.org

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
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

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