

“Let My People Go So They Can Worship Me”

**A Vision for Preparing The Spiritual
Highway in the Middle East**

**David Joseph
Founder of The Last Harvest
with Jan Fletcher**

**The Last Harvest, Inc.
El Cajon, California**



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Dedication

To my family: First, to my wife, who stood beside me through all the circumstances of my life, and who sacrificed many things to enable me to fulfill God's plan in *our* lives. And, also to Andrew and Timmy, my two sons, who spent many nights in prayer to God asking Him to bring their Dad home safely after my trips to hostile Middle Eastern countries.

To my dear brothers and sisters, who are my coworkers and partners in the gospel, and who risk their lives on the front lines serving the Lord in the different countries of the Middle East.

To my dear friends and partners Jan and Charlie Fletcher, who dedicate their lives to helping precious souls in the Middle East see the light of the gospel. Without Jan prodding me to record these testimonies, and her diligent work in transcribing and editing them, this book may never have been published.

To my Lord Jesus Christ who gave me the honor of serving Him in the Middle East.

“My friend, David Joseph, is a tireless dynamo working to fulfill the vision God has put on his heart for the nations of the Middle East and North Africa. His life’s story is one of the grace of God preserving him under difficult circumstances, and then establishing him in a powerful international ministry. As a native of Egypt and one who has traveled extensively among other Muslim nations, David writes with a deep understanding of the plight of Christians living in these lands. His experiences in life have given him insight and clarity into Islam and a deep compassion for Muslims everywhere.”

Mark Hoffman, Senior Pastor – Foothills Christian Church, El Cajon

“I have seen the potter’s hand remaking, shaping, moulding and beautifying Brother Nagy’s life for several decades. I have known Brother Nagy since the late 1960s. He is a man who loves the Lord, and was always ready to obey, and pay the price even when all the voices that surrounded him said otherwise. He is a gifted and talented individual sold out to God’s higher call, and an earthen vessel held by the Maker of heaven and earth to be used throughout the Muslim world, in unique, daring, and courageous ways endeavoring to do His pleasure. Brother Nagy was blessed with a loving, giving, and ever faithful helpmate, who was always there for him through thick and thin, and through the treacherous waters of their life’s adventure. I know that this book will be a blessing, and an enlightening and edifying resource to everyone who reads it. I pray God’s continuous protection upon his life, and I know that in humility Nagy will continue to beat the Master’s feet.”

Nabil Abraham, Senior Pastor – Christian Arabic Church of Anaheim & Director of Programing – Arabic Healing Channel

“It is with great joy that I recommend the ministry of Dr. Nagy. It has been my privilege to know him and his precious wife for almost 20 years. I marvel at God’s hand to use me — this handmaiden of the Lord from America — to be instrumental in fulfilling the vision and plans of a young Egyptian believer, named Nagy. As we look back over the years, we begin to understand some of the ‘ways of the Lord’ which were unknown during the journey. I thank God for His servants, trained to ‘hear and obey’ in order to be effective for His glory. May all who read this book be inspired to seek the Lord with all their might and dedicate themselves to follow Jesus fully. He alone has the words of eternal life. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. May the hand of the Lord guide you continuously, my dear friend Nagy.”

**Rev. Judy Bauer, Founder & President
Kingdom Advancement Ministries, Inc.**

“Nagy (David Joseph) is a man of faith, who has lived a life of faith, that will challenge your walk of faith. I have been truly blessed and challenged by his story. May God continue to use this man of God to bless the Muslim world.”

John Hilton, Pastor – The Chapel, San Diego

“I have known Nagy (David Joseph) for more than 15 years and I am delighted and amazed at the ministry God has given him amongst Muslims both in the USA and globally. You will be enriched and amazed yourself as you read this book — and you’ll find yourself asking, ‘How can I be involved?’”

**Paul Borlhwick, Senior Consultant
Development Associates International**

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Introduction

I first met David “Nagy” Joseph in an airport, when he was on his way back to El Cajon, California, after sharing his testimony about the miracles God is doing in Egypt and the Middle East. David had been praying for an American writer, and I had been praying for years that God would grant me the opportunity to help Muslims hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since our first meeting over a year ago, I have come to know David and his wife, Carol, as dear friends in the Lord. Through the times I have experienced their warm hospitality in their home, their church, and with their Christian brothers and sisters, I have come to truly appreciate the infectious humor and guest-honoring graciousness that Egyptians are known for around the world. However, there is an added measure of grace and joy that belongs solely to those who love Jesus. I have found, in the Josephs, a couple that combines all the warmth long associated with Egyptians, along with the brilliant light that shines from believers in Christ.

I have also experienced the joy of visiting my brothers and sisters in Egypt, who risk their freedom and, at times, even their lives, to serve our Lord. These Egyptian Christians are brave, dedicated, and long suffering in their desire to reach millions of Muslims who are spread across this golden crescent of shifting sands: a place where the spirit of Islam has ruled for too many centuries.

Four millennia ago, Israel’s son, Joseph, endured years of suffering in Pharaoh’s dungeon. God himself, in a move foreshadowing Christ’s ministry “*sent a man before them Joseph, sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true.*” (Psalm 105: 17-19)

Joseph was sent by God to preserve a holy remnant, and to save lives by a great deliverance (Gen. 45:7). Later, under Joseph's leadership, Egypt fed the entire region through seven years of famine:

“and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.’ When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world. (Gen. 41 :54-57)

Through David's ministry, The Last Harvest, these believers, who have a deep love for their mother country and its people, share a vision. They understand in these days of “the last harvest” before Christ's return, Egypt is once again being positioned by divine providence to give bread to the hungry

— those starving souls who live in the spiritual desert of Islam, and suffer a famine of God's true Word, Jesus, who is the Bread of Life.

And, like Joseph, Israel's son, these modern-day dispensers of bread have also paid the price of suffering under the same spirit of Pharaoh that cast Israel's innocent young son, falsely accused, into a dungeon where even those who had promised to remember him, instead, forgot him. Egyptian believers, especially those who leave Islam, and who, in turn, dispense this Bread of Life to other Muslims, have suffered beatings, electric shocks, sexual assaults by Egyptian police and other terrifying abuses. Some are left to languish in horrid desert prisons, alongside terrorists and beset by scorpions and biting insects. Others are forcibly confined to mental hospitals unless they agree to return to Islam.

Yet, God is still feeding His lambs in the Middle East through the Egyptian churches and ministries. Egypt's Christians understand the Middle Eastern cultures around them. They speak the same language and share much of the same heritage. Having lived under the oppressive government-enforced atmosphere of Islam their entire lives, they are burdened for their Middle- Eastern brothers by a bond of brotherhood that we, in the West, cannot fully share. They live under the shadow of blaring loud speakers that begin the Islamic call to prayers at dawn each day and repeat the call every few hours, day in and day out. They minister in a land where the spiritual oppression of Islam is palpable: you can feel the weight of it upon the people as you walk the streets of Cairo.

Egyptian believers are able to cross borders in the region, dispensing bread from heaven to a land ravished by spiritual famine, and offering living water to those who thirst for truth: precious souls who have heard only the lies of Islam all their lives. Some bold believers, still carrying government issued ID cards that mark them as Muslims, have used this oppressive law to Christ's glory, and have even journeyed to very heart of Islam's stronghold

— Mecca. They have used this access to encourage their brethren in Saudi Arabia’s underground churches. (By Egyptian law, a Muslim convert to Christianity cannot change the religion on his government-issued ID card.)

Though these believers suffer, they also endure these temporary afflictions while anticipating the joy set before them, just as Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before him.

(Heb.12:2) What is this joy? It is the intense pleasure these laborers will experience for all eternity, when Christ returns and rewards His faithful servants who have faithfully labored in the harvest fields. And, I know you, too, will be encouraged and filled with joy and praises to God when you read the testimony of David, and understand more fully what God has done and continues to do in the Middle East.

For us North Americans, there are many Muslims now living in our cities, towns, and even villages, who are still in bondage to Islam. There are many mosques in North America: from the hills of Appalachia and the hills of Hollywood to the Greater Toronto area with its population of a quarter- million Muslims. So, I pray that you, too, will hear God’s call, thinking of the joy set before you, as you minister to those around you who are spiritually starving, because they have never known the love of Christ. I am sure that, as you read these testimonies David shares from his many years of fruitful and faithful ministry, you will be encouraged all the more to give out life-giving bread to your neighbors, co-workers and fellow citizens.

It is with great honor and gratitude that I bring you David’s story using the hours of his recorded testimony that he has graciously shared with me.

To God’s glory!

Jan Fletcher
August 2007

A note to the reader from David Joseph:

I pray the Lord will bless you, and will pour His Spirit upon you, as you read this testimony of His power manifested through the saints of the Middle East. Each chapter ends with a prayer, and as you pray and seek the Lord’s will for your life, there is a place for you to make notes, too. If you’d like to share with us how this book has blessed you, please contact me at:

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Chapter One

“who wrote this paper?”

But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (Matthew 10:19-20)

The Egyptian secret police officer grabbed a piece of paper from his desk, held it up to my face, directly in front of my eyes, and peeked over the top. With an icy stare, he asked me: “Who wrote this paper?”

The paper he dangled so menacingly in front of my face was a simple message of evangelism directed to a Muslim. It explained that Mohammed was not a real prophet, but a false prophet. It gave the Good News that Jesus is the Son of God, and it explained how to accept Jesus as savior. This simple, life-changing message of salvation is freely proclaimed every day in many countries around the world. But, of course, this was Egypt. And, by law, it is forbidden in Egypt to share the gospel with a Muslim.

For many, many years, there have been laws against proclaiming the gospel in Egypt and other Islamic countries. Yes, there are many churches in Egypt, but Egyptian police enforce one rule: All Christian activity has to take place solely inside the church.

You cannot pass out any tracts, or any Christian materials, to people in

the streets, because this is against the law in Egypt, as well as most other Arabic and Islamic countries. This is true even if Christians hand out very simple Christian tracts to other Christians in the streets. Law enforcement officials accuse those who do this, and say that they are distributing printed materials, and thus, they are violating the law in Egypt.

One trick that the enemy of our souls uses to oppress us Egyptians is a trick that Egyptian leaders and leaders of other Arabic countries continue to play upon the free Christians in the West, too. This trick is the lie propagated by these governments that Christians still have freedom to practice Christianity in these countries. “See our churches,” government officials say. “Christians are free to practice their faith.” Many fall for this trick, and think we have freedom because we have churches and church meetings in Egypt. They say people are free to come and hear what we preach.

It all sounds so good. Christians who hear this, and who have the freedom to share their faith in the streets without molestation by the police, assume they can rest easy, believing that their brethren in Egypt and other Islamic countries with visible churches are openly allowed to practice their faith. Even the Egyptian believers console themselves, and each other, saying: “We have freedom to be Christians — to attend churches — and to baptize our children.”

Yet, one point of oppression always dangles over our heads: We are not allowed to evangelize. We are not allowed to reach others with the gospel message, and that’s why the established churches in Egypt don’t grow. Compared to the multiplication of the numbers of the residents in any city, the churches in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries that allow churches to operate in the open continue to shrink. They lose members. Christians who hear the same messages every day and at every meeting, yet are not allowed to go outside and share their faith without fear of arrest and torture, grow discouraged. Over time, some may even stop attending church. Stale bread kept too long in the breadbox doesn’t satisfy the soul. In the same way, churches that do not share the message of the gospel find the same messages repeated over and over, week in and week out, no longer bring life and joy to those in the pews. Yet, sharing the gospel on the streets in Egypt can lead to severe torture. Christians are not free in Egypt, or other Islamic countries.

In Egypt, even inside the churches, pastors are not allowed to preach whatever God gives to them, because their messages are supposed to be from the government’s point of view. We can preach the message about Christ and about anything in Christianity, inside the church; but, we cannot talk about Islam, or compare Islam to Christianity, or say anything in our messages that the police may consider as speaking against Islam.

And, of course, pastors and leaders are not allowed to “insult” Islam. Even, when Middle Eastern pastors and leaders take care not to speak harshly against Islam, Muslims consider any teachings against or opposite to Islam as insulting to Islam. Insulting Islam, to a Muslim, can be a matter as simple as saying that Mohammed’s teaching doesn’t say the truth about Jesus, since

the Koran disputes the resurrection of Jesus — a keystone of Christian faith.

So, most of the time, in every church, you have secret police who attend the service. Some of the secret police — they are not really secret at all, because even though they don't wear uniforms, we know them anyway. These secret police come to churches to ask the pastors about their activities: if they have conferences, if they have meetings, if they have some guests coming from outside Egypt to preach. So most of the pastors know these secret police, because the police have interrogated them many times.

Then, we have another kind of police: those in uniform. These police are there supposedly to protect the churches, because Muslims attack many churches. And, in Egypt, that's why they place some of the police at the front entrance of every church door, because, as the police say, “We are here to protect you.” But, most of the time, these policemen actually help the attackers at least they help them to run away and escape after the attack. This is what has happened in Egypt many times. Muslims attackers will come and try to set a church on fire, or stab church members, and the police, instead of protecting us, give our attackers a head start in fleeing the scene of the attack and avoiding justice.

The third type of police is the most dangerous of all, because these police don't talk to the pastors, so we don't know exactly who they are. They work undercover and come only to spy upon us and record our preaching. Then, they report what the preacher said to the main secret police office.

The ironic thing is that the officers who are in charge of protecting a church, as they claim *they* actually do, or who are in charge of the evangelical churches' affairs, or the Orthodox churches' affairs — these are all Muslims. You won't find Christians working in these positions with the police department. So when you have a Muslim monitoring a church and everything that is going on there, and then reporting to a government with a constitution that adheres to Shari & law, this is not the same as the religious freedom the Egyptian government claims we have.

What I say about Egypt can be applied, to some extent, to many of the Arabic countries, including Jordan, Syria, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. In Tunisia, they have maybe two or three small congregations that the government knows about. But, even in this country with just a few churches, the overall rule is that you can meet inside the churches, but you cannot evangelize outside the churches.

Because I am an Egyptian Christian ministry leader, I am no stranger to police interrogations. No one who wants to step out in ministry in Egypt can avoid the police. Over the years, as my ministry had taken me to many cities in Egypt, and many different conferences and activities, I had to visit the secret police headquarters and endure interrogations. The police asked me

1 Sharia is a system of societal law based upon the teachings in the Koran.

Article 2 of the Egyptian Constitution says the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia law). This requirement was added on May, 22nd 1980.

about everything I was doing in the churches. Later, as the ministry grew, I also had police encounters in other Middle Eastern countries. But, the positive thing is that with every encounter with a policeman, and in every police situation, God has given me a great testimony and a great encouragement. This time was no different.

The officer held the paper and watched me closely. From the first second I saw it, I knew that one of my group had sent this Christian literature to a Muslim. When the policeman asked me this question, he didn't give me any chance to think, because he was intently peering into my eyes, so that if I even blinked my eyes, he would know that I was hiding something from him. I was also sure that this policeman knew who wrote this note, because the man who wrote it has a very distinctive handwriting. He used to be one of my assistants and is now a refugee living in Europe after being forced to flee Egypt.

I realized I was in a very bad situation. If I say that I don't know, I'm lying now, and at the same time, I know that he knows that I know the one who wrote the paper. If I say I *know*, and I tell him the author's name, he would find him, arrest him and torture him, telling him that his leader — me — told the police that he had distributed this paper, and that they had to take action against him because of me.

All these thoughts flew through my mind in just two seconds. I knew I had to answer, but I didn't know what to say.

Suddenly, to my own surprise, I found myself laughing loudly. “Ha Ha Ha!” The laughter escaped me before I even realized what I was doing. Anger flashed across the officer's face.

“Did I tell you a joke?” he asked.

“No.,,

“So why do you laugh like this?”

“Well, because this is the first time I've thought about myself as a secret police officer. Who is the secret police officer: You or me? If I have a paper, and I don't know who wrote it, I'm supposed to come and ask you, “Can you help me to find out who wrote this paper?” And, now, you have brought me to your office, and are asking me, “Who wrote this paper?”

At this, he peered intently into my eyes, telling me with a silent language:

“I know you are just trying to trick me. And, I know you know who wrote this paper.”

Then, to my surprise, he said, “*You* know what? I will let it go this time.” After a brief pause, he asked me, “What do you want to drink?”

And I said, “Coffee.” So he brought me a cup of coffee, and we began talking about different things, and he asked me other questions. Then, he just released me.

After I had left his office and walked out to the street, suddenly I was gripped by fear, and I started to tremble. I thought, “My God, what did I do in this guy's office? How could I laugh like this, and how could I have told him ‘who is the secret police officer?’ This man could have put me in jail im-

mediately, and no one would have even known anything about me, maybe even for the rest of my life.”

Then, the Holy Spirit started to speak to me, and God said, “Don’t worry because you didn’t answer. I gave you the answer, because, that’s what I said I would do. That’s what Jesus told you. He said when they take you before synagogues and before courts, and they ask you questions, then you are not to worry about your answer. I will give you the answer.” And, God spoke to me some more, and said, “this is the answer that I gave you. And, I let this thing pass you by because *I* told him not to take any action against you.”

God’s deliverance from this interrogation was so encouraging — I was grateful to know that God had allowed me to escape torture and arrest one more time.

Surely my parents would never have thought that the little boy who stubbornly refused to go to church for years would be filled with such courage from God, and such love and concern for Muslims.

Prayer:

Dear God,

I know You will give me the words to say when I am tempted by fear to keep silent about Jesus with the people around me. Please give me the words to say when I am afraid to witness Christ. And, Lord, please continue to comfort the Christians in the Middle East who daily face pressure from governmental authorities hostile to Christianity. Give these Christians an instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary. (Isaiah 50:4)

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Two

A downpour from heaven

For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2)

I was raised by Christian parents who lived in a small city, Suez, that later became famous around the world. North Americans know the name of this city, both because of the canal upon whose banks it is situated, as well as the historic war with Israel that spilled across this strategic area and disrupted my young life in 1967.

Before that conflict, my life was one of peace and happiness.

My Dad was born in a Christian family and was a member of a Methodist church. My Mom was a member of a Pentecostal church, and had accepted Christ at the age of 12. We lived a quiet life, and I never remember hearing one fight take place between my parents. Maybe they had family problems, but my brother, my two sisters, and I didn't know about it. We lived in a peaceful, happy home.

Previously, Suez had been a quiet city about 120 kilometers from Cairo. In my early years, everything was great, and I was so happy with my parents. I had attended church as long as I could remember: I opened my eyes in a

church.

In those days in Egypt, a young lady could not go into the street by herself. Culturally, it was not acceptable. So every time my two sisters went to church, I would have to accompany them as their brother. Even though I was still a child, in this role I was seen as something akin to a young man, who was their male escort. Of course, we also had separate meetings for young women and young men, so I used to attend my meetings, my sisters' meetings, and the general meetings of the church. As a result, I was in the church almost every day.

One day in a youth meeting, when I was 11, I got into a fight with my teacher. He asked about someone in the class who was absent this particular day. Over and over, he kept asking why he wasn't there. I grew tired of this, and in an impulsive moment, I blurted out a stupid comment about this other kid. In a wisecracking manner, I said a bad word. I didn't know it was a bad word. I said it because I had heard someone else say it. It was a derogatory term that I had not understood before.

The teacher came up to me and asked me, “Do you know what you just said?”

“No,” I said.

“This is a bad word about your brother in Christ and you're not supposed to say that.”

“I heard some people saying it, and I didn't know it was a bad word, but I am so sorry. and I apologize.” I thought that was the end of the story.

However, I was wrong, because this youth leader called the pastor of the church, and told him, “Today Nagy said this word about this kid who was absent.” Nagy is my Egyptian name.

Then, the pastor came and told my Dad that I had said this bad word, and according to the culture in the Middle East, a father will usually be pretty aggressive in these situations. Fathers worry that their children will grow up to be rude if they say something like this, and are not seriously punished. So, my Dad kept telling me harsh things, and he gave me a really hard time.

Finally, the pastor left, and I thought that the story had finally come to an end. Then, my sister came home. The very first thing she said to me in front of everyone was, “What did you say to your teacher today at the youth meeting?”

So I felt like this issue had begun all over again. Then, my Dad said, “Yeah the pastor came, and he told me Nagy said that word about that kid,” and by then, I decided that I just couldn't take this anymore.

So, I let go with a long and ugly barrage against Christ, against God, against the church, against the people that go to church — I said it all. I declared all my rebelliousness against everything. And, I decided not to go to church ever again, no matter what.

Later, my Dad tried by all means to get me back to church. Sometimes, he was so nice to me, telling me, “I gave you a hard time, because I want you to be a good man. I don't want you to say bad things about any of the kids, and

you know I love you.”

It didn't work with me at all.

Sometimes, he changed his tactics. He was so harsh with me, telling me, “You will go to church. I will force you to go to church.”

That didn't work with me, either.

One Sunday, on a cold and rainy day, all my family was preparing to go to church, as usual. But, this day was going to be different, because this was a day when my Dad decided to use very harsh tactics with me.

“You are going to church!” He said, in a demanding tone. “And, if you don't want to go to church with us, you cannot stay here. Instead, you will go out into the street in your pajamas and your slippers, and you will wait in the street until we come back from the church.”

He thought this would force me to go with him to church, but I had already decided that I was not going to church no matter what happened. So, I went into the street in my pajamas with no shoes, and no jacket, and no shelter from the rain. I stayed there for three hours in the pouring rain, until they all came back from church. That's how stubborn I was. I was determined in my heart not to go to church ever again.

When I was 12 years old, in 1967, a war began between Israel and Egypt, and the Egyptian government forced us to leave Suez. They told us to immigrate to any other city in Egypt as long as it was away from the war zone. We had just two days to leave. We didn't have anyone to accommodate us anywhere in Egypt. We simply had no place to stay. At that time, because there were many immigrants from the three cities in the war zone — Ismailia, Port Sa'ad, and Suez — the owners of the properties in Cairo refused to rent their apartments to these refugees. Because we were refugees, they reasoned we probably would not have the money to pay.

Seeing our desperate need, my Mom approached her cousin in Cairo, and she gave us a room in her apartment. There were five of us, as one of my sisters was no longer with us. We had just one room to live in, and a bathroom we shared among the 22 people who lived in this one apartment. We used to joke about this and say, “We lived with 22 people, not including the ducks and the geese and the pigeons.”

We had no electricity in this room, so we had to use a kerosene lamp to study. It was such a difficult time. Still, no matter how difficult this time was, I never thought to come to Christ, and I never thought to attend any church.

After we moved to Cairo, our family attended a church called Christ Church, which is similar in theology to an Assemblies of God church. My brother attended the church, made some friends there, and became a professing Christian. Then, he tried to get me to attend the church. Of course, I still stubbornly refused to go to any church.

One day, the young people in the church said, “We think God can save Nagy, and get him to church.” So, they tried. They came many times to my house inviting me to youth meetings and other activities. Many times, I told them, “I will come right after you. Just go to church. I'm coming.” I told them

that to put them off, but I never came.

While I was attending the local middle school one day, some of my friends stopped by from the church. From the street, they told me, “You know what Nagy? This church has a program to tutor the kids in the middle school, and help them with the regular school subjects.” Most of the Christian students could not afford to pay for private tutors, so the church offered this program to help them.

They asked me to go with them — not to a church service, but to these tutoring classes. This was the first time since I was 11 years old that I had entered a church. After the teacher had finished teaching us math, I noticed how the girls and boys spent time together, and this made me feel sorry for myself, so I said to myself, “Oh, this is what the church is like,” and the thought made me stop even going to the math tutoring class.

Then, the young Christians in the church suggested to my brother, “Why don’t we fast and pray for one week so that God may save Nagy? In this way, he may come to the church.” They agreed together to fast and pray for one week. And, that was the worst week ever in my life! I didn’t know what had happened to me. I was like in a semi-coma. I couldn’t concentrate on anything. It was like I forgot even how to talk, or eat, or sleep. For that one week, I knew there was something wrong in my life. All my enjoyment in life had completely disappeared.

On the last night of this week, I fell asleep and I had a dream. In the dream, someone put me inside one room with a big policeman guarding the room from outside. The room had a window, and from the window I was looking out and I saw my sister passing by the room. I called to her, “Don’t you see me in here? This man has put me inside this room, and I can’t escape. Please go and tell my brother, or tell my Dad to come, and set me free from this room. I did nothing wrong.”

Then, she looked at me, and said, “I’m sorry we can’t. The only one who can get you out of this room is Jesus.” Then, she disappeared.

When I woke up, I thought, “Wow, there’s something here.” Because of my Christian background, I knew immediately God must have been talking to me, and that He wanted to see me find the right way.

Then, I fell asleep again, and I dreamed another dream. In this dream, I was in a sea, sinking, all the while trying to keep my head above the water. Meanwhile my Mom, who did not know how to swim in real life, was just sitting in the water. I thought this was very strange, because the one who doesn’t know how to swim was sitting in the water, while I, the one who knows how to swim, was sinking.

I raised my hand and tried to grab hold of my Mom. I said, “Mom, don’t you see me sinking? Please! Just take my hand and get me out. How can you just sit in the water?” She told me, “I’m sorry I can’t do anything for you. The only one who can get you out of the sea is Jesus.” Then, I woke up. At this point, I was sure that God was calling me to come, and to know Him.

There were many things that made me think about not wanting to come to Christ. First of all, I didn't really feel like I was a sinner, because I was so polite. I figured I had never made any big mistakes, or engaged in a big sin like adultery for example. So I thought, "What am I doing? I'm not a sinner."

The second thing was that I was in love with a girl — a girl I had never even met. Her apartment faced mine, and, since the age of 12, I had spent my time gazing at her, and daydreaming about marrying her some day. I had never spoken to her. I had never told her that I loved her, because this was not the thing to do in the culture in Egypt. It was just the fantasy of a young boy. But, still I had this thought: Even though she wasn't really my girlfriend and she didn't even know me, I was worried that if I gave my life to Jesus, Jesus would come between me and her. I thought to myself, "How could I get rid of this girl? Surely, I cannot."

And, the third thing was my attachment to my friends. I had three friends. They were not saved, of course. Not one of them knew Jesus. We never did anything bad, per se, but it wasn't a godly atmosphere. So, I thought to myself: "If I give my life to Jesus, then I will lose my friends, and I will lose my girlfriend." Although, the idea that she was my girlfriend certainly would have taken her by surprise, as she had no idea I felt this way.

Then, while I was mulling over all these childish and silly reasons that I thought were keeping me from accepting Jesus, some of the young people who had prayed and fasted for me came to our apartment. They asked me to attend the church's revival meetings. They had asked me many times before, but this time, when they asked me to go and attend this revival meeting, I said, "Maybe I can go and just attend, because I feel like there is something going on inside me."

The meeting at the church began at seven o'clock in the evening and I arrived about a quarter to seven. I didn't find anyone in the church, but I did remember something. When I used to go to church, the first thing I did was to bow my head and say some words, like a prayer, because everybody else did that. So I went in, and I sat in the last seat in the church. I was alone, and I just bowed my head and I heard someone talking to me, and He said, "Why don't you give Me your life and come to know Me? I want to save you."

Immediately, I knew this was Jesus speaking through the voice of the Holy Spirit. He was asking me to give Him my life. I wasn't ready. So I said, "I heard you respect the will of man and my will is not to know you, not to give you my life, and not to be saved. So I think you're supposed to respect me and my will." And, for about five minutes I waited there doing nothing, and there was still no one in the church. Then, the voice began to speak to me again.

"Why don't you want Me to save you? Why don't you give Me your life?"

And, this time, I said, "You know Jesus, if I give You my life, You will ask me to leave my girlfriend, and You will ask me to leave my friends. I can't face

my friends and tell them that I became a Christian. I cannot do that. So, I'm not ready now to give You my life.”

Ten more minutes passed. Now people were coming into the sanctuary and starting to praise and worship, and here Jesus is still speaking to me.

“Who told you I would ask you to leave your girlfriend, or your friends?”

And, I said, “Yeah, don't deceive me, because I cannot be Yours, and at the same time be with these friends and enjoy dreaming about this girl. I will not be able to do both.”

Then, people started to sing a song with these words: “The bank of blood is always open, on the account of the wounded side. Take a portion from the beloved and call for the Lord. He is near, because Christ paid for that.” They were singing about Jesus' blood how it's always available for you to immerse yourself, and wash your sins away.

Jesus spoke to me again. “You know what?” He asked. “Now you want to forsake Me because of your friends, but they will not go with you to hell. They will not be there. I will be there on that day. I will be everywhere you go, but your friends will not be there when you face eternal life. You are a sinner and I'm just giving you the opportunity to come and to confess your sins and to accept Me as your Savior.”

I don't know what happened that time, but when I heard these words, I found myself crying, confessing my sins, and for the first time, now I was truly convinced that I was a sinner in need of redemption.

I told God, “I'm a sinner and I'm sorry Please accept me.” I prayed the sinner's prayer, and immediately, at 7:15 on the 17th of October 1972, I was saved.

Of course, that was the best day in my life. I was filled with joy, and when I raised my head from this prayer, I realized that I really didn't have a girlfriend at all, and it didn't matter either. It was like something had been washed away from me and, at the same time, I felt like I was ready to face my friends, and to tell them I'm a Christian, and that Christ has changed my life.

I immediately told the people around me that I had just accepted Christ. I confessed my sins, and they were so excited, so happy. They said, “We were praying for you for seven days!” They asked me to give my testimony the very next week. So, I started to preach one week after I was saved.

Dear reader,

Do you know the joy of having Jesus live in your heart? Are you like I once was: struggling against the idea that you are a sinner? Dear friend, like all of us, you, too, need Jesus' forgiveness. His power, through His bloodshed on a cross, is available for you now. He wants to give you salvation and a promise of eternity with God. Pray

now and God will hear your prayer and He will save you. Pray this prayer: "Dear Jesus, I am ready to receive Your salvation. I am a sinner and I need Your salvation and forgiveness for my sins. Please come to live in my heart and I will follow You for the rest of my life. Amen."

Then, other churches in Egypt began to hear about my testimony. More invitations to speak came to me, and I spoke in many churches to young people about how Christ had changed my life. It seems that I haven't stopped preaching since then, praise the Lord!

I remember that the first day after I had accepted Christ, I didn't sleep all night. I was so excited and so happy. The next morning, I was the first one to reach the school after the doors were opened. As I was standing there, before my class, one of my classmates came up behind me, and he said to me, "Good morning, Nagy." Then, I turned and looked at him, and he said, "There's something different in you today." I was so happy that people could see a difference in my life.

Later, after I finished school, I went home and one of my friends came by and whistled up to me from the street below. As I looked down from the window, he said, "come down," because we used to talk together as friends.

But I said, "No, you come up to my apartment." When I opened the door of the apartment, and invited him in, he looked at me and said, "There is something different in you. What's going on?"

And, I said, "Do you really want to know what's going on with me? Then come in." And, I told him the whole story: About how I had dreamed of being in prison, and how I had found myself sinking into water, and how I had gone to church, and how Jesus had changed my life. As I gave him my testimony, I was thinking all the while that he would mock me and say, "Oh yeah, you've become religious now."

But, to my surprise, he looked at me and said, "Can you pray with me? I need this change. I need my life to be changed." So, we prayed together. After this, all of my friends — my old friends — just sort of slipped away. We kept good relations with one another, but we never spent time together like we had before — because now I had new friends and a whole new life in Christ.

My adventures in serving the Lord had only just begun. Over the next 35 years, Jesus would lead me into many countries and through many gates, and would bless my ministry more than I could have ever imagined.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You so much for Your free gift of salvation. In the time of Your favor, You heard me and, on my day of salvation, You helped me. (2 Cor. 6:2) Help me remember with deep gratitude this priceless gift of liberty You have given us through Jesus, our Savior. Let me not drift into complacency, so that I may not receive such boundless grace in vain. Make my every day count for eternity as I live the Christian life here on earth. Hear my heartfelt prayers that Your grace will touch the hearts of other Middle Eastern children, bringing them into the kingdom of God, and anointing them as children of light.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Three

Reaching youth in Egypt

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:17-20)

After I received salvation, I began to seriously study the Bible, as I continued to preach in churches.

When I graduated from high school, I began my studies in the school of dentistry and I soon became a member of a Christian ministry. Campus Crusade for Christ in Egypt supervised this ministry, which was called an Action Group. During this time, I shared my faith with my classmates and colleagues for three years. In my fourth year of dental school, I was the leader of the group.

Like any new believer, my Christian life had its ups and downs. For me, a test came in the area of a relationship I had with a leader in the church who was my supervisor. Although only 15 years older than me –I was 21 –he had

the manner of an old man, and so we had many conflicts together. He was really harsh with me, and I began to hate him.

Meanwhile, I was serving the Lord in the church. I had a good voice and I was the worship leader in my church and an assistant to the pastor. I would start the meeting, lead the singing, and then I would turn the pulpit over to my pastor. I was blessed with a very godly pastor, Pastor Sami Labib. All of Egypt talked about how wise, humble, anointed and godly he was. Pastor Sami was my spiritual mentor and the second most influential person in shaping my Christian life. The first was my dear, godly mother. And, the third was Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand, the founder of The Voice of the Martyrs. However, this constant conflict with this leader really got on my nerves. Everywhere I went, everything I did — he was always on my case.

One day, I was attending a lecture in a surgery class. There were 500 students in the auditorium watching our professor discuss the treatment he was giving to a woman, and how to diagnose her case. It was not a spiritual setting at all, yet I found myself praying to God, and I said, “God, now I’m a senior in this college and next year I’ll be graduating, and I want You to use me in the ministry. I want to have a ministry and I want to serve You.”

I was not even listening to the professor as he continued to talk about surgery. And, then I heard God say, “You go and forgive this leader and tell him that you love him.”

I didn’t want to hear this, so I said, “God, You know how many troubles this man has caused me. I’m just asking You to use me. I’m not asking You to solve this problem between him and me.”

Then, God spoke to me again. “I cannot use you until you go, and forgive him, and love him and ask for his forgiveness, too.”

I said, “I can’t do this Lord. So, if You want me to do this, You need to encourage me; and to give me power. I need Your power to do this, because, by myself, I can’t go, I can’t forgive him, and, I can’t love him. I cannot go and tell him, ‘forgive me,’ because he’s the one who makes so much trouble for me. I have never given trouble to him, unless I was only paying him back.”

Then, God said again, “This is what I want you to do. If you want to be used, this is what I want you to do.”

That same night, I went to this man, and I told him the story of how God had asked me to reconcile with my brother in Christ. I told him, “I was praying and asking God to use me, and He told me to come and to ask for your forgiveness. I forgive you for anything you have done against me, and I ask you to forgive me for anything I have done against you.

After this, I became his favorite friend. Anything he wanted me to do for him, I would do, and we developed a very good relationship.

When I graduated from dental school, and began my one-year residency, God allowed me to manage, write and distribute 200 copies of a small magazine for the youth in the church. While I was contemplating how wonderful it would be to increase the distribution of this to many churches, something came along that was a threat to all the churches. And, unfortunately, this

threat came from the Bible Society in Egypt.

The Bible Society had adopted an Arabic translation that had 140 errors in the translation. Some of these were very dangerous errors. Because the translation had come from a sister culture Lebanon — the leaders of the Bible Society in Egypt felt it would be a divisive insult to the relationships between the churches in the two countries to say, “No, we won’t distribute these Bibles, because they have errors in them.”

Meanwhile, I was very concerned about the errors in this translation, because Muslims in Middle Eastern countries continually attack the integrity of the Holy Scriptures, claiming the Christians have corrupted them. This new translation really did have some corrupted verses. I also realized that God had opened the door to make my little youth magazine better known to the churches.

God opened many doors through this event, and I was the one that God used to go to the President of the Evangelical Church in Egypt, and to Pope Shenouda, the head of the Coptic Church, and to the head of the Catholic church in Egypt and warn them about the errors in this translation, and how such errors would give more opportunity to Muslims to discredit the scriptures. God also gave me the wisdom and the power to have a meeting with about 200 pastors and leaders from all the Christian denominations in Egypt, and I was only 24 years old at that time. The Lord gave me the power to stop the copies of this translation from being distributed in Egypt and the Middle East, and to warn people about this by circulating this magazine and meeting personally with church leaders.

As a result of all this, many churches began to hear about someone named “Nagy,” who was an editor of this little magazine called *The Latter Rain*. We printed more than 2,000 copies of this magazine for the next three issues, increasing the circulation tenfold. I distributed it to all these churches and they took it and enjoyed it. Some of these churches sent me a letter thanking me for standing in the gap, and warning the churches about this translation. Even the head of the Brethren Church sent me a letter, along with 10 Egyptian pounds to help support the magazine.

After three months, when the controversy of this error-filled translation had ended, I printed another 2,000 copies of *The Latter Rain* and distributed it to the churches. However, to my surprise, now I found that most of the churches returned the copies of the magazine back to me. Many of them said, “Your church is like an Assemblies of God church, and we are Methodists,” or we are Baptists, or we are this denomination and you are from a different denomination.”

I pleaded with them not to do this, and to continue to accept the magazine. “I’m not teaching you to be Assemblies of God or Pentecostals or Charismatic or whatever. I am just sending you the magazine.”

The replies I received really discouraged me. They could be pretty much summed up like this: “You are not from our denomination. We cannot accept your magazine. We accepted the previous issues because of the Bible translation issues.”

I was so troubled at this turn of events. I asked God: “Isn’t there someone who can solve this problem between the different denominations in Egypt? Can we reach the Coptic churches and Orthodox youth and the Catholic churches with the message of Christ? If we cannot get the evangelical churches together, how can I go to Orthodox churches and Catholic churches?”

And, here God — I heard him so well — spoke to me, saying, “In every denomination I have godly men that bow not their knees to Baal. I want you to put a group together called The Egyptian Christian Youth Union, and to gather godly men from the big denominations - Evangelical, Coptic and Catholic — and go and start this group and I will begin to move among the churches.”

This was in the middle of 1981 in Egypt, and, at that time, Anwar al-Sadat, the former president of Egypt, was putting the leaders of the churches into jail. He had already arrested almost 200 leaders and pastors and put them into prison. And, he even forbade Islamic groups like the Muslim Brotherhood from claiming distinctiveness among Muslims.

This was not the kind of atmosphere in which someone could easily start a Christian group in the Middle East — especially in Egypt — and, especially in this time of troubles. In Egypt, they allowed us to go to church and to have church meetings, but we were not allowed to go outside the church and evangelize anyone, or even share biblical truth with other Christians. Even now, Christians face severe persecution if they try to do any activities outside the local church.

So, here God is asking me to found a group, and to call it Egyptian Christian Youth Union. I told the Lord that if I go with this name, the police would most certainly say: “Nagy is trying to get the Christian youth to be in union together.” They will think I am becoming a threat to the government. The name God told me to give the group was so scary for the police and for the Egyptians, and especially for me, because I feared the consequences of launching such an organization. However, God still told me, “That’s what I want you to do. And, I want you to go and meet with the leader of the evangelical denominations.”

In Egypt, we have only one man who is president of all the evangelical denominations, and, at that time, his name was Pastor Samuel Habib. This man was well respected both in government circles and by many Egyptians. He was also a businessman, so he was not the type of man to go on feelings alone. I wouldn’t expect a man like this to tell me, “God told me to do this, or to do that.” Instead, he was the type of man you would expect would ask to see your plans and goals — both long-term and short-term. This was the mind of Samuel Habib.

When God told me to go and speak with Pastor Habib, I said to myself, “I don’t think he will ever agree with this idea. He will undoubtedly ask, ‘Who is Nagy? His church is small. No one here has heard of it.’”

In my mind, I was wondering how I could possibly go before this very important and well

-known church leader and ask him to place his name and reputation as a cover for me from the police and the government. Unlike Pastor Habib, whom the government recognized as an official representative for all of Egypt's evangelicals, I had no political standing. Without his official sanction for my work, the governmental authorities would undoubtedly stop me the moment they realized they need not fear the consequences of arresting me.

One of the principles of spiritual fruitfulness God has taught me over the years is the importance of obeying His convictions to step out and do things that seem impossible and strange, but are proven by time to be His plan and His wisdom. So, I knew that I needed to believe what He had placed upon my heart and obey Him.

I arranged an appointment with this pastor. It took two weeks just to get in to see him, because he was such a busy man. Of course, they gave me only a few minutes maximum to meet him. So, I came well prepared to present my plan, including the group's name, aim, goals and vision. I wrote everything down very carefully and, as the meeting time approached, I kept reminding myself: "When I go to meet this guy, don't ever mention that God told me to do this." I figured that saying something like this would kill the plan right then and there. I knew he would want a rational, well-reasoned plan, and even then, it would probably be a long shot at best. I was really insistent in my mind, and told myself, "Nagy, make sure that you don't tell him that God told you to do this, because, you know he's not that type of man."

What actually happened when I met with Pastor Habib is one of the funnier things that has happened to me in the ministry.

You see, I got all my plans together, and with my friend accompanying me to provide moral support, I went to the meeting fully armed with facts and figures and all the details. It was the first time I had ever actually talked to him face to face. When I arrived, he was sitting behind a big desk; looking like the imposing figure I had expected him to be.

I looked up, and I said, "Pastor," and then, I completely forgot everything I had so carefully prepared in my mind, and in my papers, to present to him. The only thing I could remember came blurting out of my mouth: "You know, pastor, God told me to start a group called Egyptian Christian Youth Union."

I was so shocked after I said that, because I figured I had said the wrong thing: exactly what I had planned beforehand not to say. So, realizing the situation I was now in, I hastily added: "Don't ask me about any plans. Don't ask me about anything. I have things in my mind, but that's all that I want to tell you: God told me to do this group, and He told me to come to you and to ask you to be my cover in front of the police and the government. I want to be allowed to work under your supervision." Then, I looked at him and I waited for his answer.

He leaned back in his seat, and he said, "Nagy, I was praying for this very thing for the past two months, and I think this is the answer from God. I know God told you

to do this, so go with my blessing and found this group. You can tell everyone that am your supervisor in this matter, and I will grant you the cover of my position, and, with it, my protection from the police and the government”

At this, my mind focused once again on my plans, and then, I ventured a suggestion. “Pastor, I cannot just go and say to everybody that you are my supervisor — that I’m working under you. You have to tell the leaders of the churches this — they need to hear it from your own mouth. So, for my part, I will organize an initial meeting, and I will invite all the leaders and pastors from all over Egypt, and you will help me by agreeing to be the main speaker. Then, you can tell everyone who attends that the Egyptian Christian Youth Union will be under the authority of your office, as President of the Evangelical Church in Egypt, and you are responsible for the supervision of this organization.”

Pastor Habib agreed immediately to this, without even personally knowing me, for which I praise God.

So, at the end of 1981, I organized the meeting, and I convinced most of the leaders and pastors to come to the meeting. Then, Pastor Habib stood up and said, “I’m so happy that Nagy is one of our church leaders, and that he came to me with a leading from God to found this group, which will come under the umbrella of the Evangelical Church in Egypt. I’m in charge of Nagy, and I have confidence in his leadership of this group.” He said so many other nice things about me.

Now that I had an agreement with Pastor Habib to oversee the work of the Egyptian Christian "evangelical churches, because any efforts to work outside the local churches would mean problems with the government and with the police. We needed a large church for meetings.

A thought occurred to me. If I found a Catholic church in which to meet, then both evangelicals and Orthodox Christians would feel more comfortable coming, because a Catholic church was more of a neutral meeting ground for the two groups. In Egypt, the Orthodox Christians don’t like to come into evangelical churches, and the evangelicals don’t like to come into Orthodox churches. However, the evangelicals do not have the same degree of distrust as do the Orthodox, because in the Orthodox churches, the priests outright forbid parishioners to attend any meetings inside evangelical churches. That’s why I thought holding the meetings in Catholic churches would be a neutral ground for these two groups. Both Orthodox and evangelical Christians were more willing to go into a Catholic church than into each other’s churches.

Even so, finding a place big enough would be a challenge, and meeting outside the church was impossible because of the government’s restrictions. So, I was dreaming about a place where we could have the first meeting and invite Egyptian youth to come and hear the gospel.

About that time, a group of around 15 people from my church took a one- day retreat to visit De La Salle Catholic School in Cairo. While there, I didn’t

realize that these people had such a large church. As I was walking inside this beautiful hall, I was facing one of the doors, and suddenly, someone opened the door from the other side, and I caught a glimpse of a tremendous sanctuary. I discovered this sanctuary was available for churches to use. So, when I saw this spacious hall, and realized how large it was, I told the people around me, "I'm thinking this would be a good place in which to have the first meeting of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union."

One of the women with us started laughing, and said, "Nagy, nobody knows you and this is the first meeting for the Egyptian Christian Youth Union — a group hardly anyone has *even* heard of. When you start something like this, you're supposed to start with a 100-seat place, and then move up to a 200-seat place, and then a 300-seat place, and so on, until you work your way up to 1,500 seats. But, you cannot start in a place this size for the first meeting."

"Well, I'm just dreaming, so why don't we pray about that?" Then, we spent a few minutes praying. "God, let us use this place to have meetings here." We finished our trip, and returned home.

An Assemblies of God pastor came to my home that same night and he said, "We have an American singers group, called Celebrant Singers that one of our missionaries has invited to come to Egypt to help us raise funds for one of the orphanages in Egypt. I think it would be a good start for the Egyptian Christian Youth Union if you ask them if you could use their visit for an opening meeting for the ministry."

"That's a good idea," I said, "and I have just the place for the meeting. God showed me today this Catholic school sanctuary. which will hold up to 1,500 people, so we can invite people from all over Egypt to come and attend this meeting."

So the pastor went to the missionary of the Assemblies of God church who had invited the singing group to come to Egypt, and he asked him, "Can you give us two nights with the Celebrant Singers to have the first event for this new group, the Egyptian Christian Youth Union?"

"Who's Nagy?" asked the missionary.

"He's a fine man in one of our churches."

"Has this group had any meetings before now?"

"No, this is the first meeting of this ministry."

"A ministry that nobody's heard of, and a leader, named Nagy, whom no one knows — tell me why I should do this? I have invited these singers to help us to raise funds for an orphanage and, if you want to fill the place with youth, who have no money of their own to give to the orphanage, that means I will waste two nights of Celebrant Singers ministry here in Egypt."

The pastor tried very hard to get the missionary to agree to let us use the sanctuary for two nights, along with the Celebrant Singers group. After a while, seeing that the missionary was firm in his resolve, he finally gave up on asking for two nights. "Just give us one night and you just try us, and we will collect offerings especially for the group, and we will give it you," he

said.

So, the missionary reluctantly agreed to give us one night.

The first public meeting of our new group was supposed to start at seven o'clock in the evening, and I had planned to serve dinner to the singers and leaders of the church, starting at five o'clock. While we were eating together, at six-thirty, one of the ushers interrupted our dinner and told me, “If you don't get the group inside the church right now, they will have no access to move through the church to the stage, because people are packed so tightly in the church now, there is no place that they can go through to the pulpit. You must leave for the church now.”

To have so many people show up for a meeting a half-hour before it is scheduled to begin is not the custom in Egypt. It's just the opposite. If you have a meeting scheduled to start at seven o'clock in Egypt, that means, most of the time, the churches will begin the meeting at seven thirty at the earliest. So, to have the entire place packed to the rafters with young people this early — that is really something.

We threaded our way through the crowded hail. The leader of the Celebrant Singers was Jon Stemkoski, and he was such a warm, sincere Christian man from the Northeastern United States.

Jon spoke about Christ during the performance, and most of the songs were in English, so not too many people at that time understood English, but we knew the presence of God was there that night. When he began to speak to the crowd, he had a translator. As he concluded his 15-minute talk about forgiveness from God, he asked the youth, “Whoever wants to give his life to Jesus, raise your hand.

We were all so surprised when two-thirds of the youths there raised their hands. Jon was surprised too, and he thought that perhaps the Egyptians had not understood what he had said — that something had been lost in the translation. That's what he told me later. So he said, “OK, every hand down.” And, then he started to preach the message of forgiveness from God again. Once again, he concluded the message, and he said, “Now, if you understand really what I mean when I'm talking about giving your life to Jesus and being saved, please stand up.”

And, again, he found two-thirds of the young people rose to their feet. So, he said, “No, no, no. Sit down.” Then, he started to explain a third time what he had previously said, because he was so surprised that this number of people were ready to accept Christ. You can safely say that at least 800 youths stood that day to give their lives to Jesus. Later, we counted 345 written statements that the youths had handed in to us saying they had given their lives to Jesus, and of course, not everyone handed in written professions that night.

Finally, he said, for the third time, “If you understand what I said and you are insisting to give your life to Jesus, this time, I am inviting you not to stand, but to come here to the front of the church, and to kneel here in front of the pulpit.”

While I was there, sitting in the church during this amazing turn of events,

I looked back and all I could see was a sea of youth who were weeping, and crying aloud and giving their hearts to Jesus. Many were now kneeling in front of the altar. It was tremendous.

After the meeting ended, Jon said to me, "I've been here in Egypt for 20 days and I have two more meetings to do and then I leave for my church back in the U.S. I was praying that I needed to have something good to report when I return to my church — a praise report to tell them about the souls who were won to the Lord here in Egypt. I know that I'm coming to raise funds for the orphanage, but this is not my ultimate goal. We raised funds and we got money. But, before tonight, we haven't seen numbers of souls saved in the churches here. I think that if I had not had this meeting, I would not know what to report to my church. Now, I can write to my church and tell them these hundreds of young people have given their lives to Jesus."

After this tremendous first meeting of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union, we had hundreds of meetings in the same place. We usually called the meetings parties, because we were inviting people from the streets, and from the schools. In the beginning, we distributed the invitations to evangelical churches, orthodox churches and Catholic churches. Then, we figured out that we already had a place for evangelical youths to hear the gospel messages in their churches. So we decided to concentrate our efforts toward youths in the Orthodox churches and the Catholic churches, because this is where the people need to hear the clear message of Christ.

A prominent head of the Orthodox Church warned his people about us, and said, "This is not an Orthodox church. This is not an Orthodox group. You are Orthodox, and you are not supposed to go there."

Even so, we still had hundreds and hundreds of Orthodox youth wanting to give their lives to Jesus. When they came and gave their lives to Jesus, we directed them to the nearest church, so they could be discipled by local pastors. The ministry of Egyptian Christian Youth Union was not meant to be a substitute for the local evangelical churches, so we sent these people, who had accepted Christ in our meetings, to some of the living churches in different parts of Cairo and other cities in which we had meetings.

Then, from our side, we continued to follow them with a monthly correspondence Bible study. The Bible study explained how Christ is revealed in all the books of the Bible: Christ in Genesis, Christ in Exodus, etc. And, there were questions after every lesson, which the young people answered, sent back to us, and we, in turn, corrected and returned to them. We used to mail these studies to them, but we soon discovered that the postmen were not happy with us sending these letters. Then, we delivered some to the churches, and some by other means, so that we could reach these young people for Christ.

Over the years, we invited many important speakers from all over the world, and we had tremendous meetings, and thousands of souls came to Christ. I thank God for this precious harvest, and I praise Him that the Egyptian Christian Youth Union is still working in Egypt, over 25 years later. God

has opened the doors for many other branches of the ministry, like ministries to edify church leaders, ministries to the pastors, and ministries to the poor.

In leading this ministry, I soon discovered that we evangelical Egyptians did not have many praise and worship songs that focused more attention on God and less on individual circumstances. So I encouraged the birth and growth of a movement to praise and worship God and to exalt Him in songs. We soon held the first of many conferences to teach Egyptians how to praise and worship.

Many believers in the Middle East live under a constant spirit of fear and depression. Christians have many difficulties in the Middle East, and many persecutions. In this type of atmosphere, corporate worship songs are more like lamentations than praises to God. When people come together, they sing of their grief and oppression. They lament and sing songs with words that say, in essence, “I am poor, I am persecuted, and I am tired. You are my God who delivers me.” It’s the kinds of songs David used when he was running from his son, Absalom, or when he sought repentance after his sin.

So we began a series of conferences focusing on the ministry of praise and worship. We taught our people to concentrate more on Christ and less on their circumstances, and to praise and exalt God as mighty. We encouraged them to see God as worthy of praise and worship no matter what their circumstances might be. He deserves all our praise and adoration.

In the early days of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union, this praise and worship movement did not exist in Egypt. Thank God, we found some American songs and English songs about praise and worship, and different talented songwriters began to translate these songs. Now, we have excellent songs of praise and worship these days in Egypt. Our group started this movement.

The Praise and Worship committee of the Evangelical Nile Synod of the Presbyterian Churches in Egypt has published a book of songs every year for more than 30 years, as they collect various songs from singers and writers. They began by printing two to three hundred books. At the time we began to encourage this movement toward praise and worship in Egypt, they were printing 2,000 copies for all the churches in Egypt. However, as a fruit of the praise and worship conferences, by 1990, the committee was printing 10,000 songbooks each year in Egypt. The Egyptian Christian Youth Union continues to hold praise and worship conferences in the Middle East. Praise the Lord!

Prayer:

Dear God,

I pray that You will move among the youth in churches both in the East and West, and bring many young sons and daughters into the light of salvation in Christ Jesus. I pray that You would bless the young people in Egypt and the Middle East, and that You will receive with joy the songs of praise coming from the saints in the Middle East. As they praise You, Lord, for the splendor of Your holiness, protect them from the ambushes set against them by godless nations who rage against Your anointed One. (2 Chron. 20:21—22)

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Four

God's miracles *of* deliverance

My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion. (Psalm 71:24)

The first meeting of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union occurred about three months after Egypt's president Anwar al-Sadat was assassinated. Even though a new president took over the country, we still had many, many troubles with the police, who were alarmed by the name of our group. They tried to understand what we were doing.

"What do you mean by Egyptian Christian Youth Union? Are you a political movement, or a Christian movement?" These were the questions they asked me at numerous interrogations.

Since the president of the Evangelical Church in Egypt supported us, this was a big help. However, I was called to the police station almost every month, and asked to give a report about what I was doing. They asked me what my thoughts were about the elections, and which side I would take. "Will you teach your people to vote for this guy or not?" And, I tried to reassure them that we were not a political organization, and that we had nothing to do with elections, or with favoring one candidate over another.

The truth of the matter is the police in Egypt, as well as in all the Ara-

bic countries, do not want us to do any Christian activities. All but the most fanatical Islamic countries — those in Gulf region — tolerate the existence of some churches. Christianity as a presence through public expression of the Christian faith and practice predates Islam by centuries in the Middle East. So, governmental powers tolerate existing churches, because they know that if they work to completely crush us, this will draw too much attention from outside their countries. A cry of outrage will be heard among Christians in the free nations.

As a result, their overall strategy is to slowly strangle our growth, binding us with many restrictions and with intimidating police tactics. They also step back at opportune moments to allow Islamic mobs to tear down our churches. Then, they use burdensome laws restricting the building or repairing of churches, and, after the violence is perpetrated, they delay or refuse to issue permits to repair or replace what the mobs destroy. In this way, the number of church buildings continues to slowly dwindle. For example, in Egypt, it is very difficult to obtain the necessary government permission to replace or repair a damaged church. If Egyptian Christians repair or rebuild a church without the government's permission, police will come to demolish the building.

In Islamic lands, the outcome of these strategies essentially means fewer and fewer public churches exist over time. Because this occurs one church at a time, no huge cry of outrage from overseas reaches the ears of Egyptian authorities. This is nothing less than a long, slow, and quiet war of attrition against the public expression of Christianity.

Of course, through the power of God's Holy Spirit, the Church continues to grow through underground churches. But, I will talk more about this in another chapter.

These governments are not sad to see Christians immigrate to the Western countries, because they see each Christian immigrant as one less infidel in their lands. However, if a particular Christian emigrant from a Middle Eastern country has previously been arrested and tortured by the police, the police may take steps to ensure at least one family member remains in the country as assurance that the emigrant from the Middle East stays quiet after he arrives in the lands of freedom.

On the whole, they would simply prefer to see us disappear completely from the Islamic lands. Realizing this would be impossible for now, they continue to chip away at any public expression of our faith.

It is for these reasons, that when I found the De La Salle School a good place to have large meetings for youth in Egypt — musical parties, as we called them — the police were very upset with me. They knew I was working with Egyptian youth, and even among college students, and they knew we were getting young people out of their own churches and into what were, in essence, revival meetings. This threatened the status quo big time.

A revived church that is growing and adding young believers to its ranks would not be viewed favorably by an Islamically dominated nation, regardless of

how much cover I had obtained from the official head of the Evangelical Church in Egypt. Much like the people in Thessalonica, the Egyptian authorities feared those *“who have caused trouble all over the world [and] have now come here . . . They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.”* (Acts 17:6-7)

The police really were afraid that I was starting a political movement in Egypt, and in those days, no one was allowed to start any political movement, or to express his feelings or opinions about the country’s leaders to others. Of course, Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world, but the police still called me to the station all too frequently to investigate everything I was doing among the churches.

During these interrogations, they tried to obtain reports from me about all my activities. Sometimes, they feared that during the elections I would gather the Christians together to vote against the president, or someone in the parliament. I assured them over and over again. I said, “I have nothing to do with politics, and I don’t want anything to do with politics.” And, they took me in for questioning year after year, and they were following me everywhere.

So, in every city in Egypt, even if I went there just to visit some of my friends, the secret police were following me, and reporting on my activities to the secret police headquarters in Egypt.

Once, I visited El Menia, a city in Upper Egypt, just one time, and I stayed with a friend for two days. After I left the city, the head of the secret police in El Menia — the man charged with monitoring the activity of the evangelical churches — took my friend into custody and interrogated him. He asked him, “How do you know Nagy, and what is your relationship? Is he paying you money to work in the ministry? Do you work fulltime for him in the ministry? How do you know him?”

At the end of the interrogation, the officer told him, “If Nagy just passes by this city on the train — even if he doesn’t touch the platform — I mean, literally, even if he doesn’t touch the platform of the railway station with his legs, but if he just passes by the city on the train, you have to report him to me. You have to tell me he passed by on the train.”

My friend was very frightened after this conversation with the police. He felt so exposed to the eyes of the authorities. The cities in Upper Egypt are much smaller compared to Cairo, and, as a result, police can monitor Christian activity so much more easily.

When the police asked me about all my activities, I told them the things I figured they already knew I was doing. Whatever I could hide from them, I hid. This was my strategy during interrogations.

Later, as I traveled doing ministry in other Middle Eastern countries, I had encounters with the police everywhere I went. Some of these are very funny stories. But, more importantly, in every situation with the police, I experienced the hand of God delivering me from these police encounters and situations.

One time, while I was organizing a Christian conference through the ministry of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union, I was serving my mandatory time of military service in the Egyptian Army. Army regulations forbade any soldier from being involved in Christian religious activities, or conferences, or religious gatherings while on active duty. This conference was to be held on a Saturday night.

When I prepared for the conference, I thought that on this particular Saturday night, I was not going to be on active duty in the army, so I planned to be at the conference for one night in order to lead the conference, and to introduce the speaker. Unfortunately, I found out the night before that I had been called to duty the next day in a location away from Cairo. That meant that I wouldn't be able to lead the conference, or to even attend it.

I went to the vice president of the group, who was my key assistant, to tell him that because of this unexpected military duty, I would not be able to attend, and I wanted him to lead the conference.

I went to his apartment, but when I arrived, I found that he had left me a note on his door saying that the conference had been cancelled by the order of Pastor Habib, the President of the evangelical church in Egypt. I knew that Pastor Habib would never have cancelled the conference unless he had received some serious pressure from the police to stop it.

It was now nine o'clock at night. In just nine hours I would have to leave for my military duty. I didn't know what to do. Who will go there? And, who will apologize to the Christians who will arrive, not realizing the conference had been cancelled? I was worried about what I would tell the people. Do I risk telling them the police had cancelled the conference? Do I tell them Pastor Habib cancelled the conference, when it was actually the police who had done it? If I tell them it was the police, then I thought maybe one of them would become frustrated and angry, and would then say something against the government, then the police would find out, and at that point, we would all be in big trouble.

I went home so tired and unhappy, and I talked to my brother. "You know what I want you to do tomorrow morning? The very first thing in the morning, I want you to go and talk to one of our group leaders and tell him that we have to cancel the conference because of police pressure. Tell him to go and stand before the conference room and just tell everybody what happened and dismiss them. Please make it as low-key as possible. I don't want to make it a big deal, or else there will be trouble. This way, we can dismiss the people peacefully."

My brother agreed, and first thing the next day, he contacted this leader and relayed my message. He explained to him that I had been unexpectedly called to military duty on Saturday, and I needed his help to resolve this potential crisis.

Three days later, when my duties for the army were finished that week and I could return to Cairo, I went immediately to one of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union meetings. Among the leaders at this meeting was the one I

had originally invited to speak in the conference before the police cancelled it. I had just arrived and the group was sharing testimonies about the work of the group. This man began sharing about how God had used him in the conference of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union on Saturday. He described how the Holy Spirit had come upon these people in great power, and how many young people gave their lives to Christ that night.

“I have been preaching for 20 years,” he said, “and I have never felt the power to preach in the presence of the Holy Spirit as I felt it this time.”

Well, I was confused at this point. I thought to myself, “The conference was cancelled. How could these people have had this conference?” Something very strange had happened, and obviously, I didn’t know all the details.

After we had finished the meeting, I went up to this man who had shared, and I asked him, “You mean the conference to which I had invited you to go and preach? The one on Saturday night?”

“Yeah,” he said.

“I thought this conference was cancelled.”

“No, the conference wasn’t cancelled. Nobody told us it was cancelled. We opened the doors and people came in and I preached and hundreds of young people came, and many of them gave their lives to Jesus.”

I still didn’t understand the situation. So, I called the leader who was supposed to have been there, before the conference began. He was to have told the people it had been cancelled, dismissing them quietly. Apparently, he had not done so.

“What’s going on? What happened?” I asked him over the phone.

Then, he told me a strange story.

“Your brother talked to me in the morning, and he told me that the conference was cancelled and that I’m supposed to be there in front of the conference room to dismiss these people. I was by myself at home. As soon as your brother finished talking to me, the phone line got cut and, at the same moment, I got a case of severe diarrhea that lasted the entire day. It was so bad, I couldn’t even leave for a half hour to tell someone else that the conference had been cancelled. So, I couldn’t call anyone because the phone line was cut, and at the same, time, I had severe diarrhea, and I couldn’t go into the streets. This kept me from talking to anyone for the whole day. That’s why I didn’t go there. That’s why I didn’t tell anyone that the conference was cancelled.”

I was amazed. Then, I found out, that at the same time as the conference was going on, the secret police never bothered to go and see if the conference had actually taken place or not. They must have figured we wouldn’t dare continue with the conference and go against their orders.

Later, one of the secret police was visiting my pastor, and he asked him, “Did you know that we cancelled a conference that Nagy had planned Saturday night?”

My pastor said, “No, I didn’t know.”

Well, praise God, the conference was not cancelled and the leader preached God’s Word and God saved many, many young people. Despite

the policemen's plans, God made sure, through using cut phone lines and a temporary case of diarrhea, that the conference went forward anyway. He can use anything to bring His salvation to the youth in Egypt.

On another occasion, in 1989, God again delivered us from the opposition of the police and allowed His word to go forth in Upper Egypt.

I had invited a missionary from America, who was originally from Armenia, to come and preach at a series of revival meetings in Egypt. His name is Pastor Doctorian. During these meetings, in every city, the secret police came for me.

In the city of Suez, while Pastor Doctorian was preaching, the head of the secret police arrived, and said to me, "I need to talk to you."

I told the officer we were in the middle of a meeting. "But I need you now," he said, and he took me into custody for two hours and interrogated me about the meeting.

Another meeting was scheduled to take place in Beni Suif, a city in Upper Egypt, which is about 120 kilometers from southern Cairo in a semi remote region. It's a place that is difficult for Christian foreigners to visit. Their presence is more visible here, and would be more likely to arouse hostility among the local Islamic leaders.

However, Pastor Doctorian was so famous in Egypt, and all the Egyptians love him so much and wanted to attend meetings led by him, so I went ahead and prepared for the meetings, reserving a Christian school that had a ministry called the Holy Bible Society. We also rented some large buses in order to transport some of the people from the surrounding villages. We were fully prepared for at least 1,000 attendees at this meeting — a very large attendance for any Christian meeting in Upper Egypt.

The night before the meeting was to take place, I received a phone call from one of the church leaders in Beni Suif. He said, "Brother Nagy, please don't come tomorrow to Beni Suif."

"Why not?" I asked him.

"Because the secret police talked to us and told us that if Nagy comes to Beni Suif, he will be arrested as soon as his feet touch the ground. And, there's more. The police have cancelled all three days of the meetings. So, please, we don't want any problems with the police here. We need to think about how we are going to stop all the people from coming here from different villages. Nagy, how do we solve this problem?"

And, I said, "Before we make plans to stop people from coming to the meeting, let's just pray and let's see what God may do."

At that moment, I was visiting some very godly people, and I told them: "We all need to pray right now, because I just found out that the police will arrest me if I go to Beni Suif tomorrow. They will not let us have these meetings. But, I need to hear from God and what He wants to do."

“Let My People Go So They Can Worship Me”

We started to pray. “God, if these circumstances are from you, we accept them. But, if these circumstances are not from you, you have the power to change the situation.”

While we were praying, the Lord spoke to me and said, “You go tomorrow to Beni Suif and the meetings will happen in Beni Suif.”

Well, in Egypt when the secret police say, “Don’t do this,” this is non-negotiable. But, God had spoken to me, so I spoke to the same man in Beni Suif — the leader who had warned me not to come, and I told him, “Brother, you know what? We were praying, and God just told me to come to Beni Suif, and He said the meetings will take place for three days.”

And, this brother said: “Nagy, I believe in God. I believe He can do miracles, but we know that when the secret police tells you, ‘Don’t come to the city,’ that really means don’t come. And, if you come to this city, they will most certainly arrest you.”

I said, “I know this. I’m Egyptian, I live in Egypt, and I know that they can arrest me. But, Jesus told me to go, and the meetings will take place.”

“I don’t know what to tell you,” he said, “but, whatever God tells you, just do it.” Early in the morning, I went to Beni Suif. I didn’t find anyone there waiting to arrest me. Then, I went to the secret police office. I spoke to this secret police officer, who had given us this trouble, and I asked him, “Why did you cancel our meetings?”

He tried to give me a good reason at first, and he said, “Because you didn’t report these meetings to us two weeks ago. We just discovered yesterday that you are having these meetings in Beni Suif.”

Standing there alongside me was the Christian brother who had reported these very meetings to the police over two weeks ago, and we knew right away that the police officer was lying. Now, this brother, who was very young he was still a teenager — spoke up. “No, officer, you are wrong about that. I reported these meetings to you three weeks ago and, at that time, you never said, ‘Don’t do these meetings.’ You said, ‘OK.’”

And, he said, “No, you are lying. You did not report this to me.”

“But, I’m not lying. You were there with another officer. His name was Ahmed. Officer Ahmed was there.

“No,” the officer said. “When I say you are lying, then you are lying. You never reported this to us.”

At that very moment, the door of the room opened, and there stood Officer Ahmed. This teenager looked up at Officer Ahmed, and said, “I came and I reported these meetings to you, remember?”

The other police officer, who had accused us of lying, now looked to Officer Ahmed. “Did they really come and report these meetings to us before? I told them that they didn’t come, and I told them we just found out about these meetings yesterday, and that’s why we cannot protect these meetings. We don’t have time to plan for security for these meetings, and that’s why we have to cancel these meetings.

He looked at him, obviously expecting Officer Ahmed to agree with him, because he had put the answer in Officer's Ahmed's mouth by the way that he had posed the question to him.

Of course, under these circumstances, we fully expected Officer Ahmed would lie, and agree with his fellow officer, and would say, "They didn't come. You were right. We just heard about these meetings yesterday."

But, instead, all three of us were very surprised when Officer Ahmed said, "No, they came three weeks ago and they reported the meetings to us."

God had forced Ahmed to say the truth!

So the officer in command tried another tactic. He said, "Our chief officer is the one who told us to cancel these meetings. If you want to have these meetings, you have to meet him." "How can I meet him?" I asked.

He said, "His office is right by the train station. You can go there right now and meet with him."

Then, I left the police station and quickly figured out that the chief officer, who held the rank of lieutenant, was the second in command for the secret police in the city of Beni Suif. When I arrived, this was the first thing he said to me: "Call me stupid if I allow you to have these meetings tonight, tomorrow and after tomorrow. Don't call me by my name. Anytime you call me, call me stupid, if I allow you to do these meetings."

When one stands in front of a secret police officer in Egypt, of course, one cannot call him stupid! And, I couldn't just walk in and say, "Jesus said that we will have these meetings." As, I looked at him, in that same moment, the train whistle in the station next to us began to blow. Pastor Doctorian was on that train. The words came to me, and now I knew what to say to him.

"You know, Officer, I don't want you to be stupid. Here I am, in your office, and I can hear the train whistle blowing, and this is the train carrying Pastor Doctorian, the speaker for our meetings, to Beni Suif. So, I suggest that you send someone to get Pastor Doctorian back to Cairo, and I suggest that you send some of the secret police to the meeting tonight to tell the people who will arrive that the government of Egypt decided to cancel these meetings. So, I'm here right now in your office. Do whatever you want with me. I know that you can arrest me and you can do anything to me, so whatever you'd like to do to me, here I am."

Then, I stopped speaking, and waited for his answer.

Earlier, the first thing he had said to me as I came into his office was, "Call me stupid if I allow you to have these meetings tonight, tomorrow and after tomorrow. The very next words that came out of his mouth now were, You know what? I will let you have these meetings, but under two conditions."

When he told me that, I figured God must have interfered with the enemy's plans to cancel the meeting, because God had allowed his mind to be changed immediately. So, I waited expectantly, thanking God, and knowing that things were going in the right direction.

"The first condition is that you don't put any loud speaker outside the

building that will carry the speaking into the street.”²

Of course, he knew that we cannot do that for any meeting. This is against the law and it’s something that we would never do anyway. We don’t use loud speakers outside the churches.

“OK,” I said. “We won’t use any loud speakers outside the building.”

“And, the next thing,” he said, “is that you cannot have anyone outside of the church during the meetings. Everyone needs to stay inside the church building.”

“OK, we will take care of that, too.”

“If you obey these two conditions, then you can go and have your meetings.”

I knew he had given me these two conditions things he knows Christians never do in Egypt — to save face, because he had just boasted that the meetings would never happen at all. But, because God had interfered with his plans, and had brought them to a standstill with the blowing of the train whistle, this officer could not stop us. He knew it would have created a public uproar if the police had tried to stop the meetings now that this very popular pastor had finally arrived in the city. It was the Lord’s will for us to have these meetings, just as God had told me during our prayer.

In both of these stories, the police used threats in an attempt to frighten us from having the meetings, but, when we trust in God and listen to Him, it is just as it was in Nehemiah’s day:

Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter in which was written: “It is reported among the nations and Geshem says it is true — that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us confer together.” I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head. “ They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” (Neh. 6:5-9)

So, praise the Lord! These three days were some of the most tremendous meetings we ever had in this city! For years, people continued to talk about

² Editor’s note: This rule, of course, does not apply to mosques. During my last trip to Cairo, I was repeatedly aroused from a sound sleep each day at around 4:30 a.m. by the local mosque’s call to prayer. It was so loud, it seemed as if someone was shouting right by my ear. Even the sounds of the constant honking of horns in the streets, which go on all night long as drivers ignore traffic rules and play a citywide game of bumper cars, were drowned out by this sound. For, Christians, however, there is different standard. They must be careful to disappear inside their churches to worship, never intruding upon the delicate sensibilities of the Islamic culture. It’s a sad paradox.

the presence of God, and the souls God had saved. Many of these salvations were among Orthodox adherents. How they accepted Christ in these days!

After we finished the third meeting, the Islamic group came, and they began to throw something like Molotov cocktails. They threw these over the building, and part of the building we had met in was burned after we had finished the meetings. But, the fire of the Holy Spirit had been kindled in that place and no man could stop it!

Pastor Doctorian was also scheduled to speak in El Menia about 120 kilometers further south, into Upper Egypt. This city is a stronghold of radical Islam. The most fanatical Muslims live there.

El Menia's YMCA was the largest place in the whole city. I knew that thousands of people would come to hear Pastor Doctorian, and there was no other place big enough — no other evangelical church buildings that could hold this many people.

Earlier, I had gone to the YMCA in El Menia, and asked if we could use their facility for one night. But, the man at the desk, who was a nominal Christian controlled by the spirit of fear of the secret police, said, "No, we cannot let you use this place for the meeting, unless you get the signature of the secret police to approve it. Otherwise, we will have big problems if we let you meet here."

That presented a huge problem for us, because the Egyptian Christian Youth Union is not a registered organization in Egypt for the simple reason that Egypt's government refuses to recognize any para-church ministry. Only churches, and the organizations that head Egypt's denominations are recognized. This is why our group required the cover of the President of the Evangelical Church in Egypt. We work under the umbrella of his office. We'd love to have our own legal status, like the legal recognition ministries working beyond the confines of individual local churches have long had in the United States, but the Egyptian government refuses to give us this permission. They will not recognize our right to exist as a ministry in this way, because the refusal to recognize us means Egyptian officials can deny that these groups even exist in Egypt. This, of course, helps give more substance to the government-condoned myths that Christians are not an important group in Egypt: that we don't affect the culture, and we just don't matter.

So, I told this man, "How can I go to the secret police and ask them to give me a stamp on a paper saying that the Egyptian Christian Youth Union can have a meeting in your place? The Egyptian Christian Youth Union, as is the case with any other Christian organization, cannot be registered with the government."

He said, "I don't want any problems with the secret police. If you cannot give me written permission that is stamped with approval from the secret police, I cannot let you use this place."

I was so disappointed. Meanwhile, I had returned to Cairo. As soon as I left El Menia, the man whom I had spoken to at the YMCA reported me to the secret police in El Menia, and they, in turn, reported me to the headquarters of the secret police in Cairo. The next day the chief of the secret police in Cairo summoned me to his office.

The chief asked me, “Do you have a member of your group whose name is Magy?”

“No,” I said. I honestly didn’t know what he was talking about.

“Yes, you do,” he said. “And, I want you to tell me who she is, what her full name is, her position, and the work she does for the Egyptian Christian Youth Union.” And, he asked me question after question in rapid-fire order, without ever giving me a chance to answer. Finally, he stopped, and I said, “Officer, I told you that I do not have any member in the group named Magy, and I am not lying.”

“No, you have someone in your group by this name.”

“Who told you this?” I asked.

He said, “Magy went to El Menia and tried to reserve the YMCA there.”

“I’m the one who went to El Menia two days ago, and tried to reserve the YMCA. The man I spoke to must have reported my name as ‘Magy,’ instead of ‘Nagy.’ (Since Magy is a female name, the secret police must have assumed that I had a new operative named Magy, who was handling communications for me, and this obviously caused them to be very suspicious.)

This is how I knew the man at the YMCA had reported his conversation with me to the secret police. This story illustrates the difficulties Egyptian Christians have whenever they try to arrange special meetings — something that we Christians do in America all the time without ever having to gain permission from the police.

After this, I talked by phone to one of my friends, Pastor Youseff [not his real name] in El Menia. And I told him, “Pastor Youseff, please go to this guy — the head of the secret police, and tell him that we need to use the facility of the YMCA, and the director of the YMCA said he couldn’t rent the facility to us unless you obtain written permission from the secret police agreeing that we can do this.”

This pastor was very reluctant to go. He said, “Nagy, you know that there is nothing called Egyptian Christian Youth Union, or any other organization like this in Egypt. We are not registered. How can we go to the Egyptian secret police and ask them for a stamp and for a paper like this?”

“We have nothing to lose. Just go and ask them,” I said.

So, the pastor went there, more just to please me than really expecting to get the written permission.

Officer Taha in El Menia was the secret police officer who had so badly frightened a friend of mine once before, telling him, “If Nagy just passes by this city on the train even if he doesn’t touch the platform — I mean, literally, even if he doesn’t touch the platform of the railway station with his legs, but he just passes by the city on the train, you have to report him to me.”

On another occasion, when I visited El Menia one time, Officer Taha detained me and kept asking me questions, and, at the end of his interrogation, he told me, "Anytime you come to El Menia, I want to see you." He tried to make this sound somewhat less threatening. "You just come and drink coffee with me," he said. But he was serious all the same, and we both knew it. "Promise that you will come and drink coffee with me."

And, I said, "I promise," because, well, I had to do it anyway. It wasn't a social call, and I knew that.

It was this same Officer Taha that Pastor Youseff had to speak with on that day. He asked Officer Taha, "Can we get written permission to rent the YMCA facility?"

Well, Officer Taha kept insulting him, and asking him many questions: "Who is Nagy? What is the Egyptian Christian Youth Union? Are you registered with the government? How come you are here asking me to give you written permission, yet you are not a legal organization in our country?"

And, he also asked, "Do you know the full name of Nagy?"

Pastor Youseff said, "I know that his name is Nagy Youseff."

And, the officer said, "Nagy Youseff what? What's his family name?"

I don't know," and he really did not know my family name.

Then Officer Taha asked him, "Are you working for him?"

And, he said, "No. I'm just helping him in the ministry."

"Yeah," said the officer. "That's the same answer we get in every Egyptian city. All those who help Nagy to do his meetings none of them know his last name. Nobody knows his address either. Nobody confesses that they are working for him. All of you are just volunteers helping him to work in Egypt."

"But, this is the truth," said the pastor.

And he said, "You know of course, that I can't give you written permission for your meeting, because there is nothing called the Egyptian Christian Youth Union."

And, Officer Taha gave this pastor a very hard time for almost an hour.

So, the pastor came out of his office, and he talked to me by phone, and, he said, "Nagy, I went to the police office and the police officer kept insulting me for more than an hour, asking me questions, and, in the end, he refused to give me the permit."

And, I said, "Pastor Youseff? Let me pray and I'll get back to you."

I began to pray, and I said, "God, You know we need to have this revival meeting in this city. And, You can solve this problem." Then, God began to talk to me. He said, "You call this officer and ask him for permission."

"But, God, if this officer wouldn't give permission to the pastor from El Menia, then I think he will refuse to give me any permission."

And, the Lord said, "Just call him on the phone."

I did this. I called him by phone and I told him, this is Dr. Nagy Youseff from the Egyptian Christian Youth Union."

At once, he sounded so nice. "Oh, Hi Doctor. You promised me any time

you come to El Menia, you will come and drink coffee. Do you remember your promise?”

“Yeah, I remember my promise, and I am ready to do it, but you don’t want me to come to El Menia.”

“Who said that?” he asked me.

Well, I sent you a pastor to get your stamp of approval for permission for us to use the YMCA building and you insulted him and refused to give him permission.”

Then he said, “You know what? Let him come to see me once again. I will give him the stamp. But, promise me when you come, that you will come to my office.”

“I promise. If I come to El Menia, I will come to your office. But, first, give Pastor Youseff the written permission to use this building.”

I talked to Pastor Youseff and said, “Go back to the police office and they will give you the stamp.”

“But, Brother Nagy you don’t know how these people lie. They want to play games with us, and when I go there again, they will do the same thing again.”

“No, they won’t. The Lord told me to call him, and I called him, and Officer Taha told me to have you come back again and he will give you the stamped permission that you need.”

“Nagy I will do this for your sake, but I know that they won’t give me the stamp.”

Then, he took the paper, returned to this officer, and Officer Taha, as soon as he saw him, put the stamp on it, and handwrote a note on this paper. He said, “The police have no reason to forbid this meeting from taking place, and this is a permit to the YMCA to rent the place to these people.”

While Pastor Doctorian preached at the YMCA, special police forces from the secret police came, and surrounded the building, inside and out, because they were so terrified that the Islamic groups would come and destroy the place.

And, we had the meetings, and we were so happy that God had caused Officer Taha to grant us permission to have these meetings.

One time, in one of my many encounters with the police, I came within minutes of being arrested and going to jail. It was in regards to a conference training the church leaders in praise and worship ministry. We had been doing these conferences for ten years. We bring together the leaders of praise and worship from churches all over Egypt, and we teach them how to choose songs; how to praise and worship God; and how to rid their churches of the spirit of depression that oppresses the Egyptians and other Middle Eastern believers. We talk about how to focus our praise and worship toward God, and, how to avoid dwelling on the lamentations that we traditionally sing

in Egypt. And, as I said in an earlier chapter, our ministry through Egyptian Christian Youth Union began this big movement of praise and worship in Egypt.

Like so many things we did for the Lord, we had to report this conference to the police every year. And one year earlier, we had received threats by some Islamic groups. They claimed they were planning to blow up the place where we would be holding the conference. As a result, the police forced us to leave the place we wanted to use, and instead, we had to hold the conference in a small church.

The next year, our tenth year, we were planning the next conference in two days. It was June 16th and the conference was supposed to be on June 18, 1990. I was supposed to have called the police earlier to tell them about the conference. I had so many things on my mind, and it just slipped my mind to do it.

So, on June 16th, I talked to the head of the secret police whose district included the place where we would hold the conference. I told him that we were going to have a conference on June 18th and I was just reporting that to him.

This time, the policeman sounded really mean on the other end of the line.

"How many days is it from now until the 18th?"

He asked the question with harshness in his voice. I was caught off guard, because I wasn't expecting this question, so I tried to remember what day it was. And, I couldn't remember.

"I don't know today's date," I said, "but I know we have the conference on the 18th" And, he said, "No. You don't have to have this conference. You have to cancel this conference."

So, I tried to reason with him, and smooth over this problem. I told him how we depended on him and how we had talked to him many times before about this conference, and I said, "You're our man, officer."

When I said that, he didn't let me continue, and he started shouting from the other end of the line. "I am not your man! I am not your friend! I am the police officer and I said this conference is cancelled!"

Before I could stop myself, the years of playing this game with the police finally got the best of me, and I said something that landed me in a huge amount of trouble. "You know what?" I retorted. "I say the conference will take place."

Then, this guy hit the roof! "Do you challenge me? I say that the conference is cancelled, and you have the gall to tell me that the conference will take place. I accept the challenge!" Then, he hung up on me.

I knew something bad was going to happen following this phone call, so I spent the rest of the day trying to find Pastor Habib, the President of the Evangelical Church in Egypt, so that I could tell him what had happened:

how this guy from the secret police said he was canceling the conference. I

wanted to ask if Pastor Habib would intercede to God on my behalf, and if he would talk to the police officer, and try to stop him from taking action against me, and would also pray that the police would allow us to proceed with the conference.

I did not return home until one o'clock in the morning, and I found my wife, Carol, terrified, her complexion pale and her face stained with tears.

“What’s going on?” I asked her.

She told me that Pastor Habib had called her. He had asked her, “Where is that crazy guy you are married to?”

Pastor Habib was a very important man, and to get a phone call from him would be something like getting a call from the President. She told him I wasn’t there. Then, he said, “If the morning comes, and he’s still at home, let him come to my office. But, I don’t think that he will see the morning come while he’s in his home.” Then, he hung up the phone.

At this point, she knew something very terrible had happened between the police and me, and that the police were preparing to arrest me. She begged me to leave right away. “Go to your Mom’s house,” she pleaded.

“Honey, they know my address here, and they know your Mom’s address, and they know my Mom’s address, so anywhere that we go, if they want to arrest me, they will come after me. They will arrest me from there. We are not going to go anywhere. We will sleep here in our home until the morning comes.”

We both knew that the secret police usually come to arrest you in the middle of the night. “If they come and arrest me in the middle of the night, just call my brother. Let him come and take you home to my Mom’s house. Then, pray for me and I will be released one day.”

Of course, we didn’t sleep all night. We lay there in the dark, dreading what we feared would be the sound of approaching footsteps followed by a loud knock on the door. It was terrible feeling so helpless, while we waited for these police to come and arrest me.

Despite our fears, the morning dawned, and I was still in my home. I went to Pastor Habib’s office and I told him, “Here I am, what happened?”

He told me that the previous day this officer called him, and he told him, “Pastor Samuel, we have to take action against Nagy, because he has conferences, and he’s doing too many things in Egypt, and every time we ask him who he’s working for, he says he’s working with you, and, of course, we know that he’s not really working with you.”

And, Pastor Habib said, “Who told you he’s not working with me? He is working with me, and this conference is a praise and worship conference. And, as a church, we know all about this conference. In fact, we’ve held this conference nine times before. So, yes, he is definitely working with me.”

Then, the officer told him, “We have to put him in jail, because he insulted me. He cursed me on the phone.”

And Pastor Habib said, “If he cursed you, if he insulted you, I’ll send him into your office tomorrow and, then you can insult him and curse him in your

office, but you're not supposed to put him in jail."

And the officer said, 'No. That's not so. And, we're just calling you to tell you that we will put him in jail. We will arrest him in a few hours.'

This is why Pastor Habib had told my wife, "I don't think that he will see the morning come while he's still at home."

I soon found out all the details of what had actually happened, and why I was not arrested that night. The police had decided to arrest me. They have a form they use — a court order — that can be used to arrest anyone. It's already signed and filled out, so all they have to do is to write the name of the person they want to arrest on the form. According to the laws of Egypt, anyone who is arrested has to spend 40 days in jail before he can even meet with an attorney.

So, the police officer who claimed I had insulted him on the phone had signed my arresting paper, and his supervisor had signed it, and then, the chief of the secret police — he has to sign it, too. So the chief of police asked the other officer who was handing him the paper, "Who's Nagy?"

And, he told him, "Nagy is a Christian who is doing conferences, and meetings. He's giving us a hard time. We're always running after him in all the Egyptian cities, and we have to arrest him."

At this point, God led this officer to tell his chief of police something else. He said, "Every time we asked Nagy why he does this, he says I'm working for Pastor Samuel Habib, the President of the Evangelical Church."

Then, the chief of the police told them, 'Before you arrest him, you have to talk to Samuel Habib, because we don't want problems between us — between the police and the evangelical churches. So you have to tell Samuel Habib that we will arrest him.' Then, he signed the paper to arrest me.

But, when they talked to Pastor Habib, he told them that I really was working under his supervision. So, they cancelled the arrest order because they didn't want to stir up trouble with the evangelical churches. Pastor Habib was one of the big leaders in the church, so if they arrested me, that would mean they are directly challenging the evangelical churches, as a whole, as well as the president of the Evangelical Church. So God led them to talk to Samuel Habib, although I think that this was probably the first time that the secret police informed another Christian before the arrest of a Christian was to take place. This is not the normal step they take before arresting an evangelical in Egypt. They didn't ask Pastor Habib if they should arrest me or not, and, they were not asking him. They were just telling him that they were planning to arrest me in a few hours.

However, God used this event as an opportunity, just minutes before they arrested me, for Pastor Habib to defend me. This was one of the biggest testimonies that I have about God's deliverance from the secret police. Thank you Jesus.

Prayer:

Dear God,

I praise You and thank You for providence and supernatural deliver- anCe of Your workers in Your harvest field. Truly, You are a God who delivers us from the lion's mouth. I pray for the continued protection for underground workers in the Middle Eastern and Islamic countries. And, Lord, please give me personally the courage to know that wherever I go in Your name, You are with me and You will guide me and help me to minister to others.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Five

A reluctant traveler

Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.” (Ex. 4:12)

During the 1980s, the ministry of The Egyptian Christian Youth Union led to the salvation of thousands of souls. For years, what we called “musical parties” were actually powerful, redemptive spiritual meetings packed with Egyptian youth, many of whom went on to become leaders in their churches. As I thought about this new generation of Christians in Egypt, and how God had used my previous experience publishing a small church magazine to edify Egyptian churches, God gave me a vision to have a newspaper for Christians in the Middle East. So, the Lord asked me to go and study journalism.

Years later, after I had traveled to America and had many adventures, which I will share in subsequent chapters, God used these credentials to enable me and my coworkers in Egypt to publish the first Christian newspaper in the Middle East, *El Tareek*.³

The Lord was already laying the plans for this ministry, which would be fulfilled years in the future, before I even knew I would be leaving Egypt.

I now had credentials in journalism, as well as two dental offices in Egypt.

³ See chapter fifteen.

I also had a lovely wife, a new son and a thriving ministry in Egypt. Things were going very well. Needless to say, I was surprised when God began to talk to me about leaving Egypt and immigrating to America. God said I needed to go to America, because He wanted to use me among Muslims.

At this time, I was not working among Muslims. To be honest, I didn't love Muslims. Both my coworkers in the ministry and I did not think about presenting the gospel to Muslims, as we were directing all our ministry efforts toward Egypt's indigenous Christians. Many of these people were oppressed, discouraged, and worshipping in churches where rituals had, to a great extent, replaced a living, growing faith in Jesus. Many needed a fresh witness of the gospel message and encouragement in their Christian walk.

We had succumbed to an idea, popular in Egypt at that time, which deceived us and kept us from being a witness to the Muslims around us. This idea was that we needed to concentrate first on finishing the job of evangelizing the 10 million Christians in Egypt. “Then,” we reasoned, “we will go and work among Muslims.”

I later realized, when God spoke to me after I had left Egypt, that some people are called to evangelize Christians and others are called to reach Muslims. We did not understand this at the time, so we fell under the power of this lie that says we need to finish evangelizing the 10 million Christians in Egypt, and only after that should we begin reaching out to Muslims.

The truth is clearer to me now: we cannot afford to neglect Muslims. Why do I say this? If we don't reach Muslims with the gospel, then the atmosphere in the Middle East will not change. And, if the atmosphere in the Middle East does not change, it will be so much harder for us to reach Christians with biblical truth, while having to work under oppressive Islamic states. So, now I look at a Middle Eastern culture in a particular country as an integrated whole, where the ministries to both Christians and Muslims are, of necessity interwoven together. Now, I understand that God calls some to work among Muslims, and some to work among Christians, and that doesn't mean that the work of gospel proclamation to each group must happen sequentially. It's not that we are to go first to the Christian, then to the Muslim. It's more accurate to see it as one man is called to one field, and another man is called to another field, and both work at the same time in fulfilling God's purposes for a particular nation. (2 Cor. 10:13-16)

However, back then I believed this lie. This is why, when some Muslims attended our outreach meetings, and later wrote us letters, or filled out our questionnaires asking us questions and telling us they had accepted Christ, I told my co-workers, “You know what? This is the secret police. These are not really Muslims seeking Christ. It's just a trap. The police want to test us to know whether we are working among Muslims. If you answer these people, we will surely be arrested. Instead, we have 10 million Christians here in Egypt and we have to finish that work first.”

It was while I was still in this frame of mind that God began to ask me

to work among Muslims. He said, 'I want you to go to America to be used among Muslims.

I thought this idea was hilarious, because, here I was living in the midst of a sea of 50 million Muslims in Egypt alone, with another 250 million spread throughout the different countries in the Middle East. I was less than a day's journey away from Jordan, from Syria, from Sudan, from Libya and different Middle Eastern countries, so why do I need to go to America to be used among Muslims? I didn't get it. And, there was one more thing, too: I didn't want to go to America by any means!

I am not the type of man who has a lust for travel or adventures, and, at the time, I had no desire to do such 'abnormal' things. (Since then, I've learned to do many "abnormal" things for Christ!) I even refused to go to Cyprus for Christian conferences, and it was only 50 minutes from Cairo by air. When the invitations came, all I could think of was how much I hated to travel on airplanes: it scared me to death!

That's why I was sure God had chosen the wrong person this time. So, I said to myself, "Maybe this is from me, and not God, because He knows I do not like to travel. He knows I have a ministry here. I have a family, too, so it doesn't make sense that He is telling me to go to the States."

I tried hard to forget about the idea, but every month, or two months, the voice of the Lord continued to speak about this subject. "I told you to go to the States to work among Muslims," He would say, and, then, I would continue to tell myself the same things over and over and over. Then, God started to speak in different ways and through various circumstances. Even though I didn't realize it at the time, truly, my days in Egypt were already numbered. Everything I had ever known in my life would soon be ripped away from me, as God prepared me for a new ministry to Muslims.

One day, I was doing some dental work for a missionary friend from America while he was visiting Egypt. His name is Nashan Olashian. Although originally Armenian, at that time he was living in Fresno, California.

As I was fixing his teeth, the voice of the Lord came to me so clear, as He warned me: "Soon, they will try to arrest you and will put you in jail. I want to give you legal status in the States, so that I can use you among Muslims."

When I finished the dental work, we took a walk together, and I said, Nashan, the Lord is asking me to go to the States to be used among Muslims.

His expression changed instantly to anger.

"You are the last person I thought who would tell me this! I hear the same thing from at least ten people a day in Egypt. They all ask me to help them go to America, and they all tell me that God is asking them to go to America. In your case, I know that this is not from God, because you have your ministry here, you have your family here, and you have a career here. It won't be like this in America, because there, not only will you not find Muslims, you also will not be a dentist. You will have to study all over again, and you will not have a big ministry like you now have in Egypt. God is using you right here,

and you have to be wise, not foolish!”

“I didn’t ask you to help me go to America,” I calmly replied. “I’m just sharing with you what God is telling me now. But, here’s what I think about what you said. I will take what you said as if from the Lord, and I’ll consider that God has spoken to me through you, and I’ll accept that what I’m hearing inside my heart is not from God. I’ll accept that I’m not to go to America, so I will forget about the subject.”

At this, he was somewhat taken aback. “Nagy, I didn’t tell you that *God* told you this, or that’s what *God* told me. This was my response, because to me, this doesn’t make any sense. However, give me a couple of days to pray about this, and then I will come and share with you whatever God tells me about this subject.”

So I said, “OK, take your time. I’m not in a hurry.”

Two days later, we met again.

Please forgive me, he said. I just got mad, because you told me you want to go to the States, and I didn’t want to see you destroy your ministry in Egypt by going to the States. I have been praying and fasting these past two days to see what God says to me about this, and He told me ‘Nagy has to go to the States and you have to sponsor him.’”

Then, he said, “I own my home, and I’m ready to pledge it for your affidavit of support. I’m ready to support you in whatever you need. I will do this, because God told me to do it.”

Even though this was a big confirmation for me to see that God did want me to go to the States, I did not immediately take him up on his offer. I had a very hard time accepting the idea that I must leave everything in Egypt in order to come to the U.S., and especially to come with the plan of ministering to Muslims. I still wasn’t convinced that there really were Muslims in America to reach with the gospel. Everyone in Egypt told me there are no Muslims in America. They thought this notion was as unbelievable as I did.

Sometime around the end of 1988 or beginning of 1989, I invited a pastor *I* missionary to preach in Egypt. He was also from America. God blessed his ministry in Egypt greatly, and within a few days, 17,000 Egyptians heard the message of Christ, and some were Muslims.

This troubled the secret police, so they deported this pastor from Egypt, and he then went to South Africa, where he met a missionary named Judy Bauer. She is founder of Kingdom Advancement Ministry, in Temecula, Calif. He explained to her how the Egyptian government kicked him out of Egypt, because his preaching had resulted in Muslims accepting Christ. She was excited to hear this, and told him she was very interested in reaching Muslims, too. So they agreed to have a conference in Cyprus a few months later, in April 1989, and they invited me. To be honest, I didn’t want to go. I had no desire to leave Egypt.

My wife insisted that I go, because she said I needed a week’s vacation. By this time, I had had too many experiences with the police running after me, and threatening to arrest me. Due to the fact that I was with this mission-

ary who had been deported, the police kept me in the police station for hours interrogating me. My wife believed this week of rest would refresh me. She insisted I go, and to make sure I did, she took my passport and arranged for my plane ticket. So off I went to Cypress. I survived the flight, despite my fears.

At the conference I met my old friend, Brother Doctorian, as well as Judy. We talked about reaching Egypt for Christ, and the leadership training I was doing through The Egyptian Christian Youth Union. Then, she asked if she and some other believers might have our permission to come and minister in Egypt at a Christian conference. We soon made plans to bring Judy and others to Egypt for a training conference.

In Egypt, we have to report any foreigners coming into the country who plan to speak at churches, or visit with church leaders, or to participate in any Christian activity especially if they will stay more than seven days. This was the typical thing we had to do in order to avoid trouble with the police. This time, however, God told me not to report these visitors to the police. This was a risky move, but God said, "Just call the police on Thursday."

The plan was for the visitors to arrive in Egypt on a Saturday, then leave early the following Saturday. Friday is a weekend day in Egypt, so, if we report them on Thursday, the police will not bother to check on them until Saturday, and by then, they will be gone. This is what the Lord said, "Report them at two o'clock on Thursday."

This really did not make sense to me, because Judy had already talked about her plans by phone, and all the attendees of the conference — we had 80 leaders planning to attend — they were calling us from all over Egypt — and our phones are bugged. The police hear all of our conversations. Surely the police already knew who was coming to this conference, and when they would arrive. But, that's what I heard from the Lord. Even if I did not understand why He was asking me not to report the foreign visitors to the secret police, I wanted to follow His leading. I had learned by now how many times God's plans work to the good when His direction seems so strange at the time.

That same week I was sitting in my apartment, with some of the leaders of the Egyptian Christian Youth Union, and I told them, "Guys, I have something weird that God told me. He said, 'Do not report these people to the police. At that moment, my Mom was passing by the doorway of the room in which we were gathered, and she overheard what I had said. She stopped and walked into the room, and said, "Nagy, can you do me one favor in your life?"

"Sure, Mom. Whatever you want I'll do."

"The one favor that I'm asking you to do for me in my life is this: Please don't allow the police to arrest you before I die, because if they arrest you while I am living, I think I will die. So, please don't do any foolish thing that will provoke the police to put you in jail. This is the only favor I will ask you. I cannot take the thought of seeing you in jail.

56 "Let My People Go So They Can Worship Me"

Laughing a little, and trying to ease her fears, I said, "Mom, you know, sometimes God says things, and it doesn't really make sense."

"Nagy, you know that the police already know about the conference, and the place, and everything, so if you don't report this yourself, they will come to this conference, and they will have their way with you — they will do whatever they want."

"Mom, I don't understand, but this is what God told me: 'Don't report these people to the police.' I don't know why, but I will not report them now.,,"

Then, my Mom looked over to one of my assistants, and she said to him:

"Can you tell him anything to bring him back to his senses? Because, the police already know that you are having this conference, and if he doesn't report it to the police, they will say that you are hiding these people from them, and we know that they will then put him in jail. So, can any one of you — his fellow members — can you please just talk to him and convince him to report these people to the police?"

Then, my assistant, with a gentleness in his voice, said, "You know, Auntie, many times we came against him when he said 'God told me no.' Sometimes, we even forced him to do things as we saw it, and he did it for us. But, we later discovered that we were wrong, and he was right. That's why we stopped doing that. Now, we figure that whatever he says God told him to do, he's in charge, and he will get the first blessing, and he will also get the first punishment if he heard wrong."

She gave up at this point, and left. I knew this is what I had heard, and for me, the matter was settled, even if it caused my Mom distress. I would not be reporting these visitors to the police.

Judy soon arrived in Egypt, bringing six other Americans with her. We had a wonderful conference about evangelism. Then, we came to Thursday morning. We were having lunch at an evangelical church, and the pastor of the church came up to me, in front of Judy and the other Americans. He asked me a question. "Did you report these people to the police or not?" He was also in charge of the center, where the conference was being held.

I tried to avoid answering him, because I didn't want to upset our guests, so I looked away, but that encouraged him to be even more persistent.

"I'm asking you a question, and I want you to answer me. Did you report these people to the police or not?"

"To be honest, no."

Boy, did he get mad! Shouting at me, he said, "You put us in jeopardy — all of us. Now they will come against us because you are using our facility and we were supposed to report any visitors using our facility. I see I've made a mistake with you. I trusted that I was working with a man, but now I discover that I'm helping a kid, because you've put us in so much trouble by not reporting these people to the police."

"You know pastor," I said, now trying to soothe him. "God told me, 'Don't report them to police.'"

“Don’t tell me that, because the police already know that they are here and you are causing trouble for yourself, for me, and for your church, and you are not allowed to do that!” He was really shouting now.

Meanwhile Judy was overhearing our discussion. Although she could not understand the language, she could certainly hear the anger in the pastor’s voice. “What’s wrong?” she asked. Then, I told her the whole story.

I think this was the very reason why God told me, “Don’t report them to the police.” He wanted Judy, and the other Americans, to see just how difficult it is for us in Egypt.

Then, she said, “I believe God is telling me that you have to come to the States, and get your Green Card. I’m afraid that they will come and arrest you in the conference.”

“Don’t worry,” I said. “God has promised me that nothing will happen. At two o’clock, I will send someone with your passports to the police station, so that they can take the information, and the police will come to ask about you on Saturday morning, at which time, you will be gone, so you will have no problems.”

“I still think God is talking to me about helping you to get your Green Card,” she said.

I admitted the truth to her. “I know that God wants me to go to America.” Then, I told her about my experience with Nashan, and she said, “That’s a confirmation, a big confirmation.”

But, I said, “I don’t think this is the time for me to leave Egypt.”

“I have an idea,” she said. “When I get back, I will talk to an attorney, and ask him to prepare your immigration papers. Then, when you have your Green Card, you can come when you are ready.”

After she returned to the U.S., she followed through on her word, and this attorney wanted many certificates, papers and so many applications! So, she called me and said, “Nagy, the guy is asking me for too much stuff! I don’t know how to get these things.”

“Judy, I told you this is not the time.”

“OK, but remember that I tried to do what I had promised.”

Over a year later, I went to visit the Bible Society in Egypt, and I spoke with the director, Ramez Attalah, a friend of mine. Ramez had lived in Canada for more than 15 years, and, then God told him to go back to Egypt to take charge of the Bible Society.

In his typical humble manner, Ramez was asking many of the leaders in Egypt how to advance the ministry of the Bible Society and I was one of these leaders. The moment I arrived in his office, he said, “Nagy, I have received an invitation from The AD2000 & Beyond Movement.” This was a network of Christians committed to world evangelism. He said, “They are gathering leaders from all over the world to meet in the U.S. to discuss how we can start this world-wide evangelism movement. My friend, Paul Borthwick, sent me an invitation asking me to be a delegate from the Middle East. They are meeting in a city called Los Alamitos,

in Southern California. Nagy, the moment I got this invitation, God told me, ‘This invitation is Nagy’s, not yours. You must give it to Nagy.’”

I started laughing. “Ramez, you are from a denomination that doesn’t believe God tells you to do something. They don’t know how to hear from God. Besides, how come God told you Nagy? I don’t speak English very well, and I don’t want to leave Egypt, and, furthermore, you have many people in your church who speak English perfectly. Why not one of them? You can depend upon any one of them to go and report to you what happens at the conference.”

“But, God didn’t choose just anybody. He told me this is for Nagy.”

“OK, let me go and pray and get back to you.”

“Why do you want to go and pray? You have the invitation, you have the ticket, and you have the accommodations, so why pray?”

And, I said, “Well, let me pray and make sure that God really wants me to go to the States.”

I really didn’t want to go to the States!

So, I prayed, and God told me: “You go.” That finally settled the matter.

Then, I told him that I needed my own invitation from Paul Borthwick under my name. “I can’t take the invitation and go to the U.S. Embassy with an invitation under someone else’s name.” He said he would take care of it.

At that time I wasn’t an ordained pastor. The profession listed on my Egyptian passport was dentistry. In those days, and still today, it is hard to get a visa for the United States, and you have to be ordained to get a religious visa. In order to get a visa like this, I would need a recommendation letter from the Bible Society or from the President of the Evangelical Churches assuring the U.S. Government that I will return to Egypt. When any Egyptian asks for a visa to visit the U.S., the U.S. official hands him a paper explaining that the U.S. Government assumes we will overstay our visa in the United States. So, we have to give proof that we will not do this by showing evidence like a hefty bank account in Egypt, or a well-paying job. And, even then, they usually will not grant a visa for the entire family to come to the U.S. Some family members may have to stay behind as assurance that you will return.

I didn’t know any of these things. In naivety and innocence, I just walked into the American Embassy with my invitation from Paul Borthwick in hand, and I picked up the application for the visa. I filled it out and submitted it. Then, a U.S. official came to interview me.

He asked me a lot of questions. He asked about the conference, and then he asked me, “Do you know, or have you met this Paul Borthwick, who is inviting you to come to the States?”

And, I said, “To be honest, no, I don’t know him.”

“Do you know the location of the city Los Alamitos?”

“It’s in California.”

“Where is it exactly in California?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you know the theme of the conference that you are going to?”

"To be honest, no, I don't know."

And, he asked me around ten more questions, and to these questions, I answered, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know."

Then, this guy got mad at me, and he said, "You know what? You have to know something. You are coming here to get the visa to the States. And, you don't know anything about the guy who invited you, and you've never met him. You also don't know the denomination of the church that you are going to. You are not an ordained pastor. You don't know where Los Alamitos is. You don't know anything! To get a visa, you have to know something to be eligible to get the visa!" He was really exasperated with me.

My answer did little to calm him. I said simply and sincerely, "You know what? That's all that I know."

I later realized that I was supposed to have been better prepared before I went to the embassy to ask for a visa, but God wasn't about to let me escape His plans for me in America. No exasperated official was going to stop what God had in mind to do.

With a disgusted look on his face, he said to me, "Have a seat."

And, I said, "OK," and I took my seat, and waited. Then, someone called my name and they gave me the visa.

My friend Ramez could not believe that I was given a visa without a letter of recommendation. And, he asked me, "Why didn't you get a letter of recommendation from me, or from the President of the Evangelical Church?"

"I didn't know that they needed a recommendation. I just went there."

"Do you mean to tell me that you went to the embassy without any recommendation letter and you got the visa?"

And, I said, "That's what happened."

So, I received this visa even though, in my naivety, I had done everything wrong. Later, so many people in Egypt, when they heard this story, said to me: "You are so fortunate. There is something supernatural about this — that you got this visa to go to the United States."

When God wants to relocate one of His children, a simple bit of paper-work and a few government officials are not going to stop Him. Once I arrived in the States, however, God worked it the other way, and no power on earth could seemingly make the paperwork go the way I wanted it to go. Through this experience, God taught me many valuable lessons. And He reminded me that He is very much in control of even the smallest details of our lives.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Lord, You are the Lord of the Harvest! And we thank you for strategically positioning Your workers around the world so that the message of Your glorious salvation will reach the ends of the earth. Lord, I pray that You will replace me where You want me- wherever that may be. Encourage me to be obedient to Your call and bring Your word to life within my heart. Quicken me, Lord!

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Six

“Why did you bring me out of Egypt?”

The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering “ (Ex. 3:7)

God brought me to the United States on October 24, 1991, and I attended the conference, and after it was finished, my friends who had previously immigrated to America, asked me, “Why don’t you stay?” They knew how much I had suffered from constant harassment by the police in Egypt. “Why don’t you ask Judy to start your paperwork so that you can stay in the States?”

I don’t want to think about that right now,” I said. Even though I knew God was telling me to stay in the States and to apply for residency I wasn’t prepared to do it. I told my friends, “I cannot just ask Judy to do the immigration paperwork for me. If God asks her to do it, that’s different, but I’m not going to ask her.”

So my friends prayed with me, and we told God, “If you want Nagy to stay in America at this time, and to get his Green Card, then let Judy ask him

to stay and let her offer to do his paperwork.”

Judy had invited me to come visit Sea World in San Diego with her. As she walked up to me before we began our trip, she hugged me. “Nagy,” she said, “now that you are here in the States, it’s so easy to prepare your immigration papers. I still remember that God asked me to do your papers so that you can stay here permanently.”

Then, all my friends began to laugh.

“Why are you laughing?” asked Judy.

“We were praying before you came. We asked Nagy, why won t you now stay in the U.S? And, he insisted that he would never ask you himself, but we prayed that if you offered, then it was God’s will that Nagy stay in America.

Now, began a lengthy time of testing for me, as I officially embarked upon the journey of seeking resident status in the States. This time would prove to be very difficult, because I had to leave my wife and son behind in Egypt while I waited for my papers to be processed. I also spoke with my pastor in Egypt, who sent me the recommendation letters and proof of my ministry credentials from the Bible school where I used to teach evangelism and Christian counseling. He agreed that I should stay and he asked God to bless my application. My family, however, were not able to obtain visas until my immigration petition was resolved. At the time, I had no idea that our separation would stretch to almost two years. If I had, I probably would have made sure that I returned on the next flight to Egypt as soon as the conference was over.

While my attorney processed the paperwork, I reminded God that He had asked me to come to the States in order to minister to Muslims. “But, I have found no Muslims to reach, Lord.” In fact, I found nothing to do now, except to wait upon the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to decide my case.

My wife and son, who was only a toddler, were one-third of the way around the world from me. I would spend a very painful twenty-two months away from the two people in the whole world who were the most precious to me. If I had known how long this trial would last, I would have been three times as upset as I already was, even at the very beginning of this separation.

Looking back on this incident in my life, I am struck by the irony of it. In all my years of ministry in Egypt, God had prevented the Egyptian police from separating me from my wife and child through persecution and arrest in a land where Christians are not free. Yet, He caused me to be separated from my family by taking me to the very land of freedom.

At this point, I decided to put a lot of signs before God, because I was so frustrated by this turn of events. So, I told Him soon after my decision to allow Judy to proceed with my paperwork, “You know God, if my wife says to me, ‘No, I do not want to go to the States,’ then I will go back to Egypt.” I figured it would take about three months to get my Green Card, so I told my

wife it would be six months, thinking this would make the decision to remain apart less attractive to her. I wanted to give her the worst case scenario. This was the first time we had been apart like this, except for the one week when I had traveled to Cyprus for the conference where I had met with Judy. To my surprise, my wife agreed to a six-month separation immediately. “I feel like God wants you to stay there until you get your papers,” she said. “It will be very hard for me to live without you for these months, but we have to obey God.”

After this conversation, I decided, that as soon as I got that Green Card, I was out of there — ready to depart on that first plane back to Egypt! Maybe that’s why God allowed my immigration paperwork to mysteriously disappear, not once, not twice, but three times!

Many times during this period in my life, I brought my complaints to God. “I didn’t ask you to come to America. You asked me to come. You told me that you would give me the Green Card, and for me to keep it and to use it if the police in Egypt try to arrest me. You told me that I would reach Muslims. I don’t find Muslims here. There is something wrong, and I want to go back to Egypt!”

I was so frustrated, so angry so everything. But, God had a plan just to keep me in the States for these long, trying months so that He could teach me many, many lessons, which I will share with you. During this trial, I came to understand, with so much more appreciation, the quality of the unique love and devotion that exists between our heavenly Father and His sons and daughters on this earth. God used the relationship with my son, Andy, who was separated from me in Egypt, to teach me this. Through this experience, He increased my faith and opened my eyes to many things that I had never previously understood before in Egypt.

I remember one time I was listening to the words of a song, in which God is speaking, and says, “I am a father, too. Two thousand years ago, I had a son, and I watched Him grow, and I watched Him hang on a cross to forgive the world’s sins.” I was so touched by this song, and I kept thinking about God as a father.

At another time, I was talking on the phone with my wife while I was in America and she was in Egypt. I did not have the money to even pay for this phone call, but every few days, I just had to talk to them. In one of these phone calls to Egypt, I had just finished talking to my wife, and while she was hanging up the phone, I heard my son, Andy, crying in the background. This upset me so much, that I had to call her right back to find out what was going on with my little boy. His cries were like knives piercing my heart, and I felt so helpless and so far away — so useless as a Dad. Carol answered the phone, and said, “Nagy it’s good that you called again, because Andy is crying and he wants to talk to you.”

“OK, Andy,” I said, as my wife handed him the phone. “Here’s Dad. Just tell me what you want me to get you from America, and you know that Daddy’s coming and will bring you good things from America.”

“Talk to my Mom,” he said, crying.

“Andy, I’ve finished talking to your Mom and now I’m talking to you.” For the next few minutes, I tried to console my son, while he kept trying to give the phone to my wife. Yet, all the while, I wanted so badly to talk to him. And, he was just crying inconsolably.

“Nagy, that’s enough,” my wife finally said. “We are wasting time and this costs money we don’t have.”

Just as she was telling me, “OK, bye,” Andy started to wail again.

“Please, honey, give him the phone one more time.”

She handed the phone to him, and he said, “They don’t want me to talk to you,” and he’s still crying.

So, I told him to talk to his Mom.

This conversation was repeated maybe five or six times, with him crying, and me trying to talk to him, and, all through this phone call, I was feeling the sharpest pangs of sorrow. I was 9,000 miles away, and I just couldn’t hang up the phone, but every time I tried to talk to him, he wouldn’t say anything — just “Talk to Mom.” Finally, my wife hung up the phone, and then I started to cry really hard. At that moment, I felt like someone was putting his hand over my shoulder, and I heard a voice in my heart that said, “I am a father, too.”

Then, God said to me, “If you can’t hang up on your son — the little boy who doesn’t know what to say — who has nothing to say — and you don’t have money to pay for the phone call, but because he’s your son, you cannot hang up, then how much more, when you talk to Me, will I be open to hear you? I will never hang up on you.” This moment was one of the major turning points in my life. It was a true epiphany. Now, whenever I pray, I know God is looking toward me, and no matter what — no matter how badly I’ve messed up, or sinned, or whatever problem I am experiencing in my life — I feel once again God saying to me, “I’m a father, too, and I cannot hang up on you, but I will hear you any time you speak to Me.”

Another lesson God showed me through my relationship to my son happened several years later. It was when I was standing in line to obtain a visa from the Israeli embassy in downtown Los Angeles, which was about a 45- minute drive from my apartment in Duarte, near Pasadena in suburban Los Angeles County. Andy was five years old at this time, and he was scheduled to leave school at 1:45 in the afternoon, and I discovered I would not be able to obtain the visa until around 1:30. So, I was sure I would not be back in time to greet him when he arrived home, because he used to carpool with another child in our apartment, and they dropped him off at our apartment each school day. I began to imagine what it would be like for him to arrive at the door of our apartment expecting me, or Carol to be there, and then finding no one home. I imagined that he would be very frightened.

So, I immediately called his friend’s Mom, Yvette, who lived less than five minutes from his school, and I asked her to do me a favor. “I want you to go to my apartment before Andy gets there, and stand there and let him know I’m not there, but I’m coming for him in a few minutes. In the meantime, tell

him ‘Dad asked me to take you to my house until he gets here.’ Yvette, please make sure you are there to meet him, because I don’t want him to arrive and knock on the door, and become frightened because no one is there to welcome him.” I said this over and over again to her: “Promise me you will be there before Andy knocks on the door.”

And, she said, “Sure, I’m leaving right now.”

However, she delayed a little too long, and Andy arrived before her and knocked on the door, and he found no one there to greet him. She arrived a few minutes after he did, and she saw him knocking on the door, and thankfully, she was there to reassure him.

When I arrived home, I was curious as to what must have gone through his mind, in those couple of minutes when he knocked on the door and no one was there to greet him. So, I asked him: “Andy, what did you feel when you knocked on the door and didn’t find Mom or Dad there to open the door? What did you feel? What did you think had happened?”

When he answered me, it was like he suddenly had the demeanor of a grown man. “You know, Dad, I trust you. I said to myself, ‘Dad would never leave me. He may be on the freeway, and I’m sure he is sending Yvette to take me home, because I trust him.

When my son said this, God just spoke to me in that moment. He said, “Do you trust Me as much as your son trusts you? This five-year-old knows you will never leave him, and you will send him someone to take him home. You need to trust Me as much as your son trusts you.”

Another thing God taught me during what I later termed my “wilderness time,” was that He must come first in our lives, even before our loved ones. Many times, I have heard ministers say, “You have to take care of your family, first.”

I don’t know if this is just an American idea, or not, but I have heard many American ministers say, “Put your family first, and if you take care of them, then you can serve the Lord.” However, I don’t believe there is a first or last; or, a first or second. If there is someone who needs to come first, it is God. I’m not saying that you should neglect your family, but sometimes God will call you to spend time away from your family. However, during those times, God will provide comfort and support for your family using other believers. This has been my experience.

I have a brother, Isaac, who, during my separation from my wife and son, lavished love and attention on my little boy. He really spoiled him, because he bought Andy everything his little heart desired. When I called Egypt, I would hear all about Andy’s expensive new car toy, or expensive new bike. Isaac would take him to Kentucky Fried Chicken, which is a very big deal in Egypt. My brother had his own driver, and secretary, and my son grew so used to his position of privilege as my brother’s nephew that one day he told Isaac’s secretary, “Send the driver to me so that he can take me to Kentucky Fried Chicken.”

So, I told Isaac one day, “You are not doing me any favors spoiling Andy

like this, because when he comes to America, I will not be able to afford to get him these things.”

And, when my family’s visas finally came through, Isaac flew with Andy on the jet to America just to reassure him during the trip, and then he traveled back to Egypt the very next day. This is how devoted my brother was to Andy. This is how much he loved him.

When they were about to arrive in America, I was afraid that my young son, who had not seen me for a year and a half, would have grown so close to his uncle that he would now consider him his “Dad,” and that he would see me as a stranger. This thought was so painful for me. And, I also had this anxiety that when Isaac got on the plane to return to Egypt, Andy would experience severe emotional trauma at the loss of this relationship. I feared he would become depressed, and suffer long-term problems because of this. All these thoughts came to my mind.

So, I prayed, and I told God, “You told me to come, and You held me here for almost two years. And, now my son is coming back to me, and I want Andy to forget Isaac as a father figure and to become attached once more to me, his father.”

Even though I was afraid of what kind of reaction Andy would have when we took Isaac back to the airport the day after my family and my brother arrived in California, God answered my prayer so completely. Isaac said, “Bye Andy.” And, Andy said, “Bye Amu,”⁴ as if nothing had happened and as if we had never suffered a trauma at all to our father-son relationship. In the end, we suffered no long-term effects from our lengthy separation. While I took care of God’s ministry, He had taken care of my family. And, I thank God for my children: for Andy, and for Timmy, my second son who was born in America. They are both straight A-plus students, who have earned many trophies, awards and certificates — accomplishments I never would have dreamed that they would have achieved, while we were in Egypt.⁵

So, this is how God showed me what kind of Father He truly is in my first two years in America.

I don’t think I would have had my eyes opened to these spiritual insights if I had stayed in Egypt. There were so many, many precious insights that God showed me at this time in my life, while He held me captive in this land of freedom. He hemmed me in, and did a great work in my heart, for which I am now so grateful. (Psalm 139:5) God used this time just to teach me how to wait upon Him, and how to listen to His voice, so that I could later give Him my utmost in service and obedience to whatever He asks me to do. He

⁴ Amu means uncle in Arabic.

⁵ Editor’s note: Christian school children in Egypt have to endure many difficulties in an Islamic state. I talked to one member of Nagy’s church in El Cajon, who was a school teacher in Egypt prior to coming to the U.S., and she told me that Muslim students began to pressure her son about his faith when he was only in Kindergarten. Christians are an oppressed minority, and the vast majority of their children do not easily find rewards and encouragement during their educational years.

prepared me well for what has turned out to be 16 years of miracles, and testimonies in my ministry. This ministry that God has given to me has now reached thousands of Muslim souls across many countries, who have heard and accepted the gospel. God's work in my life, and His power through my Christian testimony, is an awesome demonstration of His love for the sons of Ishmael!

Needless to say, before I had learned all these lessons — when I lacked the vision to see how God was leading me into this powerful ministry to Muslims I considered it very strange that the U.S. immigration officials managed to lose my papers three times. I had submitted all the files, and then I received a letter some months later saying that they had terminated my case, because they had asked me for a paper that I had not submitted by the deadline. But, I never received the letter from immigration asking me for any papers. And, there was no mention in the termination letter telling me exactly what paper- work they wanted from me. So I didn't know what to send them, and I just sent the same file once again, along with a note that said, "This is the file I originally sent, so please review it. If you need more papers, just send me a list of what you need."

More months would pass, and then, another termination letter would arrive. "We've terminated your case for the second time," the letter would say, "because you have not submitted the papers we have requested." Again, I never received the letter asking for the paperwork — just the termination letter. I went through this bureaucratic quagmire three times for more than year. I thought it so strange that I never received these letters, and that the paperwork I sent never seemed to arrive at its destination. As I said, God had hemmed me in.

Before I came to America, at least four prophecies by four different people had predicted that God would use me in Egypt as He used Moses to call His children out of Egypt — out from under the oppression of the spirit of Pharaoh, and the spirit of Islam, and into freedom in Jesus. This guidance from the Lord was so clear. One of these people was Judy. She told me that God promised me that He would use me in Egypt as He used Moses to deliver the Egyptians from their situation; to open their eyes; and to let them refuse to submit to the situations in which they lived. And, I accepted that. Then, another missionary told me the same thing and I accepted that. And, another guy told me the same thing, and I accepted that. I came to America because I believed this was the Lord's will.

Now I was forced to wait, with my hands in my lap, and little work with which to fill my days. I was a member in the church, and I was helping in the church, but much of the time, I waited and waited for the immigration officials to send me the papers so that my life could move on. And, while I waited, I found no Muslims.

As I said, I was so frustrated. So I was crying and telling God, “Where is Moses? Why didn’t you fulfill your prophecy? You promised me that you would use me like Moses In Egypt? Well God, I accepted that, and now I’m in America doing nothing!” To be honest, it came to one point where I told God, “You know what? I don’t accept that. Now I’m in America doing nothing, and to be honest, I don’t want to be as Moses. I’m getting so tired. I don’t want to serve You anymore. Just let me go back to Egypt to my wife and my child.”

Then, I was invited one night to an Arabic-Christian conference to lead praise and worship. The pastor was an Egyptian immigrant who has a wonderful ministry among Arabs. So, I went to the conference and I began to sing and people were praising and worshipping God, and all the while, I was thinking about Moses and my immigration case.

Later that night, when I was alone in my hotel room, I felt like I was in a spiritual battle, fighting the temptation of evil spirits, who were whispering to me, “This is your end. You cannot go back to Egypt. You cannot stay here in America. Your family is in Egypt and you are here.”

The next morning, spiritually depleted and depressed, I had to go and lead the praise and worship again. As I watched the people, who were excited and blessed by the Lord’s ministry to them, I couldn’t wait until the service was over, because the blessing from this praise and worship had not come to me on that wearisome day. After the meeting I went straight to my room, and I told God, “You know, I am not an actor. I want to praise and worship you. In the meeting today, as I led the praise and worship, I could see the people blessed and joyful, but I feel so depressed. I can’t take this anymore, Lord.” And, then I began to sob, wailing like a baby. I mean I was really crying. I was lying over my pillow, and crying, and my tears were running like a flood. “God,” I sobbed. “You promised me You would use me like Moses, and now I’m here in the States, and I left my ministry in Egypt. I left everything! So where is Moses?”

Then, the voice of God spoke to me. “Go and open the window.” I looked out at the window and the balcony it faced. He said, “You just stay there by the window and look out at the trees and praise and worship Me.”

“How can I do that?” And, I was crying like a baby; literally, like a sobbing child.

Suddenly, a memory came to me. When I was a child, my Mom used to force us children to eat homemade French fries in Egypt, and boy, we hated that! Of course, these were not like the French fries you buy at the fast-food restaurants in America. It was more like greasy, unappetizing, pan-fried potatoes. And, when she forced me to eat those, I had tears running down my face, because I hated the taste so much, and the tears were running down the corners of my mouth and mixing with half-chewed potatoes. That night in the hotel room, it was just as if I had become a child again, eating those hated potatoes: I had tears running over my checks, and dribbling down the corners of my mouth and into my mouth.

This is a good picture of my emotional and spiritual state at that moment:

A sobbing child not wanting to take what the good Lord had put in front of him. Yet, God was simply telling me: “You go and praise and worship.”

Then, I looked out and saw the trees, and, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, I could see that the trees *were* singing, swayed by the movement of the wind blowing upon the trees. (Luke 19:40) And, I began singing one verse, and then another, at first singing and crying words and tears mixed together — and then, I was praising and worshipping the Lord in earnest.

Nothing happened immediately, in terms of my circumstances, but I believed God had heard my prayers. I went back to the evening meeting of the conference, and, now I was in a very different state of mind than I had been that morning, because God had ministered to my heart.

The pastor began to preach, and when he was preaching - I don't remember what he had said just before this moment, and I don't remember what subject he was speaking about — in the middle of his preaching, he just looked at me and time seemed to freeze to a standstill. “Where do you think God will train Moses?” he asked. “When He wants to use Moses, where do you think He will train him? Do you think He can train him inside Egypt? Moses got his training inside Egypt for 40 years, and now this is the time to throw him into the desert just to talk to him and teach him different things, and don't question God and don't ask Him, ‘Where's Moses?’ because, God has His own timing. He trains people in His own plans, and one day you will see.”

Then, he just turned to look at someone else, and went on with his sermon. It wasn't like he was prophesying, or like he was setting aside a specific time to minister to people in a personal one-to-one way. He was just preaching a regular sermon, and he looked at me, and gave these words to me from God, without pointing to me, or giving any indication to anyone that he was even aware God was speaking to me through him at that moment. He didn't say, “Nagy, the Lord is telling you this.” In fact, I believe most of those who heard him say these words didn't have a clue that this was a message from God directed to me. It was just part of the flow of what he was saying, and no one else would have thought anything about that. However, I knew those words were specifically for me, and this was a big confirmation for me — just to know God spoke to me through him. It was like God was telling me, through this pastor's words: “I heard your prayers, and I know your circumstances and I have My plan for your life.”

Later, when, once again, the immigration officials told me my case had been terminated, I fell upon my knees crying to the Lord, and I said, “For the third time now, they've sent me this letter, and every time I pray, and I told You, ‘God, You control everything.’ And, I know that You control everything, so when they send me letters asking for more papers, why don't they reach me? You could easily send one of Your angels to take the letter and ensure that I receive it. So, why didn't You do that? Why?”

I was so upset that I told God, “This is the end of this. I need to return Egypt.”

Then, the phone rang. I didn't want to take the call, because of my state

of mind. I was in the middle of having an argument with God. But, the phone kept on ringing. It was my friend, Pastor Nabil Abraham. We were serving the Lord together at that time. I finally took the call, and Nabil said, “Nagy, I am praying for you right now — at this very moment and you know what God is telling me? You are praying now, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I admitted, truly surprised that he had known I was praying at that very time.

“Well, God is telling me that you are praying to Him just now, and you are telling Him that you want to go back to Egypt. And, God is telling me that you are not going back to Egypt. He says, ‘I have you here until I finish with you. Then, you will go back to Egypt.’”

Now, I was stunned.

“God told me to call you and to confirm to you that you are in His plan and His work,” he said. That was a huge encouragement for me, and a very specific answer to prayer.

After that, I got another phone call — this time from Miriam Hellman, a godly minister I knew who has a gift of prophecy. She said, “Nagy, I know there is something wrong in your life. I don’t think that the U.S. is the right place you are to be. You have to go back to Egypt.”

“Why?” I asked. “Why do you say that?”

“It is not God’s plan to have a wife and child in one place, and the husband in another place. God doesn’t like to divide the family, and, you are sitting here, and your wife and child are there in Egypt. So, do you really think that this is God’s plan?”

For a few seconds, I felt like, well this woman has a gift of prophecy and maybe God is telling her to tell me it’s time to return to Egypt before I get my Green Card. I have been begging Him over and over to allow me to return to Egypt. So, I said, “Look, I’ve got one question for you.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“Did God ask you to tell me this, or is this from you?”

“No,” she said. “This is from me. That’s what I feel. I didn’t get a prophecy for you telling you to go back to Egypt.”

By this point, God had dealt with my resistance, and I was beginning to understand His viewpoint. “You know what God is telling me now? He is bringing to mind Moses. For a certain period of time, he, too, was separated from his wife and two children and he left his wife and his children with his father-in-law. Then, he went to Egypt to deliver God’s people, and after that was done, he was reunited with his father-in-law, his wife, and his children.

“So, I think God, when He wants to use Moses, and He promises someone He will use him like He used Moses, that means more than just doing miraculous things through that person’s ministry, like it was for Moses. He also means that this person has to endure the same kind of suffering as Moses endured, and, to be separated from his family.

I was learning, through God’s training, to step into the shoes He had for me; to learn to walk in faithfulness and obedience to the calling God had

given me, despite the pain and suffering I experienced from this long separation from my family. At the same time, God was at work, preparing the circumstances for my family to come to America.

In Egypt, we lacked nothing. But, if my wife and child had come with me to America when I had first arrived, facing all those challenges right away would have been so much harder. It would have been painful to see my wife and child suffering as new immigrants and experiencing culture shock. This way, I was able to prepare somewhat of a life for them, when they eventually obtained their visas and immigration status as residents.

More importantly, this period of my life laid the groundwork for a great harvest of spiritual fruitfulness later. It's always difficult to endure those times when God breaks new ground in our hearts, in preparation for a forthcoming greater yield in our ministries. But, this proved to be a priceless time in my life, when He shaped me into a minister of greater effectiveness, and eventually set me to work in the harvest field of Islam — a place in desperate need of the gospel.

We often say, “No God, I cannot endure this — it's too hard, and if You are God and You can do anything, why don't You do it right now? When You promise me, why don't You fulfill Your promise? You can do anything.” And, sometimes God answers us and tells us, “You need to learn how to be patient

— to be able to walk daily through My plan for you.” (Luke 9:23) He patiently listens to our complaints, knowing we cannot always see the long-term benefits of such godly training, and He reassures us in our times of doubt and despair, faithfully bringing us through these times of testing.

Right after my family came to the States, in February 1994, I hung a little poster I made on the kitchen wall in my little apartment, because the kitchen was the place we gathered together as a family the most often. This poster said, “Nagy, do not ever forget, in the midst of your needs, that you came to the USA for a purpose. Nagy, do not forget that you are in the USA for a purpose. Nagy, do not forget in your study that you are a missionary dentist, not a dentist missionary. I wrote my vision, my dreams and the promises of God to me, and I hung them on the wall, for as the Bible said in Habakkuk, “write the vision ...”

Editor's note: *I found this part of Nagy's story so compelling. What Nagy later went on to accomplish in his ministry, which you will read about in subsequent chapters, makes it so clear why God chose this man, among the many Egyptians who wanted to come to America at that time, to come to the U.S. God brought Nagy to the States in order to establish a ministry to Muslims. He chose Nagy precisely because he did not want to come to America.*

So many other decent and good men, who leave oppressive countries with a strong desire to live in a free country where they can practice their Christian faith unhindered by radical Islam, may find the enticements to a comfortable life here in the States to be extremely difficult to resist. If we American Christians struggle to remember the cross that Jesus asks us to daily bear in our willingness to live a life that

witnesses Christ in a world at enmity with God, imagine how much more difficult this is for those who have lived in countries where they have suffered for their faith.

Persecuted Christians arrive in the West, where they now have a choice to avoid so much unpleasantness where the money so easily made by hard-working immigrants in such a wealthy land can insulate and distract them from the very difficult work of evangelizing Muslims, or drug addicts, or other groups of people who need the gospel message.

Nagy did not want to come to America, precisely because of his love for Egypt and the ministry he already had to his own people. And, since his desires shared God's own desires for the Middle East, God could bring him to America knowing that Nagy would remain true to God's call despite the difficulties. God knew Nagy would be willing to sacrificially give so that Muslims would come to know the Lord. This is why I believe God brought an “unwilling” Nagy to the U.S. He could trust him to live in this wealthy country, and yet continue to be dedicated to the very difficult calling of witnessing the gospel to Muslims, which so many others have failed to do.

Prayer:

Dear God,

I may not always understand Your leading and Your individual and unique call upon my life, so help me Lord, to follow You and trust You as You seek to make my life more abundantly fruitful. Lord, when You ask me to give up things most precious to me, and to venture into places where I may suffer loneliness, stress and grief, strengthen me to remain faithful, and remind me of what an attentive and gentle Father You are to me. I thank You for all that You have done in my life, and I praise You for what You will continue to do as You bless me, Father God.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Seven

“Where are the Muslims?”

Then say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert. (Ex. 7:16a)

God had shown me His loving attention as My Father, yet I still did not find Muslims to evangelize. “Where are the Muslims?” I asked God. And, while I waited for an answer, now I had a new question. “And, God if You want to use me among Muslims, I have to know, in a greater depth, what the Koran teaches Muslims. I need to learn some things before I can minister to Muslims.”

I had a pretty good idea of what Muslims believe, because I had spent my life in an Islamic country. I had read many parts of the Koran. But, that level of familiarity with the Koran wasn’t enough to successfully author apologetic materials, or to answer the many questions Muslims have about Christianity. I needed to know more in order to reach them spiritually with the gospel. I needed to be better prepared.

“God, I have to know some of their teachings, and I’ve never read most of their religious books. I don’t know what to write for them so that they can be won to Christ.”

Then, God opened my eyes to a very important fact. In 1992, I did not find even one Bible study in Arabic written to Muslims by an Arabic Christian or

a Muslim convert to Christ. Muslims have so many questions, because they have been taught that Christians have corrupted the Bible. Many discrepancies exist between the biblical account of mankind, the Patriarchs and the life and death of Jesus, and the same subject matter as addressed in the writings of Mohammed. Few Christians know the best strategy for answering these questions, because they are not familiar with how much the truth of Jesus has been corrupted in Islamic writings.

We have hundreds of Bible studies written to non-Muslims, and to Christians, but at that time, there was very little gospel material written specifically for Muslims.

“See,” said the Lord, in answer to my query. “That’s exactly why I brought you here — so you could grasp this idea — and write a Bible study that answers their questions, and understands the way they think.”

I said, “God, if You want to use me in this way, then I need to know how they think; and I need to understand their questions. All those things mean that I need to read some of their books, and, most importantly, I need to have something like a concordance, or a commentary to Islamic writings. For example, if I’m looking for a verse in the Koran, I cannot read the entire Koran in order to find that one verse. I need a concordance. And, God, I don’t have the money right now to buy even the cheapest book. All of these books that I am dreaming to own would cost hundreds of dollars. So, God, I’m just waiting on You to do a miracle and find me these books.”

of course, I didn’t even realize that Muslims actually had a concordance for the Koran. I was just thinking how great it would be if I had some kind of equivalent to a Bible concordance, so that if I knew one word in a Koranic verse, I could find that verse quickly.

On the very same day, an acquaintance of mine — a young woman — came to me and said, “Nagy I got you a gift.” She wasn’t the kind of person to give gifts to someone like me. So, I started to laugh a little, and I said to myself, “What kind of gift can this woman be giving me?”

I asked her, “What gift?”

She said, “Come to the car with me.”

When we came to her car, she opened the trunk and there before me were all the reference materials and books on Islam that I had been dreaming of — books I had just prayed to God to receive. The trunk of the car was almost completely filled with books on Islam, and this was all the more amazing, because I knew this young woman had no connection with Islam or a ministry to reaching Muslims.

“How did you get these books?”

She told me the story. She worked with an American who was married to a Shiite Muslim from Lebanon. He had an extensive collection of Islamic reference materials, including a concordance, many commentaries, and numerous books, tapes and CDs. Then, they divorced and he moved out, leaving these materials behind. She wanted to make a new start, and figured it was time to clean house, so she asked my friend to help her put all these things

that she had already placed into the trunk of her car into the trash. When she opened the trunk, and my friend saw all these Muslim books, she said, “I know someone who would be very interested in having these things. Can I take them?”

“Sure,” the coworker replied. “I’m just going to throw them away any- way.”

As I considered this amazing miracle from God, I heard the Lord explain to me why He had asked me to come to America to reach Muslims. He said, “Now you can reach Muslims in the Middle East, from America, by writing Bible studies specifically designed for Muslims.” I understood at last God’s wisdom in moving me from Egypt to the States. If I were in Egypt, I would have been arrested as soon as the police realized I was researching Islamic books for the purpose of writing apologetic materials to Muslims. It would have been far too dangerous to produce these kinds of materials in Egypt.

With these materials in hand, and my studies in apologetics moving along, now was the time to begin the ministry to Muslims in Arabia in earnest. However, I soon discovered that my fellow expatriates did not exactly share my new enthusiasm for this task. Despite my efforts to mobilize many Middle Eastern Christians, and even American Christians of non-Middle Eastern descent, to evangelize Muslims, the majority of them in the early 1990s didn’t care about Islam or reaching Muslims. For the native Middle Eastern believers, it was because they had suffered a lot from Muslims, and the challenge of finding charitable compassion for Muslims was difficult for them. It’s hard enough to pray for your enemies, but evangelizing a people who would readily beat you, burn down your church, or even kill you is a big stretch for those who have suffered oppression from the Islamic majorities around them most of their lives.

For non-Middle Easterners in America, Islam was not on their minds in the early 1990s. Now, after 9 /11, the Muslim mindset has been publicized far and wide. Everyone is now trying to understand what motivates Islamic- inspired terrorism, as well as the war adherents to Islam have declared on the “infidels” of the West. In contrast to today, 15 years ago North Americans were still very much focused on evangelizing the literally billions of people living in China, and India and the surrounding nations adjacent to these population giants where Christianity had barely gained a foothold. These were the under-reached people groups Americans pictured in their minds, when talk moved to “reaching the world for Christ.” The Muslims were not at the forefront of their minds. Yet, everything has now changed.

I’m not saying it’s not vitally important to continue to evangelize all nations and all peoples. All I am saying is that evangelizing Muslims was not on the minds of many North Americans in the early 1990s.

For the Middle Eastern Christians who had found refuge in the States — they believed God had miraculously delivered them from their hate-filled Muslim oppressors. Why on earth would they want to go back and try to evangelize these people who had caused them to flee to the West in the first

place? This is why every time I brought up the subject of the need to evangelize Muslims, I found a great opposition from most of the Middle Eastern pastors and church leaders who had immigrated to the States.

And, it was also true that most had fallen victim to the same lie I had recently believed, too: We have 10 million Egyptian Christians in Egypt. We need to evangelize them first. Then, we can go to Muslims, and evangelize them, too. Now I realized this was a lie, as I said earlier.⁶

I confess that a great work of God is needed in the hearts and souls of Christians, to change their ingrained way of thinking, and their feelings about Muslims, so that they may come to feel deep compassion and love for the lost souls that are trapped by the spirit who empowers the deception behind Islam. It takes a work of God’s Spirit to change the heart of a Christian, and to give him a burning desire to share the gospel with Muslims.

There are several reasons for this. First, reaching Muslims for Christ is a very difficult task, because you are facing the giant of Islam, which is the spiritual power that lies behind Islam and empowers its deception. When you face this giant, your life will not be as easy as if you try and evangelize people who have always lived in a Christian culture, even though they are not born again. The wicked spirit of Islam is a spirit of bloodlust that has empowered deceived people to slaughter and enslave tens of millions of people for 14 centuries.

It’s true that souls for God are of the same value, and that there is always spiritual warfare involved in contending for the truth among the lost, who are being held captive by Satan and his deceptions — whether they live in a Christian, or Islamic culture. However, when you go to the house of the strongman of Islam, you need to go with the stronger one — Jesus just to be able to face this giant of Islam. This takes a level of consecration and commitment that Christians living in relative ease may be unaccustomed to pursuing.

The other thing that is difficult in working with Muslims is the need to work secretly. You cannot just walk into the streets of Egypt, or any Arabic country, and announce to people, “I’m working with Muslims.” You may not live very long, and the local authorities will most certainly stop you long before you hand out the last tract. This means that gospel workers reaching Muslims must be totally dedicated, scrupulously honest, full of wisdom, and able to hear the Lord’s voice warning, directing and protecting their work.

Then, one of the more discouraging aspects of gospel proclamation to Muslims is that, most of the time, you don’t see the kinds of results you see, for instance, among Christians. The reason for this is simple: The Muslims you witness to will not be gathered together in public meetings and sitting inside churches. You can’t just tally up the programs each month or year, and count the number of professions of faith, or the number of attendees at a Bible Study, and say, “Praise God, look at how much ministry has been accomplished!” You can more readily see how God is moving among people

⁶ See Chapter Five.

in churches, because they are all conveniently gathered together and easy to count.

In contrast, most of the time, working among Muslims, either through distributing publications, or by meetings, usually occurs through a one-on-one situation, because of the need for secrecy.

Another challenge is that Muslims usually strongly oppose what you say, whereas Christians are more agreeable with the basic biblical viewpoint, even though they may debate a particular theological viewpoint, because of the diversity of views that exist within Christian denominations. However, even when they disagree with your theology, Christians will not report you to the police. In contrast, most of the Muslims we try to reach with gospel materials could easily report us to the police in the Arabic countries, if they had the inclination to do so, and some do. This has caused us a lot of trouble with the authorities.

Working among Muslims is very time-consuming. With Christians, you can just explain the facts that most of them have already heard many times in the church. But, when you work with Muslims, they have endless questions. Plus, because of the danger in witnessing to Muslims, you have to have a special arrangement to contact a Muslim seeker each time he wants to know more about Christianity. Arranging for these secret meetings also takes time.

Perhaps the biggest issue is financial. I've said that working among Muslims is a lose / lose situation, from a financial viewpoint. The reason is simple. When you write a book directed to Christians, they usually give you money for a book, and most of the time, you can at least cover the cost of producing the book. But, when you write to Muslims, you have to put a lot of time into study and research, just to write the book, and then you have to pay for printing it. After that, you have to distribute it secretly, and of course you cannot sell it, or tell people you are selling a book that intends to convince Muslims to become Christians, or attempts to expose the spirit behind Islam. This is illegal in Islamic countries. You cannot even put your name on the book. All this means you have to find resources to produce this book, as your target reader will not be able to pay for the cost of receiving it. You will not make anything from this book. Instead, you will pay a lot of money just to be able to give this book away. You may even pay a personal cost of being arrested or persecuted.

As a result of all these factors, the brothers and sisters who actually work among Muslims are very, very few. And, the ones who do have been changed by God from the inside to love Muslims; to think about Muslims' need for salvation; and to hear the voice of God calling the Church to share the gospel with Muslims. As for me, I know that God has called me and has equipped me to minister to Muslims.

I was sleeping one night it was in 1992 at a friend's house. He's a Christian musician. And, we were just talking about music and songs, and praise and worship. We didn't mention Islam or Muslims, or the need to reach Muslims even once. I wasn't thinking about reaching Muslims that night.

I had just turned off the light, and as I laid down on the bed, I felt some-

thing like a hand that grabbed me from the back of my head. And, this hand pulled me up to a sitting position, and then a voice said: “I will give you authority over Muslims and over Islam. Without using many words, you will reach them and you will see thousands of Muslims coming to Christ.” Since that night, I have had this strong call from God to reach Muslims. It is my commission.

Usually when God gives me a vision, or a word like this, I ask the Lord if I can test it. I say, “Can You do something for me so that I can just taste what You are telling me will happen?” Three days after this hand touched me, I went back to my friend’s house again, and I found my friend was entertaining a married couple: A Christian woman and a Muslim man.

My friend had invited this couple over so he could speak to this Muslim man about Christianity. When the woman had married this Muslim, she had not yet become a Christian. Now she knew Christ and had accepted Him, and she was praying that her husband would also come to know Christ.

Another pastor had also been invited to speak to this man. I didn’t know this meeting had been arranged, and when I arrived I saw these people there, and this Muslim — he seemed like a lion talking to them with all his power and authority and he was shouting at everyone there. He said, “You know what? No one can convince me that Christ is the Son of God. All of what you are saying is nonsense! There is no redemption and no redeemer and I’m not a sinner. I don’t need anyone to redeem me. He was so aggressive with them.

While I was watching them contend with the spirit of Islam that had taken this man captive, I prayed to God. “Lord, You told me three days ago that You would give me authority to contend for the gospel with Muslims, and I want to taste what You have said.” Then, I looked at this man and I said to him, “Just wait a minute. Don’t tell me that you don’t have redemption in your Koran. If you’re not a sinner, then why does the Koran talk about redemption?”

He looked at me in anger, and retorted: “No, no, no. The Koran never talked about redemption!”

“Well, I think I know more about the Koran than you do. Look at the story of Abraham, in the Koran, when God told him to sacrifice his son.⁷ When God commanded Abraham to offer his son, as Mohammed claimed, God didn’t say, ‘Go Abraham and take your son and go home, because you are a righteous man not in need of redemption.’ Instead, He told him, ‘I have to redeem your son with a great lamb.’ And, the main point here is the word, ‘great.’ You know that Great is one of the beautiful names of God according to the teachings of Islam, and in fact, it is one of the most important names of God in Islam, because you say, “God is Great” — “Allah Akbar,” and “Allah Azim,” which also means mighty or great. So, tell me why God described this lamb as

⁷ The Koran does not name the son Abraham was to sacrifice, but Muslims believe it was Ishmael, not Isaac.

great? This is one of the names of God. Why did God give this lamb the name great? I don't think He was talking about the lamb, because among lambs, there is no lamb greater than another lamb. But, when God told Abraham that 'I will redeem him with a great lamb,' and gave this lamb one of the names of God, He was speaking of something else other than the lamb. He was talking about Christ."

When I told him these things, this "lion" just collapsed, and exhaled a long sigh. And, he looked at me and said, "This is the first time I have understood that redemption was in the Koran, and that there is something called redemption. This is the first time I have ever understood this fact."

Then, the others in the room tried to ask him questions about Islam and Christianity, and every time they did, he pointed to me, and said, "Ask him, because it seems he knows more about Islam than I do." And, then we prayed, and he was transformed. He did not accept Christ on this night, but his entire demeanor changed. It was very strange, because, after he had previously been so aggressive, he immediately fell into a drowsy state and he even started to snore!

Over the years, I have seen this many times. When you talk to Muslims about Christ and explain redemption to them, it's like the spirit of Islam forces them into an immediate slumber. However, this man's change of demeanor was so amazing to me. As a dentist who is familiar with human physiology, I know that when someone is angry, aggressive, and agitated, his body is producing adrenaline that affects his entire system. In this situation, usually a person cannot quickly go into a state of slumber when there are all these hormones pouring into his bloodstream that signal a "fight or flight" response. The body is geared up to fight, not to sleep! That's why all of us present that day considered this man's slumber must have had a spiritual cause. We looked at each other in wonderment of how, in just a few seconds, this man could go from being an aggressive, shouting lion, to a snoring baby! We concluded that this was the spirit of Islam, and we prayed against this spirit, and thanked God that, at least on that day, this Muslim had heard the message of redemption.

As I said earlier, working with Muslims is difficult, dangerous and demanding work, which requires a solid, trustworthy team of committed believers, called by God, to this awesome task. So the handful of us who had been called to this task in America put our efforts toward establishing a non-profit organization to reach Muslims. The needs are huge for writing and publishing printed materials; and, recording audio and video programs and distributing these on tapes, and even broadcasting them on radio and television channels. We had big dreams and we wanted to create a legal and systematic way to do these things. Again, God's wisdom was apparent in His calling to place me in America, because here it was possible to do all these things from this haven of freedom — things that, otherwise, would have proved impossible to do in the Middle East.

God gave us a name — The last Harvest — as He spoke to us about the fact

that we are in the last days of gospel proclamation before Jesus returns for His church. All of us who began The Last Harvest believe that Islam is the last great stronghold that Christians will meet in these last days, and before Christ returns, Islam will be vanquished from the earth. As God has dealt, and continues to deal with the false man-exalting religion of Communism, so He will expose Islam and the spirit behind it as well.

I rarely depend upon the current news or political analysis of what is happening around the world in order to understand what is actually transpiring in the spiritual realm. Instead, I depend foremost upon what God says. Anyone can see that Islam is the last stronghold in this world, but it had a very strong impact upon me when God spoke to me about this and said: ‘Nagy, Islam is the last stronghold in the world. And, this stronghold cannot be overcome by politics or military plans, or anything other than spiritual warfare.’

It was also in 1992 that God first began to talk to me about the eventual end of Islam and this revelation changed my life. This occurred on the 22ⁿ of February. The 21st was my birthday. At this point, I was here in the States, and my wife and son were still in Egypt. I was really in the doldrums. It was my birthday, and yet I was so far away from my family and I missed them terribly. My friends in the States decided to throw me a birthday party, because they knew I was missing my wife and son, and they cherished me so much! So many came with so many presents and it was a good night. The next morning, during my prayer time with God, I told the Lord, “Yesterday, everyone gave me so many nice gifts, and I appreciate this so much, but, Lord, I need a gift from You.”

I don’t know why I said this, but I heard a voice asking me, “What do you need?” To be honest, I did not have an answer ready, because I didn’t expect a response like this. Then, in just a few seconds, my mind raced as I thought of what gift I should ask God to receive. Ten things popped into my mind, and at the top of the list was a visa for both my wife and son, because they had applied many times for one in vain.

“Lord, if You can bring my wife and child here, that would be great.” Then, I said, “No, no, no. God, this is not the most important thing I need. If You can use me in the ministry and give me souls — this I would appreciate so much.” It’s interesting how God reveals the deep places in our hearts to ourselves at certain times, isn’t it? However, this wasn’t what I really wanted, either. It was not the most important gift at that moment. Then, I said, “God, I didn’t tell any of those who came yesterday and gave me gifts — I didn’t tell them what kind of gift I wanted. Everyone gave me a gift according to his or her own will. So, Lord, I need a big gift, as big as You. You know that I need my wife to come and You know that I want You to use me in the ministry, and that I so much look forward to seeing souls saved, and all these other things that have flashed through my mind. But, God what I really need is a gift as big as You.”

And, I felt like God brought a verse to me: “To know Him and the power

of His resurrection.” God said this was His gift to me.

“Is this the biggest gift You can give me? I have read this verse many times, and I know it by heart, so how can this be a gift?”

“You asked for something big as big as Me. And, I made My word great, as great as Me. So I give you the greatest thing.”

Then, I began to realize that there is something in this verse for me, and I asked myself, “Why did God give me this verse? He must have something to show me in this verse.” So I told Him that I accepted this gift. And, I said, “Thank You so much. I know this is the greatest gift You can give me, so let us unwrap this gift, because I do not understand what You mean by this.”

I told Him the first thing I needed to know about this verse was the first three words He had given me: to know Him. “Lord, I want to know You. I want to know what is in Your mind that others do not know, and this will be my gift.” And, God is my witness, at the same moment I said this, He took me in the spirit to see the Black Stone in Saudi Arabia. Then, he showed me that many Muslims were there, circling the Black Stone, defending the Black Stone and waiting for a battle to commence. There were also many Christians in this place, and they were holding only palm tree leaves, and raising their hands and listening to a voice that told them, “Don’t fight when you go inside the mosque. Don’t fight. Just raise the palm tree leaves and shout, ‘Hosanna, blessed be the One who comes in the name of the Lord.’ And, see that this is all you need to do.”

Then, I looked at these Christians and I saw they were from many different Arabic countries. I could tell this by the style of their clothing. I could see Egyptians, and people from the Gulf countries and all these different Arabic nations. I saw them coming into the mosque of the Black Stone, and they raised their palm tree leaves and they started to shout, “Hosanna, blessed be the One who comes in the Name of the Lord.” Then, the Muslims began to fight each other, and to kill each other. The Lord showed me a big wave of water, which came and took the Black Stone and moved it. And, for the first time in my life, the Lord started to give me words to write, word by word. And, He said, “The day will come when I will move the Black Stone, and it will disappear from the earth, and this place will be for the glory of the Lord. And, praise and worship will be raised to God from this place.” And, the last word that God gave me was, “I will take you there and you will see this with your own eyes.”

When I heard these last words, I felt like I had been frozen in my place.

After this, I felt something like a wave of air — like a tornado was encircling me — and when it left, then I realized I was still sitting on the same couch in the same place. I went back in my mind to retrieve all the parts of this vision, and the Lord said that a day would come when this Black Stone will disappear and will no longer serve as the idol of Islam.

For the next several days, I was consumed with this vision thinking about it and talking to the Lord about it. I was so energized now to love Muslims more and more, especially now that I understood in whatever I do, God

will use me to change the Middle East and to move the stone of Islam. The next Sunday, with this vision still heavy upon me, I was sitting in my church in Anaheim, Calif., and God spoke to my heart and said to share this vision with the people in the church. I thought they would not think me sensible if I shared this vision, and I didn't want to interrupt the service to tell people that I had seen a vision or, had had this dream to minister to Muslims. No one was talking about Muslims that day in church.

“I want you to share what I gave you to these people,” the Lord told me.

At what seemed to me to be a suitable point in the meeting, I spoke, and I told the people that God had given me a vision a few days ago. I said: “Please, after the meeting, don't ask me any questions about this vision. Don't ask me how or when or any questions, because, to be honest, I didn't even want to share this vision with you, but I feel that God is insisting right now that I have to share this with you.”

Then, I described the vision, and I said that the most amazing part to me was when God said I would see this with my own eyes. After I finished speaking, I sat down, and then, after the meeting, this couple, a husband and wife who had lived in Saudi Arabia for 16 years, came up to me. “We respect that you don't want anyone to talk to you about this vision. But, God told us to come and talk to you anyway.”

“Well, if God told you to come and talk to me, what do you want to tell me?”

The woman said, “The day before we had to leave Saudi Arabia, we had a secret prayer meeting, and it was like heaven on earth. The doors of heaven were open and we experienced the presence of God and, then, God gave this same vision He gave you to two of the group at the same time. The last word the Lord spoke to them was, ‘I will keep you here and you will see this with your own eyes.’ The very next day, the government discovered we had had this prayer meeting, and we had to leave Saudi Arabia immediately in order to avoid being arrested. The only two people who didn't leave the country were the two people who had had this vision. God told them, “I will keep you here and you will see this with your own eyes.” The government was running after everyone who attended that prayer meeting, except these two people who had received this vision. That's why they were able to stay in the country. And, to this day, the government has never discovered these two people were at this meeting. All the rest of us left, and we are waiting to see this happen in Islam.”

I later told this story to the Christians in Egypt, when I made a trip back to my home country. While I was preaching in a church meeting there, the police were standing outside the meeting I think there were maybe five officers and soldiers there. I began to tell the church the story of the vision and of the Black Stone, and about the prophecy I received predicting the end of Islam. Now, in Egypt, you cannot stand in the pulpit and talk about how God the Father of Jesus Christ will remove the Black Stone of Islam, and that Islam will one day be finished. It means you will soon be finished! In reality,

it means you are likely to be arrested and vanish within the gulag of Egypt's prisons. I believed, however, that God wanted me to speak about this vision, and when I began to tell my testimony, virtually every member in the church just froze in fear, because they knew that secret police were probably right there, sitting in the pews, listening to every word I was saying. Even if they were not there during that particular service, I was using a microphone, and people passing by the outside of the church may have overheard my testimony. But, this is what I was led to do, so I said it. And, no one from the police later came to ask me any questions, or to say, “Why did you say that?”

After this, pastors began to call me, and they came to visit me in Egypt, and they were all asking about this vision. It had an amazing effect upon them, and they were motivated to pray against the spirit of Islam, and for the first time, they began to think about reaching Muslims with the gospel. The dream of a day when the Black Stone of Islam will be moved from its place had a huge impact on everyone in the churches that heard the story of my vision.

Five years later, in 1997, I was in Duarte, Calif., a city three miles east of Pasadena, and one of my church members called me, while she was at the hospital to have surgery. She had been watching television. And, she heard a pastor speak prophetically about how God had told him that the Lord had brought Middle Eastern Christians from different countries in the region to America in order to prepare them to go back to the Middle East, and to change it. Then, he began to talk about the end of Islam, and the moving of the Black Stone, and he repeated almost the exact same vision God had given me the day after my birthday. This sister told me, shouting with excitement, “Turn on the television and see what this prophet is saying about the vision God gave you five years ago!”

I believe the Black Stone will be removed from Mecca, and not only the physical Black Stone, but also the spiritual Black Stone of Islam, which has controlled the Middle East for centuries. It will be removed one day. And, the Bible says in Isaiah 19 that the Egyptians will know the Lord, and the Lord will be known in Egypt. And, as God used Egypt to feed all the surrounding countries, He is telling us that Egypt will spiritually feed all these countries. He will distribute His Word everywhere.

Anyone who is watching what is going on in the Middle East now can see that the Black Stone is starting to move big time, because Muslims are fighting each other as never before. They are fighting by swords and by different teachings of the Koran, and these false teachings are now being exposed in the Middle East as in no other time before in the history of Islam.

And, I believe not only the spiritual Black Stone, but also the physical Black Stone will be removed from the world, and the Lord will be glorified in the Middle East.

Prayer:

Dear God,

We pray that You will show Your great mercy to the sons of Ishmael who have lived under the captivity of the spirit of Islam for so many centuries, and that You will set the captives free across the many lands of the Middle East. We thank You that You are stirring the spirits of many believers in many places to have a fervent love of Muslims, and to undertake the risky work of sharing the gospel with them. Lord, please convict me to pray for and love the Muslims, and to commit myself to this task, because Your promises will soon come to pass, and Jesus Christ will reign, and no idol will stand in that day in the Middle East.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Eight

The Vision of the highway

A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." (Isaiah 40:3)

This vision of the Black Stone brought with it a power that convicted many pastors and believers in the Middle East, and also in America, to intercede for Muslims. It reminds us that one day, no idol will stand, (". . . *The idols of Egypt will tremble before him . . .* " Isaiah 19:1), and people across the Middle East will give praise and honor and glory to Jesus.

Later, after I founded The Last Harvest organization and began the ministry to Muslims in earnest, the Lord gave me another vision. He began to give me understanding regarding something the scriptures speak of many times, and that is the "highway." I had previously read Isaiah 19 many times. This is one of my favorite passages in Isaiah, because God talks about what will eventually happen to Egypt: that there will be a highway between Egypt, Assyria and Israel, and that these three countries will worship together the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In all the times I had read this passage before, I had never thought that I, personally, would have anything to do with this highway. My theology was when Christ returns at the end of the days, He will make this highway, and

this highway is not just a physical highway, but it is also a spiritual highway between Egypt, Assyria, and Israel. It's obvious that Assyria and Egypt are the two prominent enemies of Israel today. What is not so obvious in a cursory reading of this passage is that the boundaries of the ancient Assyrian empire included parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, in which dwell many enemies of Israel today. This is the same area that this scripture says will have a highway connecting Egypt to Assyria through Israel. (Geographically one must past through Israel to get to Assyria from Egypt.)

When you look at a map today, these are all Islamic countries, and all are a continuing source of great animosity against Israel. This is particularly so in the case of Iran, because her leaders issue pronouncements, virtually every few hours, saying evil things like they want to wipe Israel from the face of the world, or that Muslims hate Israel with all their hearts. Even in Egypt, despite the Camp David Peace Accord, government-condoned media publicly agitates Egyptians against Israel. If you are an Egyptian, and they find out you know someone in Israel, or that you have some kind of connection to Israel, this is the easiest crime you can commit in Egypt. They can accept you speaking anything against anyone in Egypt, but never, ever mention the word Israel. Despite all the world's efforts to make peace, this animosity between Israel, Assyria, and Egypt continues unabated today in the Middle East.

I had never before considered that we, as believers in these days, would have anything to do with this highway. All the previous times that I had read this passage, I had never before thought about this. Now, the Lord was telling me, "Read carefully, because someone will build this highway." In Isaiah 40:3, the prophet speaks of one who will prepare this highway: "*In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a high way for our God.*" And, the Lord asked me, "Who will prepare this highway? Will it be Christ, when He comes, or, will it be My people?" And, when I thought about it, I reasoned that God was saying to us that we are to prepare this highway. Then, He began to speak to me about the need to remove the stones on this highway, and about the many stones that are in the Middle East, which are preventing the highway from being prepared today.

God was describing to me a spiritual highway — a spiritual movement and a spiritual knowing of Christ — and I began to realize that God was telling me I would have something to do with preparing this highway between Egypt, Israel and Assyria. However, as I said earlier, any talk of Israel, or interacting with Israel in any way, is one of the most difficult tasks that an Egyptian or any Middle Easterner can face, because it's so easy to accuse us of being Zionists. This accusation inevitably brings trouble from the governmental authorities in this region of the world.

As I was thinking about this, and the implications of speaking about such a vision, I told God, "I'm ready to do whatever You want, but why don't You give this vision of the highway to one of the prominent television pastors — one of the big shots — someone who has influence over thousands and thou- sands of people who will follow them and do what they ask of them, even

if they do not understand what they are being asked to do?” Then, I named some well-known televangelists, and said, ‘Why don’t you give this vision to this man, or this woman? If he or she begins to tell everyone that we are going to prepare this highway, then lots of people will donate money, and everyone will work hard to build this highway. So why me?’”

“First of all,” said the Lord Jesus, in answer to my questions, “It’s not only you. I have given this vision to many people inside every country of this highway. Secondly, when I came the first time, someone came before Me and prepared the highway so that people would receive Me. The one who came before Me the first time was, in the eyes of the people, a strange prophet, who lived in the wilderness and didn’t eat regular food, but instead ate locusts and honey. And, he wore strange clothes made of camel skin. In the eyes of the priests and Levites, they expected someone important — not someone unknown — not a man no one knew, who was weird in the eyes of these people. But, he was the one who came before Me, and he prepared the highway, and he also told everyone who believed to also prepare the highway of the Lord. And, before My second coming, there will be a corporate body of Christians who are not famous or well known, but these Christians will shout before My return to prepare the highway.”

These things encouraged me so much, and I told the Lord, “Whatever You want me to do, I will do it.” Then, He said that I should study the scriptures about the highway and understand the steps involved in preparing this highway. In doing so, I discovered that the first step in preparing this high- way is to pass through the gates.

Before, even though I had read these passages, I had not grasped with understanding the significance of this highway and what it meant to prepare the highway. So, I asked God, “What do you mean by these gates? Which gates?” Then, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, I began to see that in every city and every country in the Middle East there are gates through which I needed to pass in order to begin to prepare the highway in these countries.

And, God told me that when I go to these countries, I would meet with the spiritual elders of these countries and cities. And, some of these elders have also been given this same vision of preparing the highway, but they did not know how to begin this work, because no one, as yet, had come to them to talk about this vision. So, I understood that I was to pass through the gates of these countries in order to share this vision.

The Lord also revealed to me something else about these spiritual gates: There are demonic spirits who work to control the gates to these places in a spiritual sense. He said there would be opposition to my attempt to pass through these gates and make connections with the elders in these countries. Passing through these gates was a strategic move of God that Satan would oppose. God warned me that I would find opposition, because the enemy knows that I would be coming to pass through these gates, and in doing so, I would be taking steps toward preparing this highway in anticipation of the return of Christ. The enemy will try his best to prevent us from doing this,

and the Lord was telling me that much prayer was needed in order to pass through these gates, and that I should not be surprised at the opposition.

So, I said "God, Please allow me to pass through the gates. I don't know anyone in these Middle Eastern countries other than in Egypt. I've never been to Algeria or Tunisia, or these other places. So, how can I pass through the gates if I don't know anyone? Do you want me to just get a ticket and go somewhere? What am I supposed to do?"

God told me that how this will happen is not my business. I am just to be ready to obey when He opens the gates to me. "You will meet the leaders of these countries — those who have this vision. I will allow you to connect with them." This is what He told me, so I waited upon the Lord.

Suddenly, on a day sometime around late 1997 or early 1998, when I was not thinking about the highway, my friend David Demian called me from Canada. He was also interested in this vision of the highway. As soon as he said, "Hello, Nagy," I heard the Lord telling me that David was calling to tell me about a conference, and I was to go to this conference.

So, without waiting for him to tell me anything else, I said, "Hi David. How are you? And yes, I will go with you to the conference."

"Which conference?" He had not yet said anything to me except, "Hello, Nagy"

"David, you are calling me to tell me about a conference and asking me to come. Isn't that right?"

"Did I talk to you about this before?"

"Then, how did you know that I was calling to ask you to come with me to this conference?"

"The same One who asked you to call me, just now told me that you are calling me to ask me to go to a conference. Isn't that right?"

"That's amazing, Nagy! Because, you are right."

"OK, I'm coming. Why don't you give me the information so that I know where the conference will be held and how much it will cost? I don't care where it is, or how much it will cost, because I know God wants me to go."

To make the long story short, the conference was to be held in Antioch, Turkey. As I thought about that, I realized the church began in Antioch, because the first believers were in Jerusalem, after the Day of Pentecost, and due to subsequent persecution, they fled to Antioch, where, along with Gentile believers, they were first called Christians. From Antioch, these Christians spread out all over the world and preached the gospel everywhere.

I believe that the gospel is now coming back to this same area: the Middle East. This conference was in Antioch, and the theme of the conference was "Prepare the Highway." It was at this conference in the spring of 1998 that I found most the leaders of the Arabic countries and, even my Israeli brothers in Jesus, and also those from Assyria, including other countries that long ago were part of the Assyrian empire. Over the days of the conference, we talked together and shared our vision, and I told them

how God had asked me to come, and how He wants me to pass through the gates of these Middle Eastern countries. I also told them that one of the things God had impressed upon me was to take praise and worship leaders with me and to go to these countries and fill the atmosphere of these countries with praise and worship. Then, God said: “I will change these places spiritually and I will build this highway.” (2 Chronicles 20:21-22)

In this way, through this conference God led me to attend, in less than 48 hours I came to have contacts in every Arabic country! Many leaders invited me to come and pass through their countries’ gates. After this, I was sure that God wanted to take me to all these different countries and to pass through the gates.

Later, I wrote a summation of what I came to understand about this highway spoken of in scripture:

This highway speaks of the spiritual connection between Egypt, the former Assyrian Empire and Israel. In Isaiah 19:23-25, we read, *“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.’”*

Many American and Western countries are ready to help Israel by all means, because they consider that Arabs are the enemies of Israel, and they must help Israel to survive. However, sometimes they forget that born-again believers of Arabic descent are not Israel’s enemies. These Arabic believers are working to build the highway in the Middle East. The Bible tells us that Israel will be the third along with Egypt and Assyria. God has a plan, and He knows the arrangement of the necessary steps for preparing the highway.

If God were talking merely in geographical terms about the highway, He would mention Egypt, then Israel, then Assyria; or Assyria, then Israel, and then Egypt. But, since He said Egypt, then Assyria, then Israel — and He even specifically mentions that Israel will be the third — not the first, or the second

— believers need to understand that there will be no peace for Jerusalem, and no blessings for Israel, until He changes Egypt first and, then, Assyria. When these two giants are changed spiritually, and know Christ, Israel will automatically have peace and will be a blessing on the earth.

This highway will be:

1. A highway of ***Witness:*** to the Almighty God who can do any- thing, even to unite Egypt, Israel and Assyria — the three historical enemies — together. Isaiah (19: 19-20a) *“In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Al- mighty in the land of Egypt”*

2. A highway of ***Deliverance***: *“When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them.” (Isaiah (19:20b)*

3. A highway of ***Knowledge***: Through God’s power, Middle Easterners and Muslims who have been spiritually ignorant for so long will know and acknowledge Jesus as the Almighty God. *“So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. “ (Isaiah 19:21a)*

4. A highway of ***Sacrifice and offering***: People in Islam and the Middle East who have never believed in redemption and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ — *“They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. “ (Isaiah 19:21b).*

5. A highway of ***Healing***: The Muslims and the people of the Middle East who seek healing through psychic and Muslim mediators will acknowledge Jesus as the healer. *“The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. “(Isaiah 19:22)*

6. A highway of ***Relationship and unity***: *“In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. “ (Isaiah 19:24)*

7. A highway of ***Blessing***: *“...a blessing on the earth. The LORD Al- mighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance. ‘(Isaiah 19:24b-25)*

Four steps to preparing the highway:

The four steps mentioned in the Bible to prepare the highway are:

1. Passing through the gates, which includes:

A. Both individuals and groups traveling under the Lord’s leading to different countries of the highway (Assyrian Empire, Egypt, and Israel).

B. Making contact with the Christian spiritual leaders of these countries.

- C. Discussing the countries' spiritual needs, as understood by the leaders, and evaluating those projects that will contribute to building the highway.
- D. Holding conferences to teach leaders how to intercede, and to praise and worship in these different countries so as to break the spirit of fear and depression. Also, to teach and disciple Christians and Muslim-background converts to Christianity.
- E. Training these countries' leaders on how to spiritually discern the keys that will lead these countries to fulfill the vision of the highway.

2. Remove the stones. These seven stones are:

- A. *The stone of the needs:* Existing churches in the different Islamic countries need support to maintain fulltime pastors and to rent facilities in which to meet. There is also a need to support church planting in order to accommodate new Muslim converts to Christianity, who must, for the most part, meet in underground churches. There is a need for Bibles and Christian materials, including audio and videotapes, and magazines for children and adults.
- B. *The stone of ignorance:* Most of the Christians in the closed countries are not adequately educated in systematic theology, and are biblically illiterate, since they do not have pastors and Christian materials, including Bibles.
- C. *The stone of apostasy:* The pastors and the leaders in the closed countries need encouragement to remain faithful to practicing their faith with integrity to the biblical model and to evangelizing others and training them to continue the work of the Church. There is a need for evangelistic tools and indigenous missionaries from Middle Eastern cultures.
- D. *The stone of mistrust:* There is a wall of mistrust between Muslim background converts and believers who come from a Christian background that arises from social and historical factors. Bible study and practical teaching in how to live the Christian life is needed in order to build trust among these brothers.
- E. *The stone of fear:* The spirit of fear and depression usually attacks new converts and those who work among them. This spirit of fear includes: Fear of government officials and police; fear and worry about the future; fear for families and homes; and, fear of persecution. There is a need for special funds to help converts in case of emergencies

arising from persecution, so that they can receive legal, housing and financial assistance, as well as help to support relatives left destitute when a breadwinner is arrested and put into prison.

- A. *The stone of the spiritual control:* All of the Arabic and Islamic countries suffer oppression and deception under the spirit of Islam. Some of these countries also suffer from other principalities, like the spirit of Pharos in Egypt, and the spirit of Babylonia in Assyria. These principalities spurred human leaders — like the Pharaoh who opposed Moses and King Nebuchadnezzar — to afflict and oppress God’s people. These same principalities are behind the imprisonment and torture of Muslim converts to Christianity today. Believers will overcome the power of these spirits to oppress those seeking the Lord when the churches are encouraged to praise and worship in these countries, and through sound biblical teachings that teach trust in God’s power to deliver them.
- B. *The Stone of Islam:* Muslims imitate all the outreach and educational methods used by Christians in these days. They conduct Islamic evangelistic conferences, print Islamic literature and books, produce Islamic TV and radio programs, support Islamic missionaries all over the world, and create plans and programs in order to Islamize the world. The churches need to support these same kinds of activities in the Middle East through sacrificial giving and prayer, and by being united together for the love of the brethren.

3. Preparing the highway:

- A. Obtain an in-depth spiritual understanding of the highway and all of its spiritual significance; the historical opposition to God along this highway; and, the cultural impediments to receiving this gospel in this area of the world. Then, pray over each one of these obstacles.
- B. Remove all the “stones” mentioned above. Each one of these stones is a potential stumbling block that prevents Muslims from understanding the gospel message. Removing these stones is a powerful witness to Christian love and the power of God to provide for and deliver His people.
- C. Excavate the highway, and expose traditions and false teachings within the Middle Eastern churches, and then lay down a new, biblically sound base for the highway by promoting solid Bible teaching among Christians.
- D. Declare the glory and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ through the

exercise of signs and wonders given by the grace of God to those who humbly and faithfully believe in God’s power to do miracles among Muslims, and among Middle Eastern churches.

4. Building the highway: Building up the highway will occur through Bible teaching and the practicing of the spiritual gifts in biblical ways exercised by anointed, godly leaders in conferences; through Christian literature and broadcasts; and, by creating Bible schools to train and ordain indigenous believers — both men and women — to spread the gospel among their own people.

As God took me onto the first step of passing through the gates of these countries, I can truly say that my adventures for the Lord had now begun in earnest.

Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the Lord of the nations! And, you have called us, through the voice of the prophet, John the Baptist, to prepare a highway, by removing the stones of misunderstanding, deception and false witness among the Muslim countries. Convict me to study Your word intently in these Last Days, just as the faithful among God's people of Jesus' day searched the scriptures and, as a result, recognized the coming of their Lord and savior. (Luke 2:29 —32, Mark 12:24) Help me both to know the scriptures and the power of God in my life. Help me build a highway so that others will receive the Lord.

Amen

My Thoughts:

Chapter Nine

Bullets of love

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

It was New Year's Eve 1994, and I was serving the Lord with Pastor Nabil Abraham at the Christian Arabic Church in Anaheim. The whole church came before the Lord, fasting and praying on the last week of the year, as we sought God's leading for the upcoming year. I, too, was fasting and praying, and I asked God, "What do you want me to do in the next year?"

I was sharing with Him all the many projects — from my point of view — that I thought the ministry should do, and I asked the Lord, "You just choose one or two from these things."

Then, God asked me a question. "Do you want to do what you think is good, or do you want to do what I want you to do?"

"Lord, I'm fasting and praying in order to seek your leading on what you want me to do."

"I want you to do a radio program for Me, and you will address Muslims and answer their questions.

"Lord, you know a radio program means equipment — lots of expensive equipment. It also means a studio, and many other things, too, and I don't have the money for any of these."

"If you are willing," He told me, "I will send you all that you need."

So, I told Him, "I've been studying for almost two years now about Islam, and I've been writing Bible studies and studying intently on how to respond to Muslims' questions about Christ. Why not record these things on audio-tapes and broadcast them in radio programs? I want to do this."

That night, I, along with the other four leaders in the church, were scheduled to share with the congregation what the Lord had placed upon our hearts to do in ministry over the next year.

Three members spoke before me, and Pastor Nabil was to follow me. The three leaders all talked of good and worthy ministry activities for the following year. When it came my turn to speak, I thought to myself, "How can I tell these people we need to start a radio program? This is not an easy thing to do. They will not accept an idea like this."

Then, I stood up and said, "You know what? You may hear me say something astonishing, and you may think, 'we cannot do this,' but I am telling you what the Lord told me He wants us to do this coming year. We need to begin a radio ministry to Muslims in Southern California. I know that we need tons of money to do this — money for equipment to record, edit and produce these programs, as well as obtaining airtime — we need many things. But, that's what the Lord told me."

Then, Pastor Nabil began to speak, and he said, "The Lord told me the same thing: we need to have a radio program."

At this point, the elders of the church gathered together to discuss how this might possibly be done. One said, "We have a brother who is talented in music and audio recording and production. Maybe he can help us."

Then, Pastor Nabil agreed to contact the radio station that was already running one Arabic secular program on the air daily from five to seven in the evening. I told him to ask for a spot from seven to seven-thirty in the evening, because 99 percent of the Arabs who live in Southern California listen to this secular program. "If we have our program scheduled to run right after this one, many will stay tuned to the station, and this will increase our listeners and make our job of promoting this program easier, I said.

Then, one of the church members spoke up and said, "Nagy, you are speaking with such confidence that you will indeed have this program, and you will have the equipment and, to top it off, you will also get this spot from seven to seven-thirty. You talk like the station has already reserved this hour after the Arabic show just to give it to you. Aren't you presuming a lot here?"

"Well," I responded, "If this idea is from the Lord, then He can easily provide the equipment and the time slot we need."

When we contacted the station, they wanted to give us one hour from seven to eight o'clock on Wednesdays. Even though we were looking for a half-hour spot, they said taking the whole hour would be cheaper than taking just a half-hour. So, I told him, "We'll take it!"

I came up with the idea to call other churches and tell them that we now

had this spot, and to invite them to join us and do their own Arabic program. In this way, local churches, too, could reach Arabs in Southern California.

We had already begun to plan out the programs, but at this point, we did not know where we would find the money to buy this recording studio equipment. It was exactly at this time, however, that I was awakened at six o'clock one morning by a phone call from the director of a ministry in Germany to persecuted Christians.

“Can I speak to Dr. Nagy?”

Still groggy from sleep, I said, “This is Dr. Nagy.”

“Are you still sleeping?”

When he said that, I thought it was someone who knew me, but I did not recognize the voice.

“Who are you?” I asked, still puzzled at this strange phone call.

“You don’t know me, but Richard Wurmbrand has been talking to me about you for years, and he said, ‘You need to get Nagy to do some radio programs to the Middle East. He’s an expert in Islam and he will be very effective.’ So, are you willing to do that?”

“Yes, I’m willing, but I don’t have the tools to do it — I don’t have recording equipment, or a studio or anything like that.”

“Did you know you could rent a studio? Or, if it’s cheaper, we can help you buy recording equipment.”

Within days, with the help of this ministry, we had rented a recording studio with advanced computer equipment, and we immediately began recording the programs, which were broadcasted both to the Middle East, and at the same time, on Southern California radio channels.

This ministry continued for a year, and then, in one prayer meeting, God told me, “Your voice will be heard all over the world from over a mountain in Jerusalem.”

I’m an Arabic guy who has a radio program to the Arabs, so having my voice broadcasted from a mountain in Jerusalem did not make any sense to me at all. I asked Him, “How can Israel allow a Christian program produced by Arabs to go all over the world?” I just couldn’t comprehend that.

A few weeks later, I had the answer to my question, when I received another phone call from one of the directors of the radio broadcast ministry called, High Adventure Ministries. This ministry was broadcasting our radio programs in the Middle East. Formerly, their studios were located in Southern Lebanon, but Hezbollah had destroyed half of the station, so they had to go with a satellite, and now they were using a transmitter situated over one of Jerusalem’s mountains.

“Brother Nagy,” he said. “I want to tell you that our station in Lebanon has been destroyed and we had to move out of Lebanon, and we are transmitting over one of the mountains in Jerusalem. We are not going to tell you which mountain it is, for security reasons, but we want you to know that from over a mountain in Jerusalem your voice is being heard all over the world.

Since then until now, we have broadcasted this program, “Light and

Truth." And, it continues to be heard from over one of the mountains in Jerusalem to all over the Middle East.

I was visiting my cousin in a very tiny village in Upper Egypt and he told me, "I hear you every week on the radio."

"How is that possible?" I asked him. "This is a remote village in a remote area. I didn't think you had any radio stations you could pick up here." Then, he tuned in the station for me, and it was so clear! We have listeners all over the Middle East, and we have received so many responses and letters from Muslims, asking questions, to which we send replies.

I received a letter from a Jordanian woman, who told me, "I am the only Christian woman in my district. And, the Muslims, when they meet me in the marketplace, they ask me, 'How can Christ be the Son of God, if he walks around in human form, and how can God get a son, and when this son gets tired, he uses the restroom and God does not use the restroom.' They ask me all these things. And, I didn't used to know how to answer them, and their questions — they have endless numbers of questions.

"One day, by chance, I was listening to this program, 'Light and Truth,' and it answered all these same questions that the Muslims used to ask me in the marketplace. So, I wrote down the information about the program. Now, whenever I go to the market place, and someone comes near me and asks me any questions about Christ, I say, 'You know what? I don't know the answers, but you can take this information and you can listen to this program.'"

She said many of her friends now listen to this program every week.

We receive letters about this program from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and many other countries. Listeners ask for Bibles, Christian materials, and Christian songs. This is one of the most effective programs in the Middle East.

The previous year, the Lord had already given our Christian Arabic church another idea for an audio ministry. We began to record audiotapes, which answer questions Muslims commonly have about Jesus and Christianity. Then, we handed these out at The Olympic games and the World Cups every two years in different parts of the world — in 1994, 1996 and 1998. These competition events gave us access to both players and spectators from Muslims countries.

Our first tape, which Pastor Nabil prepared, was called, "Music and Truth," and this tape answered the common charge, promoted by Islamic teachers, that the Bible has been corrupted.

Our team of volunteers traveled with 3,000 copies of this audiotape to New Jersey and New York with a plan to hand out the tapes at the start of an event where teams from Saudi Arabia and teams from Tunisia were playing against other teams. When our ministry team arrived, there were 12 gates, and they were not sure which one the Saudis would use. There were only a

few ministry workers — not enough to cover all the gates at the start of the event. They prayed, and soon heard the Lord tell them to use a specific gate.

When they went to this gate, they discovered this was the same gate being used by the princes of Saudi Arabia. This was the place where they were all to enter the stadium to watch their team play. And, at this gate, our workers also found a group of Mexicans distributing flyers about Saudi Arabia and the Saudi team. It was a very hot day, and as one ministry worker was watching these Mexicans passing out flyers, with the sweat beading on their foreheads, God gave him an idea.

He approached these Mexicans, and he asked them, “Did the Saudis pay you to do this — to distribute their brochures?”

“Yeah,” they said.

“So you already have the money, right?”

“Yeah,” they said.

“Why don’t you give us the brochures and we will distribute them for you. We are standing here anyway distributing these tapes, and we’ll distribute your brochures at the same time.”

Of course, this made the Mexicans very happy and they handed over the brochures to our workers, which our team then gave to the people entering the gate. These brochures had the Saudi flag on the cover and, it was so easy to hand the tape out at the same time along with these brochures. It made our tapes look very official and their distribution appeared to be just a regular part of the pre-game activities.

So every Saudi Arabian who went through this entrance gate to the stadium received a tape from our group. We distributed all 3,000 tapes.

At the conclusion of the games, when these Saudis left, most of those who came out of the stadium with one of our tapes slipped them into their tape players as soon as they got into their cars. They thought these were Saudi Arabian tapes, because of the music, and the way they had been distributed. Our team members were so excited to hear the princes of Saudi Arabia listening to the music on this tape!

Later, one of the funny things we heard about this tape happened when the Saudi Arabian officials announced on Saudi television that the Christians had smuggled Christian tapes into the country by using people who had attended this game event. They said, “These Christians, they try to evangelize you, and they try to convince you to leave Islam.” They were very upset about this, and they said anyone who had a copy of this tape must turn it in at once to the nearest police station. The custom officials and the police estimated 600 copies of this tape had made their way into the country.

When this announcement happened, people’s curiosity was aroused all the more, and they began to talk about the tapes, and then, some of the people who had the tape began to make copies and to circulate it to those whose curiosity had been aroused. We heard later that the police arrested two men who had distributed copies of this tape, and were selling them for 20 Saudi riyals apiece.

In each of these games, as we distributed tapes, God gave us awesome testimonies and abundant proof that He was working through this to bring the gospel to many Muslims.

When our church members asked me, "How many tapes do you need to distribute?" I responded with, "As many as we can make, but at least one."

"We do all this so you can have just one tape?"

I told them, "I say at least one, because God told me that whatever seed we put into these lands, He will take it and multiply it."

This was so true.

When I went to Paris France, I saw one minister distributing Bibles and other Christian Arabic things in the street, and I discovered he was also distributing this same tape. I asked him, "How did you get this tape?"

"Oh yeah, this is a very good tape," he said. "I ordered these from a ministry in Germany."

I was amazed to discover that a ministry in Germany had made a master of this tape and was now selling it all over the world, and I thanked God for that. We're not upset that another ministry took this tape and was selling it, because they are distributing the message of Christ to Muslims, and that's what concerns us the most. Praise God more Muslims hear the gospel!

This tape ministry distributes two other tapes in addition to the "Music and Truth." One is "Greater Than a Man." This one answers all the common questions Muslims ask about the divinity of Christ: "Is he a man, or a prophet, or God incarnated in a man?" At the same time, it gives the message of salvation, along with a prayer that the listener can pray to give his or her life to Jesus.

The third tape is called the "Game of Life," which we distributed at a big game event where many Middle Easterners were present in Paris. In this tape we talk about the idea that we play games with our lives, and we have unseen enemies, who also play games with our lives. These enemies are death, Satan and ignorance of God's Word in the Bible. The format is question and answer, and this tape also includes music and songs designed especially for Muslims.

Throughout this ministry God continued to do many miracles so that these tapes would find their way into the hands of Muslims from countries where these apologetic materials were virtually impossible to obtain.

In 1996, there was a match between a Kuwaiti team, and another country. Originally, we tried to go to the stadium entrance to distribute the tapes, but we reached this event a little late, and the Kuwaitis had already lost the match, so all the players were standing in a long line. The president of the team and all these important people from Kuwait, were working their way down this line of players, in order to shake the hands of the players, and to tell them that they had played a good game, and not to worry that they had not been the victor. One of our team members had managed to place himself into this line as the last one. All these Kuwaitis were passing down this line, by each person, shaking hands and offering condolences. As each person

reached the end of the line, he reached our man, and as he shook the hand of our team member, this team member also handed the person an audiotape.

It was amazing that not one of these people seemed to notice that our man was not a member of the athletic team, and not only that, but also that he was handing something to each Kuwaiti. I believe, in that instance, God was blinding the athlete, who was next in line beside our man. I say this, because it stands to reason that the athlete standing right next to our man would have surely recognized our team member as someone who shouldn't have been there.

In the end, everyone who came to shake the hands of the Kuwaiti athletes received a tape from our ministry.

In 1998, we distributed another tape in Paris during the last match between the Tunisian athletes and the British athletes. During this match, the athletes from each team began to fight, and, in an effort to bring order, the police had to encircle all the Tunisians into one place, as they pushed them out of the stadium. Before this fight occurred, we had tried to distribute the tapes to the Tunisians, but it was so hard to find Tunisians among all the different nationalities that were present at the stadium. We barely managed to distribute 50 or 100 tapes, because we did our best to determine whether or not the person spoke Arabic, and this had taken time. We only wanted to distribute the tapes to Muslims.

However, when the fight started, the police lobbed tear gas, and encircled all the Tunisians onto one street. We quickly ran there and we found them — all of them. They were conveniently gathered together in one place, and we just stood there waiting for them to be released. Of course, this was after our vision had cleared, when we had recovered from the smart of the tear gas.

At this point, we didn't have to expend any effort to figure out whom the Tunisians were. The police had done the job for us. All we had to do was stand there and wait for their eventual release. And, when the police finally let them all go, even though we were still weeping a little from the tear gas, we also had tears of joy, as we handed out all 3,000 of our tapes to these Tunisians who had to pass by us to exit this street.

In Egypt, I was once talking about these tapes, and how God had used these tapes in different parts of the world. After the meeting, a man I had never met before came up to me. He said, “I was in New York and I distributed hundreds of these tapes.”

“That's great,” I said.

Then, he told me that when he came back to Egypt he had only one tape left. “I told myself, ‘I'm not going to waste this tape. I will go to Egypt, duplicate it and distribute everywhere.’ But, when I got onto the airplane, I saw one of my professors from Egypt on the plane. He is a Muslim. And, God told me, ‘Give him the tape.’ And, I told the Lord, ‘I've only got one copy of this tape left. I don't think I will find any more of them inside Egypt, because we don't have these in Egypt.’”

He didn't realize that our ministry also produces and distributes these

tapes inside Egypt.

"I tried many times to ignore this voice, but God kept telling me, 'You need to give this tape to your professor.' And, I told God, 'OK, I will obey You and I will give him the tape, and I trust You will give me another copy.'"

Then, this young man approached his teacher on the airplane. The relationship between professors and students in Egypt is not the same as it is in the States. You cannot just casually go up to your professor and talk to him. In Egypt, professors have more of an aloof relationship with their students. They are venerated, and it's not proper for a student to approach a professor without having first been invited to do so.

This young man continued sharing his testimony.

"So, I went up to my professor, whose name is Ahmad, and I told him that I owed him a lot, because he had taught me many things. 'You know, I have been thinking of getting you a gift in appreciation for all you have done for me, and I'd like to give you this audiotape, if you will accept it.' He took it.

"Two weeks later, when I was in my church, I talked to the priest about my recent trip to America, and how I had found a copy of the tape, 'Greater Than A Man,' and how God uses these tapes. Then, the priest asked me, 'Do you have a copy of this tape?'

"I said, 'No, I'm sorry but I do not. I had only one copy, and God insisted that I give this one copy to my professor. His name is Ahmad.'

"Then, the priest said, 'Are you the one who gave this tape to a professor?' and I told him, 'Yes.' Then, he said, 'I just baptized him yesterday. He has accepted Christ and he came into my church and he asked me to baptize him.'"

This was a big encouragement to this young man. And, of course it was also an encouragement to me to know that God has used this tape, even among the most intelligent and educated Muslims in Egypt, so that they, too, would come to know and worship Jesus Christ.

I also received a letter from a man in Palestine. He told me: "I'm not writing to you because you are in America. I don't need anything from you. If you need anything from Palestine, I can send it to you. But, I'm writing to tell you that now I am a convinced, dedicated Christian. I used to be a Muslim. I was the only educated member in my family and, I have a big family in Palestine. I am the only one."

He didn't mention what field in which he had studied.

He said that previously to becoming a believer, he had wondered about how Western Christians say that Christ is the Son of God, and Christ is God and he had been perplexed by this. "I think that these people are so smart — they went to the moon, they invented the computer — but they are still stupid when they believe that a man can be God, and that God can walk in the streets of Jerusalem."

Of course, this man walked upon the streets of modern-day Jerusalem all the time, because he lived there. And, he said every time he walked the streets

of the Via Dolorosa, he thought, "Oh, the stupid Christians say that Jesus God was here and was crucified," and he had considered this utter foolishness.

"In my mind," he said in his letter, "I used to say that I wish I could meet anyone who could explain this and answer my questions about Christ: how he can be a man, and, at the same time, God. Then, I saw a tourist. She was so beautiful. So, I said to myself, 'Why don't I try to start a relationship with her and maybe I can take her home with me.'"

She came near him, and when he began to speak to her, he said she didn't understand a word he was saying, but she grabbed a tape from her bag and she gave it to him, and when he saw the title of the tape, it said, "Greater Than A Man."

He took the tape home and began to listen to this tape. "I listened to this tape four times, and each time it finished, I listened to it again. After I had heard the tape four times, I went to sleep well convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, and that Jesus is God. And, while I was sleeping, Jesus appeared to me in a dream. He had the Bible, and He came to me, and He said 'read this.' And, I told Him, 'I cannot. This is a corrupted book. This is the book the Christians corrupted.' Jesus said, 'read this.' And, when He said it a second time, I felt something like air coming from His mouth. When He said 'read this' the second time, at that moment, something got inside me. And, I woke up believing that Jesus is God.

"Since then, my life has changed, and if any one of you can come to Palestine, I will introduce you to my whole family and you can answer their questions and when you do, I'm sure most of them will accept Jesus as their savior.

This amazing letter carried the ring of authenticity. The one thing that assured me that this was a genuine testimony was the fact that this man asked me for nothing. He didn't try to establish a relationship with me. He didn't ask me for anything. He just said, at the end of his letter, "If you need something from Palestine, just send me a request and I will send it to you. I don't need anything from you in America."

We have received many other testimonies about these audiotapes.

All this has happened because the Lord brought me to America. God reminds me that if I were still in Egypt — if I had insisted upon staying in Egypt when God told me clearly to come to America — then I would not have been able to record these tapes and send them to the Middle East. And, that means God would not have been able to use me to change the Middle East. I thank Jesus so much for what He has done for me.

I was praying in a prayer meeting one day, and God began to speak to me, and He showed me something very interesting. He said the tapes, and the other things we use to show Muslims the gospel, are sort of like bullets in machine guns. Machine gun embattlements pepper the mountains of the Middle East. Well, these tapes are like machine gun bullets. When a bullet reaches the ground, the impact divides it into small pieces and each piece can penetrate into a person, and this is a life-impacting event, albeit negative.

And, God used this illustration to point out to me that what we record on these tapes is not just information, and it's not just a Bible study. These recordings are bullets of love that hit the people in the Middle East and change their lives so that they accept Jesus as their savior.

When God showed me this idea, I was excited about it. Then, three days later, I saw an interview with Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran at that time. The news reporter asked him, "How could you win Iran while you were still in France? You were away from Iran for many years, and then you were able to enter Iran and the people were prepared to receive you as their leader."

Khomeini answered the question in one word: He said "audiotapes." Then, he explained what he meant. He said the audiotapes he prepared in Paris were like bullets placed into a machine gun and shot over Iran. "The people started to hear me and began to understand my message. When I decided to go back to Iran, the machine guns and the bullets had already done their work, and these changed people were willing to receive me as their leader."

When I saw this interview, God told me, "If Ayatollah Khomeini can win Iran by audiotapes and false facts and the message of hate, how much more will I use the tapes, and the radio and television programs in the Middle East to bring the message of love that will change the people of the Middle East." Amen, Lord!

Prayer:

Dear God,

No weapon formed against the gospel will prosper! I pray all the gospel programs on radio and television in the Middle East will pierce the hearts of those who hear them like bullets of love, and that the harvest will be great among the sons of Ishmael. Lord, protect the broadcasting equipment and laborers who bring these programs to the people. Give them wisdom in presenting the message of salvation to the Muslims.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Ten

“Open the Gates!”

Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. “ (Isaiah 62:10)

After God had given me the vision of the Highway, the first gate I passed through was the gate of Jerusalem. Surely, there is some amazing irony to the fact that the first place God took this native Egyptian to was — of all places — Israel.

In September 1995, after the radio ministry had begun, God told me to go and pray for Israel and the peace of Jerusalem during the week of March 10 to March 15, 1996. I thought this was a strange calling, and, actually, I was very afraid to go to Israel. At this time, I did not yet have my American citizenship — all I had was the Green Card.

I said, “God I’m ready to go. However, I don’t know anyone in Israel, and I don’t have the money to pay for my ticket. I’m still a citizen of Egypt, and have only my Egyptian passport. When an Egyptian goes to Israel, he has to have a good reason to go, and I will need someone who will accommodate me. I see so many difficulties to going to Israel, but you know what God? I’m ready to go.”

I did not understand this call, but God said I needed to go and pray for

Jerusalem for five days. He said I had to be there on March 10, and I had to leave on March 15 for Egypt. I did not know why He chose these dates.

Later, in a prayer meeting, I told my brothers, “God is asking me to go to Israel and to pray for Israel for five days.” God soon provided for this trip, because a few weeks before God told me to leave for Israel, in February 1996, a woman came up to me and said, “I was praying and God told me to give you this ticket that I bought for you, so that you can go to Israel.” One of the most important mentors in my life was Richard Wurmbrand, who founded the Voice of the Martyrs. Richard, a Jewish Christian who converted to Christ from atheism as a young man, later spent 14 years of imprisonment and torture under Romanian communists in the 1940s ‘50s, and 60’s. At this time, he was living in Southern California, so I went to his home and I told him, “God is telling me to go to Israel and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”

His excitement was obvious. “Nagy, do it. If God told you to do this, He has a plan for you, so you have to do it.”

“Richard, I don’t know anyone in Israel . . . I mean anyone.”

“Nagy, I know a lot of people in Israel, but I am especially thinking of a couple, who are friends of mine. They will receive you, and you will be able to spend several days with them. I will talk to them by phone, and I will give you the information so that you can contact them.”

His offer reassured me greatly, because, to be honest, I was frightened at the thought of going to Israel due to the great conflict that exists between Egypt and Israel. I thought if I went there alone without knowing anyone, the Israelis might arrest me, or even kill me. I didn’t know that Israel was a Western-style country, and, that even visitors from Middle Eastern countries can go there without fear of being unduly molested by the authorities.

Before I left for Israel, the woman who had purchased a ticket for me told me I should make every effort to visit the home of a woman in Israel named Ruth Heflin, who, in 1972, had founded an international prayer ministry in Jerusalem called Prophetic Prayer Ministry.

I told her that God was sending me to Israel specifically to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and I would love to meet Ruth Heflin, but that I did not know how to contact her. She told me she would try to get me the address, but the time came for my plane trip, and I had to leave without having this information.

When I arrived in Israel, Richard’s friends accepted me immediately and were very gracious. However, I soon found that this couple only had a one-bedroom apartment, and the husband suffered from health problems, so there really was no place at all for me to sleep — not even a sofa. The wife was so embarrassed by their humble surroundings, and she apologized that they had no suitable place for me to sleep. She said, “I tried my best to find a cheap hotel or a cheap place for you to stay so that you will not have to pay so much, but I only found two options.”

So, I said, “What are they?”

At this, her husband spoke up before she could respond to my question, and he said, “I told you that the first option will not be suitable for our guest. Just give him the second option.”

At this, I just smiled and said: “So, can you tell me the first and second option?”

“My first option,” she said, “is that you will stay at this secular youth hostel. It will cost you around \$5 per night. It’s similar to a YMCA, but I don’t think you will be comfortable there.”

“That’s why I told you to only give him the second option,” said her husband.

“The second option is this: I have a friend, and she has a prayer house here. Her name is Ruth Heflin. She doesn’t accept singles, especially single men, because she’s single and everybody who works there is a woman. She only accepts couples. However, when I told her about you, and that God told you to come to Israel to pray for Israel, she said God was telling her to invite you to stay with her. This is very strange, but this is what she said.”

“Well, of course I want the second option,” I told her. ‘Before I left America to come here, a sister in the Lord told me to come to Ruth Heflin’s house of prayer and to pray for Israel. I couldn’t find the contact information for her before I left, so this is amazing to me that she has invited me, and that this is my only option, too.

Ruth Heflin offered me a large room with a very comfortable bed, and a spacious closet. I was amazed again at her hospitality. After my five-day stay was over, I discovered that Sister Heflin had graciously offered me her own private quarters, while she had shared her assistant’s room.

For the next five days, I passed through many gates in Israel and, the first gate I passed through was the gate of my own fear of Israel. As I prayed in every place I visited, and as I prayed for the peace of Jerusalem many times, the Lord gave me visions and spoke to me so much in Israel. While I was praying for the Middle East at the tombs of the prophets, God brought to my mind Ezekiel 37:4: “*Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!’*” He told me to prophesy over the Middle East, and over the dry bones of Muslims, and the dry bones of ritualized Christianity, which is the biggest stone in the way of Muslims coming to know Christ.

So, I began to prophesy over the Middle East, while facing the Mosque of the Rock, which Muslims believe encloses the rock from which the Prophet Mohammed rode to heaven upon a white horse. I started to pray concerning this mosque, which sits in the area where Jesus will one day appear, as He returns to reign upon the earth. And, I asked Jesus, “Who can take the mosque out of this place? This is the place where Your temple once stood, and the place where sacrifices and offerings were brought before You. Now, five times a day in this very same place where You chose to put Your name, it seems to the world that the enemy has overcome You, and Your temple and Your sacrifices. And, not only this — the enemy is spreading lies five times a day in this very place, through the Salah — the Islamic call to prayer.”

As I prayed, I was thinking what would happen if anyone bombed or destroyed this mosque. Who could imagine what horrible things would happen? The entire Muslim world would probably rise up, enraged, and fires would probably be kindled throughout the world in retribution for such a sacrilege. I could not imagine that human hands would ever remove this mosque. Then, at that moment, I had a vision of Jesus, as big as a Colossus, standing over this mosque, and He said, “When the time comes, I will wipe this place as I wipe this plate with my leg.”

I did not know this was a Bible verse: *“Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.”* (2 Kings 21:12-13) I did not remember that this reference to wiping a dish was in the Bible, and when I came back from this trip, I was sharing this vision with my brother, and he said, “You know this is part of the Bible,” and he gave me the scripture reference.

I prayed and prophesied in many places in Israel, and God spoke to me about many things. Then, as March 15th approached, I knew, even though I wanted to stay in Israel longer, I had to leave, because God had made it clear to me that this was the day on which I was to be in Egypt. I did not know why this was so, but I would find out later.

My flight was due to depart at ten o’clock in the morning on the 15th. On March 13th, in the afternoon, I called the airline company to confirm my ticket, and the woman I spoke with told me the computers were down and for me to call back in one hour. I called back in an hour, and was told the computers were still down. By now, it was five o’clock, and this person asked me to call tomorrow. So, first thing, at nine o’clock the next morning, I called the third time, and this woman told me, “I’m sorry, but your name is not on the list for this flight.”

“That’s because you didn’t confirm my reservation yesterday, even though I called you three times. You kept telling me the computers were down.” I didn’t realize, at this time, that the airline had been playing a trick on me. Unbeknownst to me, there were many Egyptian officials leaving Israel for a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, and all these officials were booked on the same flight as me. The previously booked passengers had been bumped off the flight to make room for these officials, and the airline didn’t want to tell the bumped passengers the real reason they were taken off the flight list, so the employees were telling the passengers that the computers were down and to call back.

“This was not my fault,” I insisted. “I called you three times. The fault is yours. It came from your end — your computers.”

“Look,” she said, “Whatever happened, the end result is that your name is not on the flight list. If your seat is not confirmed two days before the flight, the computer automatically removes your name from the list.”

“What am I supposed to do?”

“I’ll put you on the waiting list.”

“How many are ahead of me on the list?”

“Seventeen. To be honest, there is absolutely no chance that you will get on this flight tomorrow.”

Needless to say, I was very sad, and angry, too, because I believed God wanted me in Egypt the next day, even though I did not understand the full reason for this conviction. That morning, I visited Golgotha, and the Lord spoke to me and said, “You are in Golgotha. You are not supposed to worry about anything else right now. You are in a place of rejoicing. You just look to the cross and rejoice, because no one is to be depressed in this place where Jesus came to give His life for sinners.”

“But, God, you told me to be in Egypt tomorrow, and now they are telling me there is no way I will be on that flight to Egypt tomorrow.”

Then, I considered what the Lord had said, and I began to think about how awesome and wonderful it was to stand at the place where Jesus died for me. I began to pray: “Thank you for redeeming me, for forgiving my sins, Lord,” and I began to dance, and felt great joy at this thought. I worshipped and enjoyed the presence of God and prayed for almost two hours. It was a very blessed time for me in Israel.

After those two hours had passed, I felt a leading from God, “Why don’t you call the airline again?” So, I called them, and I gave them my name and said I was supposed to be on the flight tomorrow.

“Yes,” the woman who answered the phone said. “Your name is on the list, and you are confirmed, and tomorrow you will travel to Egypt.” At that moment, the voice of God spoke to me and said, “See, that’s what I want you to do. Just know that I can do anything. You rejoice in me, and I will solve your problems.”

When I arrived in Egypt the next day, right away I went to visit the associate pastor in my church in Egypt. I knocked on the door, and his wife opened the door, and she cried aloud when she saw me. “Praise God! Praise God you came!”

“What’s going on?” I asked, startled at her response.

“We have a big problem in the church. It’s to the point where my husband has decided to leave the church tomorrow. I’ve been praying to God on my knees, and I told him, ‘Lord, the only one who can solve this problem is Nagy, and Nagy is in America. But, Lord, even if he’s in America, you can bring him right now to Egypt.’”

She was dancing now, overjoyed that God had answered her prayers in this miracle. “This is God who got you here, especially today, because tomorrow my husband will announce his resignation to the church, and he will leave the church, and I feel his decision is not from the Lord, and I need someone to talk to my husband. He will listen to you, of all people.”

I began to pray with her husband, and the Lord gave him a word from heaven and his attitude changed. The next day, I wrote down what God had

put upon my heart to tell him, and I gave this to him and he put it into his pocket. He had planned to surprise everyone with his resignation, so he had invited another pastor to preach at this service.

After the guest pastor had finished his sermon, this assistant pastor came up to the pulpit. He told the people who were gathered there, “This was the day that I had decided to announce my resignation as a pastor at this church, but God sent me Nagy yesterday, and he prayed with me, and God gave him some words for me, which he wrote down and handed to me, and I have them in my pocket. The message you heard from our guest pastor this morning is exactly the same message which Nagy received from the Lord to this church, and if anyone doubts this, I still have this piece of paper in my pocket.”

The church problem that had almost caused my brother in Christ to resign continues to be solved to this day. We all rejoiced in God’s greatness at solving this problem.

The point of sharing this particular event in my life is to tell you that you do not have to understand why God is asking you to do something. It is not our position to understand His convictions and His leadings, because attempting to understand His reasons may hinder us from obeying God. Instead, we may begin to argue with God, because these convictions from Him do not appear to make any sense to us. This is not something we are supposed to do. Instead, we are to hear, trust and obey, even if we don’t understand the why of it.

For me, the first step was to pass through the gates. When I was ready to pass through the gates, God allowed me to pass through the Israel gate, and in the same trip, also, the Egyptian gate.

Later, another very important gate God wanted me to pass through was the Algerian gate. In 1998, when I attended the “Prepare the Highway” conference in Antioch, I had met Fathi, a believer who was living in Tunisia at that time. He was later kicked out of Tunisia, because he was a Muslim convert to Christianity and a short while later, in 1998, when I went to France to distribute the tapes at athletic events attended by Muslims with Pastor Nabil Abraham and his sister, Jeanette Abraham, Fathi was living in Paris. He was the only Middle Eastern contact we had in Paris at that time. So, when we distributed “The Game of Life” audiotape in Paris, we asked Fathi to meet our party of three and to guide us and help us in knowing how best to distribute the tapes in Paris.

The next day, which was a Monday, we needed to travel to Marseille. Pastor Nabil Abraham and, his sister, Jeanette had reached Paris one day ahead of me, and they had rented a car with a manual transmission. Nabil could drive a stick shift, but Jeanette could not, and neither could I. Nabil was already worn out from driving to and from the games and distributing tapes, and the drive to Marseille was very long. We needed someone to help us with

this long drive, as we had to go on Monday, and come back on Tuesday, in order to catch our flight to Egypt on Wednesday. Nabil and Jeanette, while distributing tapes, had met a Christian brother named Ahssan, who had shared the driving during the games, and we asked him to help us to drive to Marseille.

“I have to ask my pastor,” he said, “because we have an activity planned on Monday at the church.” His pastor, Amar, who is a Muslim-background believer from Algeria, said he needed Ahssan’s help with an evangelistic out-reach at the church on Monday.

“God, please send us someone to help us drive this car,” we prayed. We kept thinking that Ahssan was the man who could help us, but his pastor had said no. And, we didn’t want to create a conflict between him and his pastor. After we prayed, Brother Fathi, who was with us, said, “Let’s go and attend a Sunday night meeting at any church and we will leave this request to the Lord. Before the night ends, He will send us a driver.”

He told us there were two Arabic churches that might help us. One was a large Egyptian church and the other was a very small Algerian church. The Egyptian church had around 100 members, which is very big for an evangelical church in France. The prayer meeting at the other church — Pastor Amar’s church — had maybe nine to 15 people who attended on Sunday night, said Fathi. “You have to choose one of these churches,” he said. “Do you want to go to the Sunday night service at the large church, or to the prayer meeting with Pastor Amar?”

Pastor Amar had already said Ahssan could not drive us to Marseille and back, and Fathi figured that, since we were Egyptians, the Egyptian church would be a better choice.

I turned to God and asked Him which church we should attend. “God, the Algerian church is the smaller church and no one there can drive a stick shift except Ahssan, and the pastor has already told us he needs Ahssan to stay. Maybe we have the better chance in the Egyptian church of finding someone to help us.” And, God told me, “You go to the Algerian church.”

The three of them all said: “No, that doesn’t make sense. The Egyptian church is the one we should go to.”

“I don’t know why, but God is telling me to go to the Algerian church.”

So, we went to the Algerian church and we found around a dozen men and women praying. Then, the pastor asked me if I wanted to share some — thing with these people, and I talked for around 15 minutes. I was preaching on the Apostle Paul, and I said when Paul was facing the shipwreck, God sent him an angel and the angel said, “Don’t be afraid Paul, because God has given you your life and the lives of those who travel with you.” I said God knew Paul by name. As God says in the Bible, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...” (Jer. 1:5a)

At that, suddenly, the entire church was weeping. I could not even complete my message, and we had to stop and pray right then and there. The Holy Spirit just moved among these people. They were crying, and they were

praying at the same time. Most of their prayers I could not understand, because they were praying in French.

After the meeting, I asked the pastor, “What did I say that they all started crying and praying like that?”

“This happened because you touched one of the main points in their lives, and that is that God knows them by their names, and He is watching over them, and opening the door for them to be a part of the greater Christian community. That’s what you said that touched them.”

In Islamic teachings, God is distant from mankind. Unlike Christianity, there is no caring Father-child relationship. God used what I said to minister to their hearts and to remind them that He knows each one as a beloved son or daughter.

After the meeting was over, Pastor Amar came to me and said, “I’m sorry. Please forgive me. I didn’t realize that you are a spiritual people that come with the power of the Holy Spirit and that’s why I told Ahssan not to drive you. But, now God is telling me that I have to give you Ahssan to drive you to Marseille.”

Ahssan agreed immediately to accompany us. “I was ready to go with you, but I needed my pastor’s blessing first.

The visit to this church not only solved our immediate problem with the need for a driver, but I found out that Pastor Amar also shared our vision of the highway. I want to pass through the gates of Algeria, because I’m Algerian and I still have my Algerian passport,” he told me.

Pastor Amar was the open door for me to Algeria, and now I knew why the Lord told me not to go to the Egyptian church. It was because he wanted to bring Pastor Amar and me together to be a blessing to the church in Algeria. And, through Pastor Amar, I went to Algeria, and I have so many stories to tell about Algeria. But, that’s for another book.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for Your leadings and Convictions, and Your wisdom and guidance to the saints, whom You use to minister one to another, as well as to spread the gospel and save more souls. Your abilities to guide us through the Holy Spirit and bring us together with exactly those whom You have chosen to be our partners in the ministry are so amazing! Guide and direct me, Lord, to those whom I am to help and assist in the spread of the gospel. I thank You in advance for the divine Connections You will bring into my life through the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Eleven

Miracles in Tunisia

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

(Mark 10: 29-30)

In my subsequent travels to Algeria, I met many brothers and sisters there, and, through The Last Harvest, we planted a church. The members of this church use four, huge, automobile garages all joined together. In two, they hold meetings; in another they have a basin for baptisms; and they use the fourth one as a safe house for new Muslim converts to Christianity.

When Muslims confess Christ, many times their families reject them, kick them out of the home, and persecute them. Most have no place to go, and this is one of the most difficult times in their lives. That’s why there is a great need in Islamic countries for safe houses. These facilities are an integral part of underground churches.

When their families expel them, new converts may also lose their jobs, so

they cannot afford to rent a place. The safe house provides them with shelter until they have enough resources, or, until their circumstances change, and they can move into another place. Then, the safe house is opened for the next convert, because — Praise God — the churches are growing in these lands!

The brothers and sisters in Algeria love the Lord with a fervent, childlike faith: they are fully devoted. They have a deep-rooted appreciation of the knowledge that God has graciously granted them eternal life through Jesus.

One of the most effective tools to reach this area of the world is through radio programs. With a small, cheap radio, a Muslim seeker, or a Muslim- background believer, can go outside his family's home and listen in the street, discreetly, to Christian teaching.

This is in contrast to Christian television broadcasts. If a Muslim, or a secret convert, desires to listen to Christian programming on television, he must use the family living area, because that's where the television set is located in most Muslim homes. If he watches at home, then all the family will see that he is watching Christian television, and this will cause him a great deal of trouble. That's why Christian radio programs targeted to Muslims are the most important method of evangelism in the Middle East.

I thank God that we have been able to broadcast a program called 'Light and Truth' to all these Arabic countries.

At the same time I visited Algeria, I also visited Tunisia. The only person I had known from this country was Brother Fathi, but, as I said earlier, he had to flee to Paris. I did have an Egyptian friend who, at that time, was a missionary in Tunisia for several years. So, I contacted him, and I said, "God is sending me to Tunisia so that I can pass through the gates of Tunisia, and I want to come and see you."

Of course, the Tunisian government did not know he was a missionary, because he was a tent-making, undercover missionary. That's the only way to be a missionary in Tunisia, as obtaining a visa for this purpose would prove impossible. So, he was there, officially, as a businessman.

I asked him if I could use his name and address on my visa application I was submitting to the Tunisia government, and he told me yes, even though this would create a great amount of trouble for him. I still had my Egyptian passport, and in Egypt, your religion is noted on your passport, as well as your profession. They are so religious — there is so much zeal for religion in Egypt — yet so many do not know the Father!

My passport noted Christianity as my official religion, and pastor as my profession. This did not make it easy for me to get a visa to Tunisia, an Islamic country. Still, I applied from my home in the States to the Tunisian embassy. However, I never heard back from them before my plane was scheduled to leave for Egypt.

In Egypt, I went to the Tunisian embassy to apply for a visa to Tunisia. I told the embassy officials I was going to visit my Egyptian friend, who was living in Tunisia, and I gave them his name and address. A Tunisian official called him in Tunisia and asked him, "Do you know Nagy?" He said he did.

“So what’s his profession?” he asked.

“He’s a dentist,” he said, because he knew I was a dentist in Egypt, but he didn’t know my Egyptian passport listed my profession as a minister.

“No, he’s a Christian pastor,” the officer said.

“I don’t know if he is a pastor now or not, but I do know he’s a dentist,” he told the officer.

After this, the police in Tunisia came and told him, “If any problems come about because of this man’s visit to you, we will hold you responsible.”

He said, “He’s over 18 years old, so if he does anything here that you don’t like, he will be accountable for that. He’s just coming to visit me here.”

“No,” said the policeman. “He’s really a pastor, and we will hold you fully responsible for everything he does while he is in Tunisia.”

My friend thought about this and, in a moment he realized that the police in Tunisia could easily create any kind of a problem for me, through a baseless charge; and then, if he had previously agreed to assume responsibility for me, the police would have found their excuse to expel him from the country, too. It would be like the English expression: “Killing two birds with one stone.”

So, he told the officer, “No, I am not in charge of him. He is the one who will be responsible.”

After this, my visa application was denied. Then, I went to the Tunisian embassy, and I submitted the application again without mentioning my earlier attempts to obtain a visa to Tunisia. I told the embassy official, “I’m going to Algeria, and, I’d like to stop by Tunisia to stay for three days, but I have to have the visa today. I’m leaving for Algeria right away.”

of course, he didn’t have time to check with the Tunisian embassy in the States. He didn’t investigate anything. All he said, was: “Since you are visiting Algeria, I’ll give you the visa to Tunisia this time.”

This is how God intervened in order to open the gate to Tunisia.

After spending five days in Algeria, on my way back I went to Tunisia. I met with my friend, the missionary, and he filled me in on all the things that were happening with the churches in Tunisia, and the missionary work taking place there and many other encouraging things. During this time, my friend told me that his ministry involved following up with listeners to an Arabic Christian radio program.

We receive so many letters from Tunisia as a result of this program. Both converts and Muslim seekers write to our ministry workers with questions.

Then, my missionary friend began to tell me the story of a young man named Taher, from Tunisia, who leads a group of believers in a remote area located about a nine-hour journey from the Tunisian capital of Tunis. He told me the story of how this group began.

“The people who run this program in Tunisia received a letter from this 17-year-old boy, Taher. In the letter, Taher said, ‘I know that the Christian girls are so beautiful, and I want to marry one of them. Can you help me to marry a Christian girl?’ The ministry worker who received this letter sent it to me. I get so many letters — so many serious letters — asking about Christ, and ask-

ing, 'how can I give my life to Jesus?' But, here is this guy asking me to help him marry a beautiful Christian girl! So, I said to myself, 'I don't have time for this nonsense,' and I put the letter aside for a few days. Then, the Lord told me, 'You go and talk to this young man.' And, I told the Lord, 'He's so far from here, and what I am supposed to tell him? How can I arrange a marriage between him and a Christian girl?' And, God said, 'You go and talk to him.'

My missionary friend obeyed the Lord, and he contacted Taher, and arranged a meeting. "I told him I had received his letter asking for help in his desire to marry a Christian woman, and I asked him, 'Why do you want to marry a Christian? Do you even know what a Christian is?' Then, I began talk to him about Christ, and, amazingly, he accepted Christ in this first visit! Right away, he began sharing his faith in the village and he was so excited about his new life as a Christian. He completely forgot about looking for a wife, and one of the first people God brought to Christ through this brand new convert was the son of the village's Imam, who was a sheikh. And, that's when Taher's problems truly began.

"Well, this Imam knew that Taher was the one who had convinced his son to become an apostate to Islam, and he was very angry. He persecuted both his son and Taher. He kicked his own son out of the home and he convinced Taher's family to do the same to him. The two boys found no place to go, and, at last, in desperation, they rented a cave with no electricity, heat, or water. They had no jobs, and no support. They had nothing. Taher was in his last year of high school while living in a primitive cave."

My friend paused, and I thought about what a difficult trial that must have been for this young man, because high school in the Middle East is different from the U.S. The last year of high school is a crucial time that has a heavy bearing a person's future job opportunities. The tests are very difficult and students must study hard. In a Middle Eastern family, the entire family is expected to focus on serving the high school student so that he has plenty of time to study. For Taher, obviously intensive study would prove impossible while living away from his family in a primitive cave.

Then, God spoke to me, and reminded me that in every country He is sending me to, He will also give me a key to the country — a ministry contact whose ministry will prove vital to the spread of the gospel in a certain nation. Of course, I knew this, and when I had first arrived in Tunisia, I spent two days trying to find the "key" for Tunisia, but I wasn't successful. I had thought that after this visit with my Tunisian friend, I would get my ticket changed and would spend my last day before my departure to the States visiting people in Egypt. I was planning to leave for the airline ticketing office and have my ticket changed, as soon as my visit with my missionary friend was over.

However, my friend's excitement over Taher was evident, and as he continued to talk and talk and talk, sharing ever more interesting aspects of Taher's newly born ministry — like how he had won six Muslims friends to Christ — the Lord spoke to me. "This young man, Taher, is the key to Tunisia.

He is the key person I want you to use."

"God," I prayed silently. "Am I hearing right or wrong? This is a 17-year-old boy who was just saved six months ago. He doesn't know anything about Christianity. The only reason he wrote the letter my friend received was because he wanted to marry a Christian woman, so he wasn't even genuine at first. How come you are choosing a 17-year-old boy?"

In the Middle East, again it's not like in America. People are more conscious of age in relationships, and there is a strong cultural history of deep respect for community elders, much like we see in the Old Testament stories. The "elders" who sat at the city gate were older men, not young boys. The thought that this kid was a key contact made no sense at all.

Then God began to instruct me by bringing scriptures to mind. "When I began to talk to Joseph in dreams, he was 17 years old. When I began to use David — when I anointed him he was 17 years old. There were many who were older than him and more experienced than him, but I chose David when he was a boy and I anointed him the King of Israel — the key person in Israel. And, I did the same with Joseph. Taher is the key to Tunisia." (1 Cor. 1:26-31)

At that moment, my friend looked at me, and said, "Do you know why I talk so much about this guy, Taher? Because the Lord told me he is the key to Tunisia."

"Oh my God, I'm just hearing this right now!" I exclaimed. I then explained how the Lord had been speaking to me, while my friend was talking about Taher, and I was asking the Lord how a 17-year-old boy could be the key to Tunisia.

"I asked God the same question, and He gave me the same answer," said my friend.

"Since God is telling me the same thing, I need to meet this guy."

"That's not possible," he said.

"Well, you know the village where he lives. Let's go there now."

He laughed and said, "I told you, he has no address. He lives in a cave."

"Why don't we go there and look for him anyway?"

Then, his expression changed to one more serious.

"This is a small village where everyone knows everybody. If we go there, they will assume we are the people who converted him to Christianity and, then they will kill us right then and there. And, anyway, we cannot drive nine hours just to go and find someone in some remote village."

Not one to quit when God was leading me to meet someone, I asked him:

"Why don't you talk to him by phone and ask him to come and meet me?"

Undoubtedly feeling a bit exasperated with me at this point, he said, "I told you he lives in a cave and he has no phone. There is no way to contact him."

"So how do you meet with him and his group of disciples each month?" Earlier he had told me about his monthly meetings with Taher and the other believers from this village. "If he has no phone, then how do you meet with him each month?"

“We arranged that I would visit the first week of every month. Taher contacts everyone in advance of this visit and they agree on a time and a secret place. Then, he calls me and tells me that they will be waiting for me in this place and at this time. And, that’s the only way I have contact with him. If you want to meet Taher, and you want to come with me to meet with his group, then you have to wait until the last week of the month.”

It was only the first week of the month, and that meant I would have to spend three weeks in Tunisia just to meet the one person God said was the key contact for Tunisia.

“There is no way to call him, and there is no way he can come here, so I don’t know what to do,” said my friend.

So, I said, “Maybe God doesn’t want me to meet this guy this time.” However, that didn’t sit right me. I just knew I was supposed to meet him and I was very upset to be so close to meeting this key, and yet stymied by this seemingly impossible obstacle of having no way to reach him.

I returned to my hotel room and I began to pray, and I said, “God, you promised me I would meet this key person, and since you promised, I know that you can do anything — you can move heaven and earth if necessary — for me to meet this guy.

After I prayed, I went ahead and visited the travel agent’s office, figuring that since it seemed impossible to meet Taher, I would spend my last day in the Middle East in Egypt, instead of Tunis.

As I walked up the ticket counter and prepared to hand the ticket to the agent with a request that the ticket be changed, the woman asked me, “Can I help you?” And, then the voice of God spoke to me, and He said, “Don’t go one day early. You have to stay.”

I stared at this woman, and hesitated, with the ticket still in my hand. Then, I said, “Well, maybe later you can help me, and I turned around and went back to the hotel. “I didn’t tell you to leave one day early,” said the Lord. You have to stay here tomorrow, because you will meet Taher.

“But, God, there is no way to meet him, because he can’t afford to make a phone call, and my friend just came from visiting him this week, so Taher will not be calling my friend for three more weeks.”

And, God said, “I told you, when I say that you will meet him, you will meet him.” As it turned out, God had a simple solution in mind.

I returned to my friend’s house and I told him, “Listen. I went to the airline to change my return trip so that I could spend my last day in Egypt, instead of here in Tunis. And, while I was standing there with the ticket in my hand, with the ticketing agent asking me if she could help me, God told me that I will meet Taher, and I think that I will indeed meet Taher, so I’m back.”

Then, my friend’s wife started to laugh. “We still believe in miracles. God can do any miracle to let Taher come tonight or tomorrow morning before you leave,” she said. Then, at that very moment — and God is my witness — the phone rang. And, I jumped! And, then I told them, “Tell Taher to come now.”

And, sure enough, it really was Taher on the phone.

My friend asked him, “How come you are speaking to me at this time? You are not supposed to call me for another three weeks.”

“I was sitting by a lake and I heard the voice of God in my ear telling me that you needed me right away. He said, ‘You have to call him now.’ So, I just obeyed and I called you. Do you need me?”

Here was God’s personal paging service at work! How encouraging such testimonies are to those who work in underground ministry, and are constantly chased by police and, often, enraged Muslims, too. Nothing stops the Lord from divine appointments.

And, I said “Tell him, ‘Yes, Taher, I need you. Why don’t you just come?’”

Taher spent nine hours on the train, standing the entire time, because all the seats were taken, just to get to the capital city of Tunis.

When we met, I asked him many questions, and he told me how he had shared his faith with others.

“It’s so hard to approach one of my friends and to tell him, outright, ‘Look, I’ve become a Christian and I have accepted Jesus. I’m not a Muslim anymore.’ But, God spoke to me, through the Holy Spirit, and He told me all of my friends suffered from depression. I think all Muslims suffer from depression.

This was not at all surprising to me, because the power behind the deception of Islam is a religious spirit, and this spirit brings with it a sense of depression.

Then, Taher said, “I believed this was true, because I already could see that they were all depressed.”

Now better understanding his friends’ mental state, he came up with a plan to convince them to listen to the gospel message. He said, “I usually sit down beside one of my depressed friends, and I say, ‘I want to tell you something. I used to be so depressed and so sad that I was crying. I even thought about killing myself. Then, I found this one book and I started to read it, and, to my surprise, I began to feel happy and to laugh with joy.’

Most of them, at this point, thought I was talking about a book of jokes to make people laugh — something silly and fun to read. So, they would usually ask me, ‘where is this book, I want to read it, too.’

“Then, I would grab the Gospel of John from my pocket, and I would say, ‘listen to what this book says: In the beginning was God and God was . . . and I would start to read it. After two or three minutes, my friend would begin to understand that this was not a joke book, but a Christian Bible. So, most of them would tell me: ‘This is a Christian book. How come you are reading this Christian book? This is corrupted.’

“Then, I would say, ‘You know what? I don’t know whether it’s corrupted or not, but I was depressed and when I read this book, something changed in my life. I saw you were depressed and so, I gave you the same book. If you like it, OK. If you don’t like it, that’s OK, too.’

“Then, most of my friends would say, ‘OK, go ahead and read to me from this book.’ When I read, I would take notice of when they would begin to smile and when they appeared to calm down, and that’s when I would start to talk about what I’m reading and to share the gospel with them. In this way, I won six Muslims to Christ, and one of them was the son of the sheikh of the village.”

“Well,” I thought to myself as I heard his amazing testimony. “They didn’t teach us this kind of soul-winning technique in Bible school!” And, I realized that Jesus has all these different ways and means to reach these people, even with this very simple, but powerfully effective method.

So, I asked Taher, “How do you deal with the persecution and all the problems that have come against you from your family?”

“I know that they are blind. They don’t see the truth, and they don’t want me to live with them anymore. The sheikh’s son, and I — we went and rented a cave and we live in it. But, even so, the sheikh doesn’t leave us alone, and he went after his son, beating him, and persecuting him. Then, his son said, ‘I cannot continue being a Christian. I cannot take this anymore. I have to stop.’

“When I heard this, I was so sad. Then the sheikh’s son said to me, ‘I am going to stop reading the Bible and meeting with you. I am not going to be a Christian any longer.’

“When he went back to his father’s house, however, he was struck by a terrible disease. His Dad took him to many different doctors — many specialists — trying to find a cure for him. The last doctor admitted him into the hospital. Of course, I couldn’t get in to see him, because I feared that if his father saw me, he would kill me. But, I watched the hospital, and one day, when I was sure his Dad had left, I took the brothers who meet with me monthly, and we went to his room and surrounded his bed.

“He asked us to pray for him, and while we were praying, he jumped over the bed and the disease left him and Jesus healed him! Then, the sheikh’s son said, ‘I cannot be unfaithful to Christ who healed me. I will tell everyone that I am a Christian and I will be a Christian. I will be a Christian forever, because Jesus healed me when Mohammed could not heal me.’ And, my friend embraced Christ again, and he is back in our prayer meetings once more. And, the entire village heard about how Jesus had healed the sheikh’s son.”

When I went to Tunisia, there were almost no Christian meetings, and only one public church in the capital of Tunis. They call it the English Church. It’s a big building, but no Tunisians were allowed to go inside this church — only foreigners, and then, not to worship, but just to visit it as tourists.

While I was in my hotel room during that trip to Tunisia, I watched a Saudi Arabian program on the television. A man interviewed some Christians who had converted to Islam, and he was putting words into their mouths,

as he coaxed them to give their “testimony.” He said, “I believe you came to Islam because you discovered that Islam is a good religion?” And, the man essentially parroted the same words back. “Yeah, I discovered Islam is a good religion.”

Not one of these people on this television program had a testimony of anything supernatural that had happened to him to bring him back to Islam, or to make him leave Christianity and to embrace Islam. It was just a religious decision based on what was convenient to do — what made sense from a human standpoint. There was no testimony to how God had touched these people’s lives and changed them through His power — a testimony that we all have as born-again Christians.

When I heard this, I felt so troubled in my spirit and very sad for all these people in Tunisia who did not know the Lord. I was crying in my hotel room and I said to God, “The television programs we have in the Middle East that promote Christianity — most of these are from non-Arabic countries, and they are in a foreign language. The people who produce these programs have never read the Koran, and they do not understand the mindset of a Muslim, or know anything of the teachings of Islam. And, at the same time, the people from a Christian background — they have these Muslims running after them, pressuring them to be Muslims — trying to convince them to be Muslims and giving them the ‘bright face’ of Islam first, but hiding the reality of its oppression and futility. And, God they don’t have the foundation to defend Christianity, or even to understand what it means to be a Christian. God, You cannot leave these countries trapped in this darkness.”

I was praying and weeping and interceding, and literally, I felt like I was floating 20 centimeters above my bed. I sensed a power raising me up. And, God said to me, “I heard your prayer.”

The next day I left Tunisia for U.S., and after that, the Tunisian authorities kicked my friend out of Tunisia because he had received me, a Christian pastor.

After this, I tried to return to Tunisia under my Egyptian name, but I could not obtain a visa. A few years later, I heard that the Tunisian government is now aware of at least two or three Christian groups who meet.

A leader of one of these groups told me this story. He is a Muslim convert to Christianity, and as he began to share his faith with others, he led about twenty Muslims to Christ. They would meet in his apartment and praise and worship God softly, so as not to disturb his Muslim neighbors.

Yet, his neighbor soon figured out that there was a meeting, and, as he eavesdropped on their singing, he concluded it was a Christian meeting. So, he reported them to the police, and the police came and brought this house church leader to the police station for questioning.

The house church leader told me, “On my way to the police station, I told myself, ‘They already know you are a Christian, and they know you had a meeting, so they will probably put you in jail. You might as well evangelize the officer and tell him about the teachings in the Bible. You have nothing to

lose.' And, when the officer interrogated me, and asked about the teachings in the Bible, I gave him the full message of the gospel. And, I told him I wasn't a Muslim anymore. When the officer heard this, he asked me, 'So what do you believe about Mohammed?'

"And, I told him, 'You know what? I will not answer this question, because I'm not a Muslim anymore. I'm a Christian. If you ask me about Jesus, I will answer you about Jesus. But, you should give me the answer about Mohammed, because you are a Muslim. I'm not a Muslim.'

"So, he says to me, 'What about the president of Tunisia? What's your attitude towards him?'

"And, I said, 'The Bible taught us to pray for the presidents and the leaders and we pray for our president every time we come together; we pray for the president and pray for our country and we pray for the peace of our country.'

"And, he said to me, 'I will leave you to do whatever you want on one condition: don't make any problems for your neighbors. If you want to have meetings in your apartment, have meetings in your apartment, but don't make any problems for your neighbors.'

"I was so surprised when he said this to me, because I was prepared to go to jail, and then, he just set me free and said not to bother my neighbors. I was so happy, and we came together the very next week and I shared with my group what had happened. Then, we began to sing and the same neighbor reported me to the same police officer once again.

"This time, the police officer told me at the station, 'I told you to go ahead and have your meeting, but don't bother your neighbors. Now you are bothering your neighbors, and this is why they are reporting you to us.'

"So, I said to him, 'We are twenty in number. Even if all of us just whispered along with the song we are singing, the whispers of twenty this neighbor will hear. And, he will come and report us to you.'

"Then, he got mad, and said, 'So, why don't you just go and have your meeting in this English Church?'

"But, officer, I don't have permission to do this. If you want me to do this, then just give me the permission and we will meet in the English Church.'

"Then, he said: 'You have my permission. Go and get your guys and meet in the English Church.'

This story is so amazing! This underground church, comprised of native Tunisians who were former Muslims, now meets in a historical English Church, and it's all happening right under the eyes of the secret police!

Similar testimonies to God's awesome provision for the Tunisian Christians are occurring in many villages in Tunisia, and I thank God for the new churches God is planting in Tunisia. Now, we have one missionary in Tunisia, who operates a house church that meets weekly, and they praise and worship Jesus in Tunisia.

Prayer:

Dear God,

I praise You for Your awesome miracles in Tunisia. Father, increase my faith to believe that You are a God of miraculous provision and the author of divine appointments. Please grant me both the faith to believe in Your miracles, as well as the willingness to suffer for Jesus' sake and for the gospel's sake in a world filled with those who do not know You.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Twelve

Hearing the Lord's voice of love

The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (John 10:3)

How to discern the voice of God is one of the more important subjects that Christians need to understand. When I speak at conferences, or to gatherings of Christian brothers and sisters, and I give them an opportunity to ask questions, maybe 90 percent of them ask, "How can I hear the voice of God? How can I be sure that this is the voice of God? How can I be sure that this is not the enemy that is talking to me, or that it is not me saying what I want to hear, but that it really is the voice of God?"

A popular saying is "the need is the call." Let me first say that to work in the Middle East, among Muslims in a dangerous, potentially violent climate, you cannot do ministry based solely upon your desire to show compassion to others, or even solely upon your desire to spread the gospel. These, of course, are worthy motives. However, there are so many great ministry needs in the Middle East, and there are hundreds of fields in which to work for the Lord's glory. How will you choose specifically where to expend your brief time on earth, when the need is so great, if you do not seek God's will for your particular time of ministry? God has a specific calling and a specific plan for you, and divine appointments awaiting you, as well as warnings of obstacles, in-

cluding things within your own heart that you may not even see in yourself. He has a calling appointed just for you.

So, if you are to be willing and supple clay in God’s hands, you have to hear the voice of God as clear as you would hear my voice now if you were with me as I am recording this testimony.

This doesn’t mean, however, that every time God speaks to you, you will hear an audible voice in your ear. God speaks in many ways.

God speaks to us through the Bible.

Many times God speaks to us through the Bible, as we read passages of scripture. For example, when I was reading Isaiah 19 God spoke to me about “the highway.” Although I had read Isaiah 19 many times before, God chose that one day to give me illumination about this subject of the highway between Egypt, Israel and Assyria. While I was reading this passage, I was thinking to myself, and asking questions about this passage, and, then I began to read and search the scriptures for more about this highway, like Isaiah 40:3, and 57:14. God began to speak to me through these verses, too, and He asked me, “To whom did I write this? Did I write this to Jesus to build the highway, or to you and your brothers — the Christians — to build the highway?”

Then, I said, “No God, I think that you wrote this to us.”

The Bible is one of the cornerstone ways through which God speaks to us. This is why it is so important for you to really study and know the Bible, verse by-verse and book-by-book. Every part of the Bible is useful for training us, guiding us, and equipping us for every good work God calls us to do. (*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* “2 Tim. 3:16)

A new Christian, or a new convert from Islam, will not know the Bible, as he or she hasn’t had time to read it. In this newly born phase of Christian life, God often speaks in unmistakable ways. He often directs these new believers through visions, prophetic dreams, and prophecies that warn or encourage. He understands that the newly born soul is a baby in Christ, and, as a baby, he needs the attentive care of a God who cares for him like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. (Luke 13:34) He is right there, giving signs, audible warnings, and even miraculous healings for converts in Islamic countries, where newly-born believers may face death from enraged relatives, and all kinds of tribulations.

However, God expects us to grow beyond this early mothering stage, and to grow into knowing Him through His Word — to always have this plumb line clearly in our minds in order to evaluate whether the Lord is speaking to us, or another voice the voice of a stranger. When we know scripture, then He will give us warnings or guidance using His Word.

If you study the Bible with an open heart, you will not be constantly wondering if a leading or conviction or thought you have is from the Lord. You

will have confidence in Him who leads you. And, for those times when you may face unseen dangers that the Lord wants you to avoid, you will receive a clear, almost irresistible warning from God that will suddenly intrude upon you. You will know, and you will be moved to take action, because He who leads us is faithful. You will have a sure foundation, and, over time, you will live less like a person who needs your hand held to cross every street, and more as a tried-and-true vessel of God, who seamlessly moves under the leading of the Holy Spirit. You will be confident in your relationship with your heavenly Father. You will live as an obedient servant, whose Master tells him to "Go," or "Come" and he obeys. (Matthew 8:9)

It was this way with the Prophet Samuel. In I Samuel 3, Samuel heard a voice so real that three times he assumed it came from another person — Eli. Scripture tells us the word of the Lord was rare at that time, and there were not many visions. Later, as Samuel become Israel's spiritual leader, God answered him in a different way. He didn't use a loud voice. Instead, God spoke to Samuel and Israel, not with an audible voice, but with deliverance, as the Lord, with loud thunder, routed the Philistines by throwing them into a panic. (1 Sam. 7:10) These miracles of deliverance are also common among Muslim converts. Weather, and other physical circumstances have, many times, been used by God to deliver a convert from the jaws of death.

God also uses other ways to speak to us. It does not mean that these ways are better than hearing the voice of God through scripture. It just means that He chooses different ways at different times to guide us and help us.

God speaks to us through others

One way God speaks to us is through using another person. This has happened to me many times. God frequently uses other believers to encourage us, warn us, or guide us in a specific matter.

At certain times in your Christian walk, you may realize that a person is talking to you with words of wisdom from God. This can happen, for example, when someone is praying with you, and tells you he has heard God speaking about some specific thing in your life. Then, there are other times when the person doesn't know he is being used by God to speak to you. For example, when I questioned God — "Where is Moses? Why you didn't fulfill your prophecy? You promised me that you would use me like Moses in Egypt?"⁸ God answered me a little while later, during the pastor's sermon. Without even being aware of it, this pastor spoke to me about a very specific matter that I had taken to the Lord a few hours earlier with many tears. He was unaware that God was using him, at this time, to minister to me.

At other times, people will tell you that they have something to share with you that they received from the Lord.

Of course, you must take care to confirm these things, by praying to God, and using discernment, until you are sure of God's leading in the matter.

⁸ See Chapter Six.

Sometimes a person will speak out of his own understanding, and not from the Lord’s viewpoint.

Here’s an example of this from my own life. I had many different leadings and words from people telling me I was to come to America, and that I must wait until God had provided me a base from which to develop a ministry to the Middle East before reuniting with my family, who were still in Egypt. However, one person spoke to me from her own opinion, telling me I shouldn’t be apart from my wife and child. Her opinion was in disagreement with the many other times God had spoken to me about the same subject.

Sometimes, the Lord will speak to us using other people bearing strange things we would not, on our own accord, look to for spiritual guidance:

Things like fortune cookies! At least, that is what God once used to help me to learn a very important spiritual lesson..Although, let me state emphatically that I do not believe in using fortune cookies to know the will of God for my life, and I do not recommend this to anyone! However, God chose this strange thing to give me a powerful lesson.

This happened when I was co-pastoring a Christian Arabic church in Anaheim. We had some difficulties within the church, and there were some church members who were questioning the pastoral leadership in a non-edifying and hurtful way. I was thinking that I should do something about this, and that I should try to stop the situation. I felt this situation was sapping my time, and distracting me from the Lord’s ministry.

At this time, I had an agreement with the Lord in which I expected Him to teach me a lesson every week. So each week, I would spend some time with the Lord anticipating receiving a new lesson. He gave me hundreds of lessons in this way — every week I received a new lesson from the Lord. When I say lesson, I mean something that really impacted my life — a big lesson from the Lord.

On this particular week, my brother was visiting me from Egypt, and I took him to San Francisco, where we spent a nice time together. On Saturday morning, we were checking out of the hotel to return to Los Angeles, and, while my brother was paying the bill, I was thinking about the problem with the church. “How can I stop these church members from doing these things that are causing me to be so upset? How can I talk to them and maybe even teach them a lesson?”

So, I’m standing there outside the hotel, thinking about this problem, and suddenly, I realized that I had not spent any time with God that week. So, I just raised my heart to the Lord, and I said, “Lord, I’m sorry, because I didn’t spend this time with you this week, and I surely cannot blame you. I cannot ask you why you did not teach me the lesson of this week, because I didn’t take time to be with you to receive it. But, you know what, Lord? This is Saturday morning and Saturday is the last day of the week, so I’m expecting that you will teach me a lesson this week anyway. In a few seconds you can teach me a big lesson. Please, don’t skip my lesson this week because of my own foolishness — because I forgot to spend time with you.

I'm praying this simple prayer, and then I hear my brother say, "Did you read this paper?" He was now standing behind me, and before I even looked to see what he was talking about, the Lord told me that this was the lesson for this week. God said, "This is the solution to the problem in the church. This is what I want you to do tomorrow."

So, I looked over at my brother to see what he was talking about. After he had paid the bill for the hotel, the person at the desk had given him a fortune cookie — the kind you find in Chinese restaurants. And, as soon as he had opened it, he had heard God say, "This is for Nagy." That's why he was asking me to read the paper. That's why he said, "Do you know what this paper says?"

And, when God told me this was my lesson for the week, I grabbed the paper from his hand and I read it. I never depend upon fortune cookies to know the voice of God. I've never done that. I never believe what I read in these fortune cookies, because that would be superstitious. However, in this particular case, God spoke to me through this paper. When I unfolded it and opened it, this is what was written on the paper: "The man who wants to lead the orchestra has to give his back to the multitude."

When I read this, God spoke to me about what was happening in the church, and He said it was the same thing that had happened to Nehemiah, when people tried to hinder him from the ministry of building the wall around the city of Jerusalem. This was a great thing Nehemiah was about to do, and they tried by all means to hinder him. They discouraged him by telling him he wasn't doing a good job. They criticized and mocked his work, saying that the wall he was building was so flimsy, even a fox could knock it down. Some accused him of rebelling against the king, and they tried by all means to stop him. But, Nehemiah had only one answer for all these people:

"I am doing a great work for the Lord. I have no time for you." (Neh. 6:3-4)

So, the Lord told me that the answer to this problem was for me to give my back to the multitude, and to devote my attention to the work of the ministry. And, this was one of the most important lessons I have ever received in my life from God: to just focus my attention on leading the orchestra, because God is there watching me and listening to the music that I conduct from the orchestra. I need to put all my energy — all my concentration — on just leading the orchestra so that I can achieve exactly the right melody and bring sweet music to the Lord for His ears to hear. If, instead, I get wrapped up into distractions with anything other than pleasing Him and giving Him the best that I can do, then I am sinning against Him.

Many times, the enemy has sent endless numbers of his helpers just to oppose me from doing many, many things. And, each time this happens, God says to me, "Remember the San Francisco lesson: You have to give your back to the multitude if you want to concentrate in your walk. Don't be concerned with what people say about you. Don't be concerned with what people say about your ministry. Do the right thing and I will be faithful to my promise, and I will let your enemies come and lay down before you."

This was one of my most important lessons in ministry from God, and He used my brother, too, as the messenger, which is the second way God speaks to us: through other people.

God speaks to us through circumstances

Sometimes God talks to us through circumstances — through open doors and through closed doors. The Bible says what God opens, no one can close, and what He closes, no one can open. However, as with this way, and in every way the Lord speaks to you, you need to have a discerning spirit. Otherwise, you will go by trial and error and God’s children need not rely on this kind of experimentation. Don’t take the approach: “We will try that, and if it doesn’t work, we will try another thing.” That’s not what I mean by hearing or listening to the voice of God. Trust that God will give you help in deciding which course to take. If He’s silent in a particular matter, continue to seek Him in prayer until you come to the place where the matter is settled in your heart.

Sometimes, God will open the door, and He tells you to go through this open door. At other times, you will find an open door and God tells you, “Don’t go through this open door because it’s not from Me.” Then, vice versa, sometimes you come to a closed door, and God tells you He will open this door. And, at other times, He tells you to wait until the door is open. Still other times, God says “Go through this closed door, and when you begin to move towards this closed door, I will open it for you.” In this case, you have to go forward in faith, seeing a closed door, yet expecting and acting upon the belief that God will open it, because this is what He has put into your heart. This happens, because God wants to increase our faith.

When God told the Israelites to cross over the Jordan River, He asked them to carry the Ark of the Covenant, and as soon as the Levites put their feet into the river, that’s when the waters parted. If they had stayed on the shore praying for God to open the Jordan, as He did the Red Sea, it would not have worked. Why? It was because God talked to them, and asked them to put their feet first into the Jordan. (Joshua 3)

This is why we need to discern which open doors and closed doors are from the Lord, and which ones are from the enemy: Because, we don’t depend on open or closed doors as much as we depend upon the Lord’s guidance — what He speaks to our inner man.

God speaks to us when we pray

When we pray, we take our petition to God. We ask God to solve a problem, or to guide us in a particular instance. Most of the time, if we are faithful, and come humbly and expectantly before the Lord, giving Him our focused attention; then, while we are still praying, God will give us ideas and solutions. In these cases, He answers our prayers immediately when we pray. Sometimes, it’s not right away. In those times, scripture tells us not to give

up, but to keep on praying until we receive an answer. (Luke 18:1) The main point, here, is that we should keep on praying, and God will teach us something and answer this thing we are bringing to Him.

I remember a time when God used me to answer another believer's heartfelt prayer, and, at first, I did not want to do it. Sometimes, when God speaks to us in our heart, we know full well it is God speaking, but we are reluctant to do it, because our selfish concerns interfere with our desire to obey the Lord. This was the case with me in this instance, and I learned my lesson to be obedient, even though I struggled hard to avoid what I feared would be embarrassment.

I was born and raised spiritually in a denomination that believes in prophecies and visions and all these things. Many times, I heard my brothers and sisters — the Christians in the Middle East — saying things like: "God told me this," and "God told me that," and "God is telling you to do this and not to do this." Most of these pronouncements later proved not true, because people were often voicing their own opinions instead of God's. As a result of this experience, I had a place in my heart that was very resistant to the notion that I, or someone else, should speak to another person and say, "God is telling me that you are to do something." I didn't like to hear someone telling me, "God says this," or "God wants you to do that." In my past experience, such advice had turned out to be wrong. When I came from Egypt to America, this was my attitude.

However, by this time, I had been well trained to hear and listen to the voice of God. I'm not claiming to be a prophet. However, I have heard the voice of God speaking to me many times, and later events have proven this guidance to be from God. Still, I did not like the idea of someone telling me, "God tells me you should do so and so," or, in the same way, the idea that I should tell someone else, "God tells me you should do so and so."

One day I was in a prayer meeting with around 20 believers, after I had come to the States. I heard something inside me that was not an audible voice, but a leading from God pointing me to one woman. I understood, at this moment, that God was telling me to go and lay my hand over her head and pray for her.

I was very troubled by this, and I immediately said, "No way. This woman is from a denomination that doesn't believe in laying on of hands, or having someone touch her and pray for her. This woman is a physician, and she certainly wouldn't be the type of person to go on her emotions." But, I heard God speaking to me in my heart: "You go and pray for her and lay your hand upon her."

Two other pastors were ministering at this prayer meeting. One of them was leading the prayer meeting, and one of them was moving from person to person, ministering to individual people, and praying for them. I was sitting over on one side, and God was continuing to speak to me, asking me to pray for this woman. I said, "God, I can't do this. There are many problems here. I'm from the Middle East, and it's not polite to touch a woman in church, or to

lay your hand upon her. This is a woman. I can't touch a woman and put my hand over head. And, also, what will these people think of me, if I leave my place, go over to this woman, and pray for her? Please, please, I don't want to pray for this woman!”

This inner wrestling went on for about five minutes, and then God spoke to me, and said, “You are not obeying Me. I want you to lay your hand upon this woman and pray for her.”

And, I again told God, “There is no way that I can do that. Why don't you ask one of the other pastors to do this? They live here in America and are more familiar with this culture so they can do this without problems. But, I'm coming from the Middle East and I will go back to the Middle East, in my ministry, and I can't touch a woman and lay my hand over her head. This is like a big no, no in my culture.”

Then, suddenly, a thought came to me a memory from 25 years before. I was walking with my pastor in Egypt one day, and he told me, “Nagy, God used to tell me things that He wanted me to tell others, or He used to ask me to do something and, out of what I thought was humbleness, I kept telling him, No, God, I can't go to this woman to pray, or I can't go to this man to pray, or I can't tell them that you want to deliver this message to them. You know what Nagy? I lost this privilege from the Lord, and it's my advice to you, that whenever God tells you something, do it. Don't tell Him no.”

Then, I heard the voice of God again, and He said, “This is the last time I will ask you to do anything for Me, if you don't obey Me and go and lay your hand over this woman's head and pray for her.”

“God, I don't know what to pray for how can I pray for her? For what reason can I pray for her?”

“You go and pray in the Spirit.”

When God told me that this was the last time He would use me to do something for Him, I was terrified. I trembled at this thought.

“OK, I'll do this, but, please, allow me to ask You one last thing, Lord. I'm afraid to go and pray for this woman, so can You lead this pastor, who is leading the prayer meeting, to say anything to encourage me to do this? Just ask him to say something like ‘other pastors may pray with me,’ or anything that I can take as a sign and be encouraged to pray for this woman.” And, God is my witness, as soon as I finished praying this request, the pastor leading the service said, “There is someone here and God is telling you to go and lay your hand over someone's head and pray for him or her, and you keep saying, ‘No, I don't want to do that, I'm afraid, I don't know what's the subject of the prayer,’ and so on. God is telling you, ‘Move! Put your hand over the head of whomever God tells you, and be obedient to God.”

God gave me so much confirmation, by including so many specific details! I certainly didn't expect this. At this point, I jumped up and ran over to this woman, and I asked her, “May I pray for you?” and she said, “Yes.” She started to rise to a standing position, and I said “No, No, No. Just stay in your place, and I will lay my hand upon your head. I don't know why, but God is

telling me that I have to come and lay my hand upon your head. I don't know what the subject of your request to the Lord is, and I don't want to know. I will just pray and obey God, and He will do whatever He wills with you."

I prayed for her and, and then I was released by God to return to my place. The next day, this woman called me, and she said, "You know what Nagy? When you came and put your hand upon my head, I was crying inside for help. I told the Lord, if you still remember me by my name, and not just that I'm a member in this church — not just that I'm one of the twenty people here who pray to you — and, if you know, and if you hear my prayers, and you know me by name, let Nagy, or Nabil, or Rafat — one of the three pastors here — come and lay a hand upon my head." She told me how encouraged she was, and what a confirmation it was for her, when I came to her and laid my hand upon her head and prayed for her.

After this prayer meeting, she told me that she kept praying until the next day, when God blessed her, and poured out His spirit upon her and she received the joy of the Holy Spirit.

I, too, was blessed by this experience, to know that God used me to encourage this woman, and I thought, "God used me with this woman." Then He said, "No, No, No. This is not the first aim you are to pursue with this testimony. I used her to teach you. You prayed for her, but through her, I taught you a lesson, and this is: When you hear Me, you must obey Me."

God allowed me to go through many, many, experiences like this — each one resulting in another testimony to His patience and love for me.

Another time, I went to a prayer meeting where I found two pastors praying for one woman, and an evil spirit was tormenting her. They were praying and praying for her, and every few minutes, she began to retch, and they allowed her to go to the restroom again and again thinking she was about to vomit. She would return, no better. In fact, she grew ever more terrified.

Two pastors were praying for her, and I moved close by and sat down on a sofa, while they were standing over her and praying. Meanwhile, I was silently praying to God for her, and about 15 minutes later, God spoke to me,

and said, "Hold her hand, and thank Me for healing her. And, she will immediately be happy and at peace, and this issue will be resolved forever."

So I said, "God, how can this be? There are two pastors who have struggled for two hours now, and are praying for her. These are godly people, and I know You will use them to heal her. How can I just walk over and hold her hand and expect these results?"

"Do whatever I tell you to do. She will not be delivered of this problem, unless you hold her hand and thank Me for healing her. I will use you to change these circumstances now.

I was still hesitant to do this, because I was thinking that maybe one of the pastors would say to me, "We have prayed for her for two hours, and now you walk up and hold her hand and pray for her?" I didn't want to offend them. Sometimes you don't want to do what God is asking you to do, because you don't want to offend others. This is a lie you believe, because God will

oftentimes be speaking to the other Christians, too, and they will not be offended. And, even if they are — even if He allows you to offend others — it is His will to offend them, and this is not your concern. Your business is to just obey God.

I was thinking about all this, and I heard one of the pastors saying, “I feel like there is someone here who needs to come here and hold this sister’s hand and pray for her, and whomever God is now leading to do this, please come here and hold her hand. Pray for her and we will come to the end of this situation.

I was sitting very close by, so I just stretched out my hand to her and she took my hand, and I began to praise God for healing her and for delivering her from this satanic attack. Immediately, her whole demeanor changed, and she began to dance and to praise God, and to laugh and be joyful. She was healed and delivered in about three minutes time.

Again, I thanked God that He had used me in this way, but He said, “No, I used this woman with you, because I wanted to teach you that you are to hear My voice and obey. Don’t argue with Me. Don’t say, ‘No.’ Don’t say, ‘Why?’ You just do it. Do whatever I tell you to do.”

These are hard lessons to learn.

God speaks to us through our pastors

Another way God speaks to us is through the offices of the church — our pastors and elders. Theologically and spiritually, preaching is prophesying. When I preach, I’m supposed to be prophesying — telling people about their problems; about their future hope as believers and God’s promises to us; how God wants to deal with them; and how He corrects us. According to the Bible, when a pastor or elder prophesies, he preaches. Whoever preaches is really prophesying. So, one of the ways God speaks to us is through our leaders and through our preachers. You should assume pastors, who have a close relationship with God based on the scripture, and who listen to God and live a godly life, are speaking messages by the Spirit of God.

I remember a time when I was in a Sunday evening service in Pastor Nabil Abraham’s church in Anaheim, and he was preaching about hearing the voice of God. Then, he just looked at me and said, “Nagy, how can you be sure that God told you to do something, and how can you be sure this is from God?”

I didn’t want the attention focused upon me at that moment — I didn’t want to interrupt his preaching — so, I just smiled and said, “When God tells you something, as a believer, you will know this is God, and you had better obey.” Then, I stopped talking.

He continued preaching. When he finished the sermon, he said, “Let’s stand and close with prayer.” However, before he started to pray, God told me, “Look at this one woman in the congregation, and tell her, ‘Thus says the Lord, you looked for your healing in the last year. You went to many doctors.

They gave you all kinds of medicines, but these just made your case worse. God says He has healed you today."

As a co-pastor of this church, I thought that if I said to this woman, "God healed you," and she wasn't healed it would create a huge problem, both for me, and for the congregation, too. The church members might say, "Nagy told this woman these things and it never came to pass." I was afraid of this. Then, I looked at her from the corner of my eye, and I saw that she had a very bad skin disease, which had peeled off the first layer of her skin. Very big patches that resembled red meat splotched her face, and these patches looked terrible, in contrast to her pale complexion.

That same Sunday morning this woman had been talking to my wife, and she was very upset with the other church members. She said to her, "I'm not coming to this church anymore, because I tried to greet one of the ladies and to kiss her⁹ and she acted disgusted. I could tell from the expression on her face. I don't have a contagious disease, so why did she do that to me? I was so embarrassed in front of everyone. So, I can't go to this church anymore.

She was so upset. And, my wife asked her, "Why don't you go to a different dermatologist?"

"I went to one and he gave me an ointment, and this made the condition even worse. That's why I look like this now."

After the Sunday meeting, my wife came to me and told me about this conversation. "Nagy, she is so upset, and so depressed, so please pray for her". And, also, just talk to her and try to encourage and comfort her." And, I said that I would.

So this is right before the end of the service, and at this moment God is telling me to look at her and to tell her, "You tried to find your healing in this last year, and you only got into a worse situation, but I have healed you."

And, as I looked at her with the corner of my eye, I said to myself, "Oh she's not healed yet, and God wants me to say this to her before she is healed."

Well, I stopped the meeting and I looked at her and I said, "Thus says the Lord, 'I healed you, and I said the other things He told me to say, too.

After the service closed with a prayer, I approached her, so that I could shake her hand, and she was so rude and aggressive with me. "Did your wife tell you what I told her in the morning?"

"Yes," I said.

"Oh, thank you so much! You tried to encourage me in front of everyone by telling me that God healed me. But, God did not heal me, as you can still see. I still have this disease on my face!" And, I said, "You know what? God said 'I healed you.'"

"No! I'm not healed, and I will not be healed."

"Why not?" I asked.

"I don't have the faith to be healed. I don't have faith that God will heal

⁹ The traditional greeting in the Middle East is for each sex to greet the same sex by kissing each other lightly upon each cheek.

me. I think I need to have faith to be healed, right?”

“Yes, that’s right.

“Well, I don’t have faith, and I’m not going to be healed.”

I didn’t know what to tell her, and I looked at her, and said, “This is what God told me — that you are healed. If you accept your healing, that’s it. If you don’t, it’s up to you.”

Then she said, “Don’t you know that I can also pray like you? Don’t you know that God can speak to me in the same way He speaks to you? God can speak to me directly. So, I don’t accept what you say, and I will not be healed.”

“It’s up to you Auntie,” and I left her.

On my way back to my house, I began to cry like a baby, and I asked the Lord, “Why did You do that to me? Why did You tell me to do this? I am sure that this is your voice. Why did You tell me to tell this woman these things? You know that she has no faith. You know that she refuses her healing. So, why are You putting me in this situation? Now, the people will not say that she doesn’t have faith, or she doesn’t want to be healed. They will say that the pastor of the church gave a false prophecy.”

I was so upset, and my wife tried in vain to comfort me. I told her, “Please don’t talk to me. I have to resolve this between me and God.”

When we arrived at our apartment, I told her, “I am going into this room and I will be there forever until God talks to me and explains to me why He did this to me — why He told me to give this woman this prophecy.”

Then, I went inside this room, and you can imagine my frustration and depression and weeping.

“Please, God: tell me what’s wrong? If I heard You wrong, I will go before the church and I will apologize to everybody, but if You told me to tell her that, You just explain the situation to me.”

Then, God showed me her face completely healed. It was so white and clear and smooth, and she was laughing and dancing, and the Lord said, “When I say that she is healed, she is healed.”

And, that was all He said to me. I couldn’t continue praying, and I began to praise the Lord, saying to Him, “You know what? I believe You now. I saw this vision. I heard You again speak to me. It’s not my business if she will not accept what You say. Next Sunday I will stand in the church and I will tell them this testimony, and I will say You healed this woman, but she refused to take her healing.”

This was on Sunday night. On Monday night, I spoke with her by phone, and I said, “Auntie, I was praying for you, because what you said on Sunday night, made me very upset, and God told me, ‘When I say that she is healed, then she is healed.’ So, Auntie, if you want to accept this healing, you can accept it anytime. If you don’t, then next Sunday, I will tell the church that God promised you a healing, and that you refused it.”

On Tuesday night, her son called me. He said, “I have good news! I went to see my Mom this morning, just to comfort her, because she was so depressed by what happened on Sunday night. And, she opened the door for me and her face was completely healed! ‘Oh, my God!’ I said to my Mom.

Then, I asked her, 'What happened to your face?'

"She said, 'I went into a room by myself, and I began to pray and I told God I was sorry that I had not believed Him; that I had not believed Nagy when he told me that God has healed me. So, God, I need my healing.'

"She walked out of that room completely healed!"

Many times, people will tell you that God is telling them to tell you something, and they will say something vague, like: "The problem that you are praying for — God will solve it." But, what Christian is not praying for God to solve a problem? These words could be for anyone, and could apply to any situation. However, there's a huge difference between issuing vague pronouncements from God, and giving someone a message from God specific to them, with specific details. Through spiritual training and experience, you will know when God is leading you to do this. You must not allow your emotions to cause you to speak a false prophecy to someone else based upon your own imaginings. And, you must also not allow your emotions to cause you to shrink back and not deliver a message from God to someone, because you are fearful of people's reaction.

Trust me in this: If you desire to be used of God, and you apply yourself to spending much time studying the Bible and praying in your prayer closet, God will teach you how to listen to His inner leadings. Then, He will use you to minister to others. At the same time, He will teach you obedience. He is a faithful Shepherd.

The following experience illustrates what I am talking about here.

After I had just planted The Last Harvest Church, in El Cajon, Calif., I was preaching one day and, there was this woman on the pew in front of me, crying. This seemed strange to me, because I was not preaching on a particularly emotional subject that would cause a woman to cry. She continued to cry throughout the whole meeting. I didn't know the reason for her weeping.

After I had finished preaching, and we sang the last song, God told me to tell her, "I have heard your prayers, and the person you are praying for will accept the Lord this week. This problem will be solved this week."

So I looked at her, and said to her that this is what the Lord told me to tell her. After the service, she came up to me and she said, "I didn't hear anything from your sermon. Instead, I was crying to the Lord and I told Him, 'God, You have to speak to me through the pastor in the pulpit and tell me what You will do with this problem.'"

One of the elders in the church also came up to me after the service, and said, "Do you know the case you were speaking about — the one you just mentioned from the pulpit?"

"No," I said. And, he told me the story of her abusive husband, who was a professional criminal. He had embezzled millions of dollars from his employer, and he was into drugs, and adultery, and he even brought his lovers home and committed adultery right in front of his wife. He also mistreated his wife and children. The police were chasing after him for several years, but he was very crafty, and they could not apprehend him.

“Why did you tell her this week this problem will be solved?” the elder asked me. “Please, you will destroy the church by saying this. We just started this church, and you will destroy the church, because today is Sunday. Our next meeting is at the end of the week. Do you really think this hardened criminal will come to the Lord this week — will come to his wife’s church to be saved?”

“He doesn’t have to come to the church to accept the Lord. The Lord can talk to him even in his bed and convert him,” I said.

“No,” he said. “Please, when you have any prophecy please don’t say the times. Don’t say the days. Just make it open.”

“You say that because, yeah, it’s easy to say, ‘One day, he will be saved.’ In that case, there is no way to know if this is a prophecy, or not. So what is the good of doing that?”

At this, he became so angry. Then he repeated himself, and begged me not to do this again — not to give a specific prophecy like that. “Please don’t times, don’t say days, and don’t say hours.”

The next day, which was Monday, this criminal was passing by his house, while the police were hot on his trail. He knew the police were aware that he had not been at his house for four months, because they had come by his house in the last month to ask about him. He thought to himself, “This is the best place to hide, because they would never think I would be here after they had just asked about me.”

He knocked on the door, and his wife opened the door, and his seven year-old daughter was also there. The moment she saw her father, she told him, “You are a sinner. You will perish in hell. You will go to hell forever. And, Jesus loves you and He wants to change your life. If you kneel down with me and pray with me, God will change your life and you will accept Him as your savior.

Then, this hardened criminal knelt with his young child, and he gave his heart to Jesus! He was saved and delivered on Monday morning. After that, of course, he stopped running from the police, and he turned himself in. He spent almost seven years in jail, and I went to visit him there. When I did, I found him preaching the gospel to the other prisoners, and he told me that he was grateful to God for putting him in this “Bible school” and teaching him how to be a Christian inside the jail.

You should go to church and wait for the Lord to speak to you through a godly pastor. If the Lord brought you to the church on a Sunday morning, or a Friday night, or whenever the church meets, and someone is preaching, he’s preaching to you, and God wants him to speak to you. You can hear God through the message that comes from the pulpit. So come into the Lord’s house, in a place where God has placed a godly pastor who is faithful to the scriptures, and has been tested and found to have genuine fruit, and expect to hear the Lord speak to your heart.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Teach me to follow You, Lord, and to be obedient to the things You place upon my heart. Train me to hear Your voice and to obey You. Give me the assurance that You are a faithful and true Shepherd and You will lead me all the way home.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Thirteen

A voice in my ear

“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”
(Phil. 4:19)

God sometimes uses a less common method for speaking to us — an audible voice in our ears. I think this is very rare, however. The usual way He speaks to us is through the Bible, prayers, and receiving His convictions and words from others.

God spoke to me in an audible way when I was still living in Egypt. I had read a book called *Tortured for Christ*, written by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand. His testimony of enduring 14 years in Romanian communist prisons has been told around the world and is a very famous story. When I read this book the first time, and I saw how much Richard had suffered for Christ, God touched me so much through his story. As I read this book, I considered how much his testimony and preaching would edify the brothers and sisters in Egypt, who also suffered similar persecutions. This is why I wanted to invite him to speak in Egypt.

Sometime later, I was passing by my church, not aware that a meeting was taking place. Realizing something was going on, and curious as to what it might be, I went inside, and there I found an old man preaching. He was

also barefoot. As I listened to his stories, I realized that this was the man who had written *Tortured for Christ*. Then, I knew why he had taken off his shoes. The years of torture, which included beating the soles of his feet numerous times, had left him with chronic pain in his feet. When he spoke at churches, he often removed his shoes in an effort to relieve this pain.

I found out that one of the brethren had invited him to Egypt to speak in several churches. I considered how wonderful it would be to bring Richard back to speak to many different churches, and not a few churches. There were so many more Egyptians who needed to hear this message.

“Our Egyptian Christian Youth Union could invite him and take him to different places and different churches to preach,” I thought to myself. I continued to dream about doing this for some time. What a big encouragement Richard would be to Egypt’s churches. .

One day I was riding on a very crowded bus. The public transportation in Egypt is extremely crowded, and, sometimes people literally cling to the outside of the bus, hanging on the doors, and even sitting upon the top. This day was so hot, and the bus motor roared so loud, and as the press of the crowd squeezed against me, I felt like I would suffocate under the weight of the heat. It seemed as if a huge hand was squeezing the life out of me. I felt like I was going to die. So, to take my mind off the extreme physical discomfort of this bus trip, I turned my thoughts to the Egyptian Christian Youth Union and its many projects serving the churches, as well as the many needs for new projects, too. I began to pray, asking the Lord for money for this thing, and for that thing — all of these desires for projects and things that I wanted to do for the Lord. And, one of the things I asked God to do, if He would give me the money, was to invite Richard Wurmbrand to come to Egypt.

Suddenly, I heard a voice in my ear. I think this voice had to be right in my ear, because there was so much noise around me, yet this voice was louder than all the other sounds around me. It even rose above the din of the roaring bus motor, which seemed to be groaning in protest, as it strained to move such an overcrowded bus through the streets of Cairo.

Immediately, I knew this voice to be the Lord’s voice. “I don’t pay in advance,” He said. “I want you to do whatever I tell you to do, and I will pay, but I will not pay in advance.”

When I thought about this on the bus that day, I said to myself, “This is right, because if God gave us money and other resources in advance for the things we want to do for Him, this will diminish our faith. Having money ahead of time will not build our faith in God.”

From that day forward, this message from God began to change my thinking. I realized that if the Lord told me to do something, I have to do it whether I have money lined up or not. I should rest in the assurance that God would provide for everything needed for whatever ministry projects He calls me to do. I decided I would start the projects He calls me to do, trusting that He would pay for it when the time comes.

And, I also understood from God, through this voice I had heard on the

bus, that He wanted me to invite Richard Wurmbrand to Egypt. I didn't know how to contact Richard, but I did know the man who had invited Richard the first time he had come to Egypt, and I thought to myself, “I have to go to this guy and share with him the Lord's leading for me to bring Richard back to Egypt.”

I didn't have this man's address, but we shared a mutual friend, and so I went to him to ask for the contact information I needed. I was very surprised when I arrived at this friend's apartment and the man I needed to contact was already there, waiting for me. As soon as he saw me, he said, “Praise God, I came here because of you.”

And, I said, “I came here because of you, too!”

As it so happened, we had both received a leading from God to go to this mutual friend in order to get the contact information for each other. This was another example of God's personal paging service at work, through the Holy Spirit!

“So,” I said — after we shared our mutual amazement at how the Lord had worked to bring us together — “what do you want to talk to me about?”

And, he said, “No, I am the older one, so you tell me first what you need.”

“God is talking to me so clearly, and He told me to invite Richard Wurmbrand to Egypt. I didn't know how to contact Richard, and I didn't want to try and find out how to reach him without consulting with you first, since you were the person who brought him to Egypt the first time. So, I came here trying to find out how to contact you.”

He laughed at this, and said, “You know what? I am here for the same reason you are, because Richard Wurmbrand has sent me a letter saying, ‘I need to come back to Egypt.’ As I opened this letter and was reading it, God told me, ‘Share this with Nagy and have him arrange the meetings for Richard.’”

This was a huge confirmation for me that God wanted Richard to come to Egypt. It's good the Lord encouraged me, because bringing Richard back to Egypt was going to be a difficult task for several reasons.

First, Richard would speak strongly about the issue of persecuted Christians. He had suffered years in prison, enduring torture and terrible inhumane treatment. Many Arabic governments also routinely torture Christians, and particularly Muslim converts to Christianity. These governments would naturally fear anyone who openly talked about these issues in the churches, because it might awaken the people's indignation at the persecution under which they have lived their entire lives. Then, they would be encouraged to speak out about their oppression and to call upon the Western countries to pressure these governments to stop the torture and imprisonment of Christians. These governments fear anything that would possibly upset the status quo.

Secondly, there was the concern regarding Richard's ethnic Jewish background. His very identify was, for all intents and purposes, a double offence

in Egypt: He was Jewish and he was also Christian. Christians from outside Egypt are looked upon with suspicion enough, but to invite someone who is Jewish to Egypt — this is comparable to a crime in the eyes of the Egyptian government, because of the nation's fear of Israel.¹⁰

Here was a Jewish-Christian who would be speaking about persecution in Egypt, and in this one factual statement there would be enough to likely mobilize a thousand secret police in opposition to his visit. Yet, I knew that God wanted me to bring Richard to Egypt, so I approached the president of the Evangelical Church. As I said earlier, the Egyptian Christian Youth Union was under the legal oversight of this office, as the Egyptian government does not allow para-church organizations to exist as independent organizations.

"Are you crazy?" he asked, when I told him I wanted to bring Richard Wurmbrand to Egypt. "You are inviting someone who is speaking about persecution, and he is originally a Jew. So, we cannot invite him to Egypt."

Then, the Lord gave me a word of wisdom to share with this pastor and evangelical leader. "Listen Pastor: You taught me how important it is, whenever we bring a guest to Egypt from outside the country, to put him under my arm, and to help him know what to do and what not to do. You taught me how important it is to monitor a visitor's actions so that we do not have unnecessary trouble from the police. Richard Wurmbrand has decided to come to Egypt already, and he will come whether I invite him to come or not. But, if I invite him, then we will have the position and access to be able to tell him what to say, and what not to say, so that we do not cause unnecessary problems for the churches. If another Egyptian group brings Richard to Egypt, then you and I will have no control in this situation."

He thought about what I had said for a moment. Then he admitted, "You are right. Instead of some other group inviting him, you invite him and bring him to Egypt under your organization."

Once I finalized the arrangements for Richard's trip, I was so pleased that we had been able to schedule two weeks of meetings with 17 different churches and groups in Egypt. However, in order to promote these meetings,

10 As I was in the process of editing this book, yet another convert in Egypt was imprisoned in Egypt and subjected to tortures, according to a July 18, 2007 report from *Compass News Direct*: "Fanatic Islamist relatives of Eman Muhammad el-Sayed, 26, attacked her two days [July 16, 2007] ago while she and her husband were strolling through a local fair in Alexandria. Although police intervened in the street-side fracas, they promptly arrested the victim herself, allegedly to protect her from her Muslim family. Each day since then, El-Sayed, 26, has been transferred to a security police headquarters in Alexandria, where inside sources confirmed to Compass that she has been subjected to hours of interrogation and severe physical torture... To intimidate her with the threat of public shame, she also had been forcibly disrobed and photographed naked at the Bab-Sharky police station." In an updated report, a few days later, Compass said police had handed her over to her potentially murderous relatives.

we needed to print some flyers and to distribute them to Christians telling them about Richard’s visit. The Lord had told me He would not pay in advance, and, at the same time, He had given me so much confirmation that it was His will for Richard to come to Egypt. So, I ordered the printing, expecting the Lord would send the money by the time the bill was due.

The day arrived for us to pick up the flyers and to pay for the printing. It was four o’clock in the afternoon on a very hot day when one of my assistants told me he needed to go to the printer, pay for the printing, and pick up the flyers so that the flyers could be distributed. We needed these flyers at this time, but I had no money to pay the printer. The printer wanted 70 Egyptian pounds.

“How can I get this money right now?” I thought. “My brother, Isaac — he’s doing great in his financial life. He’s so devoted to me, and to the Lord, and the ministry, too. He will surely help me this time.”

I went to my brother right away — my own flesh and blood — and I asked him, “Isaac, can you lend me 70 Egyptian pounds to pay for the printing of these flyers?”

I expected he would immediately give me the money. In fact, I was sure he would do this for me, and that he would hand me the money I needed, saying something like: “You know what? I don’t need this money. Take it.”

Instead, to my surprise, he looked at me, and said, “If you are man enough to invite Richard Wurmbrand to Egypt, how can you do that without even having 70 Egyptian Pounds?”

I felt like I had just been slapped in the face, and then the Lord spoke to me and said, “You deserve this, because you didn’t ask Me. You asked your brother and you trusted in him instead of Me. And, not only did your brother not give you the money, he insulted you, too.”

I turned to my brother, and I said, “You know what Isaac? Thank you so much, because you have taught me one of the most important lessons in my life. I’m not supposed to depend upon you, or to ask you to give me money, because I can ask God and He has the power to give me whatever I need. So thank you for teaching me this lesson.”

At this, Isaac became very upset and began to apologize over and over again. “You know how much I love you,” he said. “I am so afraid that the government and police will arrest you if this guy comes to Egypt, and that’s why I didn’t want to help you with this. I was hoping that perhaps you would change your mind and withdraw the invitation.”

“Well, Isaac, thank you anyway.”

“Here,” he said, holding the money in his hand. “Whatever you want, just take it. You can go now and pay the printer. Please take the money.”

“No, brother. God told me I deserved the insult you gave me, because I didn’t ask Him. Instead, I asked you. So, now I’m saying to God, “I repent. I’m sorry Lord that I did not ask you, but, instead, I depended upon my brother.”

I returned to the Christian brother who was waiting on me to give him the

money for the printing. He was still standing outside the door to my apartment. And, I told him, "You go to the print shop and tell the printer we need these materials and one of us will come tomorrow morning to pay this bill." However, before he even started to move, I could see a young girl running in the street on this sweltering day. As she came up to the two of us, she had rivulets of sweat trickling down her face, and she was panting.

"I was asleep," she said, still catching her breath, "and my Mom awoke me and said, 'Nagy needs this money. You have to take it to him now.' And, I told my Mom, 'Look, any need he has can surely wait until the sun sets, because right now it's so hot and I can't go. I'm too tired. I'll get dehydrated.'"

"And my Mom said, 'No. The Lord told me to get this money to Nagy right now.'" This girl handed me an envelope, and I opened it. Inside, I found 70 Egyptian Pounds.

My Christian brother took the money, picked up the printed flyers and we went from here, making all the final arrangements for Richard's speaking tour. We had an agreement with the churches in which Richard would speak:

we would receive the church offering that evening, so that we could pay for the cost of this speaking tour. All the churches agreed to this, but when Richard actually began to speak in the churches, two of the biggest churches in Egypt refused to give us the offering. They said it was too much money.

I was upset about this, but God told me, "Let them refuse to give you the offering. You will still have all that you need."

The Lord proved His words to me. Before Richard even left Egypt, we had money left over, and Richard gave me, and other brothers in the ministry checks for 200 Egyptian Pounds. And, even after he left, we found another 200 Egyptian Pounds we didn't realize we had, because those offerings had been placed in a special bag that was separate from the rest. So, after Richard left, we had actually had more money than what we had when God told me, "I don't pay in advance."

So this is yet another way that God may speak to His children — through an audible voice in our ears. Although, as I said, this is not common.

God has graciously taught me so many lessons in ministry, but perhaps the most important one of all is to trust my entire ministry to Him. He is faithful, and He promises to provide for all our needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for providing for all my needs out of Your glorious riches in Jesus. Help me believe this promise, setting it firmly in my heart. And Lord, please pour out Your abundant provisions upon the ministries and churches and believers who labor for the gospel, in the Islamic countries.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Fourteen

A light in the city

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. (Acts 17:16-18)

El Cajon, California is a city of 100,000 nestled within San Diego county and situated 17 miles inland of the Pacific Ocean. A quarter of the city's residents are of Middle Eastern origin, and almost one out of ten is a Chaldean Iraqi. We have a joke in El Cajon: The second language is English, because the first language is Chaldean. And, there are also huge numbers of Arabs, Afghanis, Pakistanis, and many other immigrants from the different cultures of the Middle East.

El Cajon is one of the darkest cities in the United States. The spiritual atmosphere is in stark contrast to the sunny days that dominate Southern California. One reason for this darkness relates to the history of ancient Chaldea, an area known in scripture as Babylon, or the land of Shinar. In Genesis 10, we see that Nimrod, the founder of the first cultic religion after The Flood, made

this the center of his kingdom.

The Bible has many references to the sorcerers of ancient Chaldea. *“But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.”* (Ezra 5:12). In this passage in Ezra, we read that God handed over the rebellious Jews to Nebuchadnezzar the *Chaldean*, king of Babylon. In the Bible, this word, Chaldean, is synonymous with astrologer. As a common noun, that’s what the word chaldean means.

And, according to the Bible, most of the ancient Chaldeans were involved with sorcery and witchcraft. We read in Daniel about the wise men, and these wise men were Chaldeans, or astrologers. This is why you will hardly find any house among Chaldeans today that is without some remnant of this culture’s vast, extensive history in the cultic arts. I’m not talking about a particular Chaldean home being a center of witchcraft. But, you will usually find in their homes writings, or idols, or pictures, or something related to the pagan gods in their history as a people. This is why, in my opinion, I see El Cajon as a dark city.

For whatever the reason, efforts to plant evangelical Arabic churches in El Cajon have not succeeded, despite many attempts. Each time a group of Arabic believers came together to start a new fellowship in this city inevitably the work was marred with dissension and unrest. The new church would split and divide into two, then those two would split into four, and two would close, while division would also beset the two surviving fellowships. And, so on and so on it went just like this for years. That is the way it has been for evangelical Arabic churches in this city.

In 1994, some Christian brothers in El Cajon invited me to speak in their Arabic church. After I had spoken, they asked me to be their pastor. And, I told them, “I have a vision. My vision is not just to be a pastor in the church, but to also have a vision for ministering in the Middle East to Muslims. If the church will adopt this vision, too, then that will fit in with my vision, but if not, I cannot be your pastor.”

They agreed to this and I pastored the church for about seven months. Even though the elders had agreed to adopt this vision, other members divided the church over this issue, as they wanted nothing to do with ministering to those souls trapped in the deception of Islam. I came to realize that pastoring this church would cause a serious hindrance to my being able to fulfill the vision the Lord had already given me for the ministry to the Middle East.

So, God asked me to go back to my previous Christian Arabic church, and continue to serve the Lord with Pastor Nabil Abraham.

In 1997, I got a phone call from a brother in El Cajon, telling me, “We don’t have a pastor.” He was referring to a small group of about eight Christians who had come from different Arabic countries. These people wanted me to come and plant a church in El Cajon — a new church.

I told them I would refuse to take members from any other Arabic church in El Cajon, because I wanted to plant a new church from new converts, and

from people who have no church. If anyone is attending another church, let him or her stay there. We don't need him in the church. That's my philosophy about planting a church. I don't believe in stealing members from other churches.

To be honest, I did not want to return to El Cajon. The previous six months I had spent in the other church had been a continuous struggle for me. However, this brother from this small group of believers in El Cajon was very persistent. For 40 days he and his wife called me every day, begging me to come and be their pastor.

I knew my wife had not enjoyed living in El Cajon before, and I avoided praying about whether this request to pastor a church in El Cajon was from God or not. If God told me to go, I knew this would be so hard for me and my wife. Well, this brother would call, and said, "Why don't you just pray? Why don't you just ask God?" And, I told him, "Frankly, I don't want to tell God no, so I'm not going to ask Him at all."

After 40 days of receiving these calls, my wife turned to me and asked me, "Why don't you pray for this matter? Because, this guy is calling you every day — literally every day — both week days and weekends. He's asking you to come to El Cajon, so why don't you pray?"

"What if God tells me to go? Will you go happily or not?"

"If God tells us to go, we will go," she said.

That wasn't exactly the answer I was looking for — mere resignation.

I did not want to hear God telling me, "Go to El Cajon," and, later, hear my wife saying, "I'm not going to El Cajon. I don't want to go." Or, "I wish we had not come here."

So, I prayed, and I told God, "If it's from you — if you agree that I am to go to El Cajon and plant a church there, under the name of The Last Harvest, you convince my wife."

After this, she began to talk about going to El Cajon, not just in the sense of "if God tells me to, I will," but, in a different way — like going would be doing the will of God. I could see the change in her. Then, I prayed again, and God told me to go to El Cajon. He reminded me of a vision I had experienced when I was serving the church in Anaheim with Pastor Nabil Abraham. God had spoken to me about changing the spiritual map of the Arabic churches in California and He had shown me a big sun in the southern part of California. Since I was pastoring in Anaheim at the time, I thought this vision was about the church in Anaheim. While I was praying about returning to El Cajon — this time to plant a church — God reminded me of this vision of the big sun, and he said, "The big sun you saw is the church I want you to plant, because from this church you will continue doing My ministry and fulfilling My plan."

After these things, my wife and I came to El Cajon.

Then, I prayed and placed a new request before God. "You have to tell me why every Arabic pastor who went to El Cajon did not succeed, and, in the end, had to leave. Some even died of cancer. And, the Arabic churches are in such disarray in San Diego. I'm not the most holy pastor, or the wisest pastor,

so why will I succeed in El Cajon while these godly men, did not?”

The Lord told me something very strange. He said most of the Arabic pas- tors — actually most of the non-Arabic pastors, too — they do not understand the true nature of the relationship of the pastor to the church. “They think they are the husbands of the church, but I am the husband of the church. You are only part of the church. You are not the husband. And, you are not allowed to make the decisions on behalf of the husband concerning his wife.”

Then, God asked me a question: “You love your brother Isaac so much and your brother loves you, but do you really think when you have a conflict between you and your wife, you will allow your brother to come and solve your problems? Or, do you really think you will allow him to give you a directive on how to solve the problems in your relationship? Or, if you and your wife want to make a decision, would you really allow your brother to interfere with your relationship and make these decisions for you?”

“No, of course not,” I said.

“It’s the same with Me. The church is My fiancée. The church is My bride. The church is My wife. I won’t allow anyone to come between My church and Me. You have to understand you are part of this bride. You are part of this fiancée. But, you are not the husband. You are not allowed, using your own ideas, and your own wisdom, to make decisions regarding the church. You have to ask Me and I will tell you what to do. Sometimes, when you do things on your own, and it is the right thing to do, and it is even the very thing that I desire to do within the church, but you don’t ask Me about this, and you don’t take My opinion, and you don’t hear the word from My mouth, you will not succeed in El Cajon. But, if you always keep firmly in your mind the understanding that you are only part of this bride, and you come to Me and ask Me about the problems that arise within the Church, then you will succeed in El Cajon and your church will survive.”

Then, the Lord revealed to me how much spiritual darkness was in this city, and how the spiritual powers in El Cajon are so strong.

We began the church planting effort with a weekly Bible study that began with the original eight people. The number of people coming to the study began to increase, and when there were around 14 or so people, during one of the prayer meetings in January 1998, I told God, “I need to taste what You told me. Just let me see what is going on in El Cajon, as well as the power You will give me to change things in El Cajon.”

In the middle of this prayer meeting God spoke to me and asked me to ask the people to pray against the witchcraft centers in El Cajon.

I know when you pray against the spiritual powers behind witchcraft that are in a place, this is spiritual warfare, and you are really praying for God to deal with the spiritual powers behind the cultic activity. Some of these 14 members were newly born again, and others were not deeply rooted in God’s Word. I thought there was no way these people could pray against spirits.

So, I told the people, “God is telling me now that we need to pray against the witchcraft centers in El Cajon.”

"We will pray with you," they said. When I heard this, I was sure most of them did not understand me.

"Don't feel guilty if you are afraid to do this," I said, and then I reminded them of the time when God told Gideon to call the people together for war, and Gideon mustered 32,000 soldiers. God told him to release those soldiers who were fearful of the upcoming battle and 22,000 left. When those soldiers who were fearful left, God didn't bemoan "all these cowards."

"Don't feel guilty if you are afraid to pray in this way. In the end, God used 300 just to win the battle," I said. "You shouldn't pray against these spirits if you are afraid." And, I explained to them that when you pray against sorcery in a place, the enemy is stirred up and will try to dissuade you. "But, you are victorious in Christ and you have the victory to overcome these spirits in Jesus, so don't be afraid. Know, however, that you will experience some opposition, and understand this before you agree to pray in this way."

I don't know if they understood me or not, but they insisted they were willing to pray against these spirits. So, almost all of them said, "No, we are not afraid. We know that God spoke to you and we need to speak against these spirits." And, we started to speak against these spirits and prophesy against the witchcraft centers in El Cajon and any activity of witchcraft in El Cajon.

Three weeks after we began to pray, in February 1998, one of the members saw a news story on CNN about a group called Psychic Friends Network, which was, at one time, the number one infomercial show on television. This corporation had just filed bankruptcy, with liabilities of \$26 million, and assets of only \$1 million. According to a Wall Street analyst, *The Motley Fool*, this company ran infomercials more than 12,000 times between 1993 and 1994, and were spending one million dollars every two weeks buying air time on cable TV. The group offered a 900 number, which, when called, connected the caller with a psychic medium who would divine the future for the caller. In 1996, according to News World Communications, Inc., the parent company, Inphomation Communications, employed 2,000 psychics.

The news anchor interviewing this man about the company's bankruptcy asked him, why, if the psychics could read the future of all these people, they could not see their own future monetary losses? And, the man said that they used to receive signals telling the future, but in the past few weeks, they could not receive clear signals, and they went bankrupt.

When we heard that, we were so excited that God heard our prayers, not only for El Cajon, but also for one of the largest psychic enterprises in the States.

Then, a week later, Pastor Victor Khallil, who was helping us in the church, got a call from the local cable channel. A woman told him that one of the other local cable programs had to shut down its non-profit operation. The president of this non-profit was looking to donate all this recording equipment to another non-profit. "If you are interested," she said, "you can come and take whatever he wants to donate — from tapes and equipment to things

to record your radio or TV programs.”

So, Pastor Khallil took her up on the offer and received almost \$3,000 worth of equipment and tapes from this man’s now defunct nonprofit. Just before he left, Pastor Khallil asked him, “So, what’s the program you are shutting down?”

The man donating the equipment said it was a program about witchcraft and the occult. The nonprofit used to have a weekly program on Channel 23 in El Cajon, but in the same month that we began to pray against witchcraft in El Cajon, the non-profit went insolvent, so this man had to donate his equipment to another nonprofit. The next week, he went on television to raise funds just for his living expenses. In the meantime, his equipment came to Pastor Khallil’s ministry to be used to the glory of God.

How was it that Satan’s enterprise went bankrupt, and yet the equipment came to Pastor Khallil’s ministry? Through his ministry our ministry also received the benefit of using this equipment to record programs. You would think the church would be the last place the enemy would think to donate his resources. Then, the Lord reminded me of the Israelites, and how they were slaves in Egypt. When they left Egypt, in the usual way of looking at things, you would have expected them to leave with nothing, because their slave masters would have robbed them, taking everything from them. And, the Egyptians hated them. But, the Bible says the Israelites plundered the Egyptians. It was a complete turnaround from what you would have expected. The Israelites took their possessions, their gold, and their silver.

And, the Lord said, “That’s exactly what I’m doing these days and you will see that I will take the enemy’s equipment, and I’ll take the enemy’s tools, power, and finance, and I’ll give it to my Church and my people to use it for ministry.”

This was such a blessing and a big confirmation to me to stay in El Cajon.

The Last Harvest Church now has an average of 50 devoted members, and the entire church operates as a mission. I tell our people, “If you just want to come to a weekly meeting and get excited about what I’m saying and the praise and worship, yet you are not ready to do something in the ministry for the Lord, then this is not your place. However, if you have the vision to come and help in reaching the Middle East for Christ, and in reaching our community in El Cajon for Christ, then this is your place.”

In The Last Harvest Church, we are not only concentrating in the Middle East, we are also very much concerned with reaching the people in El Cajon.

In one prayer meeting, I heard the Lord say, “Thus says the Lord: what happened in Azusa Street will count as nothing to what will happen in El Cajon.

This encourages me and this is why I’m here in El Cajon, California. Although the members of our church are few in number, we have outreach almost daily. We have a weekly television show on local Channel 23 every Friday evening from six-thirty to seven. Some members of the church have spent

entire nights posting signs in the streets, and talking about Jesus to whomever they see. We have visited every Arabic-speaking house and apartment in El Cajon, reaching out to each one with a Bible or Christian literature.

When others see the scope of the work we do, they assume we have a large church — like 2,000 members in size. When they see we are only 50, they are so surprised.

I believe as a pastor, I have to have a base of strong prayer support and love and encouragement from the brethren. I pastor these dear Christians and they pray for me. Our vision is to change the Middle East and to change El Cajon and San Diego County. We did not choose this vision. This vision is something that God has given us. He has told us, “this will happen and this is your part of fulfilling this vision, and this is what you will do.”

Since I have been in El Cajon, I pray with a group of pastors every Thursday morning. And, I found that God has given the same vision for El Cajon to these pastors, too. They have been faithfully meeting for years. We intercede together for El Cajon, for San Diego County for California, for America, and for our President. We pastors here in El Cajon are expectant and waiting for God to do miracles in El Cajon. One day, many in El Cajon will be won to Christ, and all the cities in the state will look at what the Lord has done among the Arabic peoples and the other peoples in El Cajon. One day, they will ask about the work of God in this city.

This is the story of founding The Last Harvest church, and how we have survived up until now. Praise the Lord!

Prayer:

Dear God,

I pray for El Cajon, and the many people of Arabic descent who live there and do not know Jesus as their Savior. I also pray for the many Middle Eastern immigrants throughout the United States who do not know the Lord Jesus. Please send them gospel messengers called from among our people in North America. Call them to bring Bibles and other literature to the doors of the Muslim immigrants who have come to live in our nation.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Chapter Fifteen

“Let my people go so they can
worship me”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: “Let my people go, so that they may worship me.” (Ex. 9:1)

“Nagy,” said Pastor Sami Labib. “We were thinking about *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, and how we want to revive it. We want to give it a fresh look and make it more interesting. We need some new blood in this magazine, and the board wants you to be the chief editor.”

I was very surprised on this day in mid-1987 that Pastor Labib had not only asked me to serve on the board for this publication, but also to become the publication’s chief editor.

I laughed at his proposal. “Oh Pastor, how come you are asking me to do this? Traditionally, you’re supposed to be the chief editor, and you are well known to the police, and you are a wise man. And, besides, this is already your position. If the board elects someone other than you to this position, he has to be as old and wise as you are, and well known in Egypt like you. It doesn’t make sense that the board would elect me the chief editor while you

are still on the job. So, I can't be the chief editor of this magazine.”

“Nagy, I feel this is what God wants us to do. We all believe that you will revive this magazine. We need you to be the chief editor, and I've willingly asked the board to release me from this position. I agree with them that you are the ideal man for this job.”

I laughed again, and I said, “What magazine, Pastor? We print like 200 copies a month. It's not like a magazine.”

“You know what?” he said. “That's why we need you to be the chief editor, because we need you to revive it.”

Despite my protests, I did accept the job, which was my second publishing endeavor for the Lord. At the very beginning of my ministry in Egypt I had published this little church magazine called *The Latter Rain*. As I said earlier, God used this publication to expose a dangerous Bible translation that had come into Egypt. ¹¹Little did I know at the time that taking over *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, which was distributed to 35 churches, including mine, would later lead to an amazing miracle impacting thousands of people in the Middle East years into the future. God would use my experience in publishing both of these two church magazines in a way I could never have imagined.

This is the story of how all this came to be.

Both tradition and practical concerns dictated that the chief editor of a publication like *The Voice of the Good Shepherd* should be the president of the church or association that produced it. In regards to tradition, it is much the same way in America: The president of an association of churches, or a ministry, will usually be listed on the masthead of an organization's newsletter as editor in chief. However, practical concerns arising from living in an oppressive country, where freedom of the press does not exist to the extent it does in the States, also dictated that the editor-in-chief be the association's president. In the case of *The Voice of the Good Shepherd* magazine, that man was Pastor Labib. He was also president of Christ Church in Egypt, and he was a very godly man. He was well known to the police and government officials, too. That's where the practical concerns came in. It helped to have an editor known to the secret police, and in a position that carried some respect with them, especially someone as well regarded as Pastor Labib.

Oh well, tradition in this case was out the window. It was my baby now.

I quickly gave a fresh look to the magazine, when I wrote a feature for my first issue about an Olympic athlete named Ben Johnson. This Canadian sprinter had just lost his gold medal, after it was revealed he had used steroids to capture first place in the 100-meter dash in the Seoul Games.

I also changed the picture on the cover. Instead of the traditional drawing of Christ carrying one of His sheep on His shoulders, I published an illustration of Johnson, and quoted the Apostle Paul, when he said, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run

¹¹ See Chapter Three.

in such a way as to get the prize.” (1 Cor. 9:24) The lead article talked about how, even though Johnson was one of the fastest men on earth, he didn’t run according to the rules, and he lost the prize as a result.

The young people among these 35 churches took immediate note of these editorial and artistic changes, and thought the new approach much more relevant to the interests and issues in their lives. As a result, demand for this little publication soared. We printed 2,000 copies to meet the demand for that first issue. This was up from 200 the issue before! God really did use me to revive this church publication. And, the increase in circulation continued through subsequent issues, too.

The board members who had elected me told me they had wanted me for the job because they knew I had a talent in writing. However, at the time, I had no idea how God would use this publication experience to do something totally amazing in the Middle East. I would have been surely stunned to consider that God would take this title of “chief editor” for a small little church publication, and leverage it into positioning me to one day publish the only Christian newspaper in the whole Middle East 15 years later. This would later prove to be the biggest miracle yet that God has done for me, and my ministry.

After three months of publishing *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, God announced His plans to bring about this miracle, when He told me He wanted me to study journalism. He said, “One day you will be the chief editor of a Christian newspaper in Egypt.” Because of the oppressive climate in Egypt, you cannot even publish a newspaper until you have both a permit from the government as well as a degree in journalism. So, when God told me this, it was an amazing thing to hear!

Obtaining these credentials was one thing. It might be hard, or it might be easy. I really did not know, but I was willing to try. However, the idea that a Christian newspaper could actually be published in the Middle East — especially in Egypt — that was something that even in my wildest dreams seemed laughably impossible in 1987.

The laws in Egypt tightly control the publication of religious newspapers. Of course, there are over a dozen Islamic newspapers in Egypt, but even they are produced outside Egypt, and only distributed within the country after securing government permission. Some of the Islamic groups inside Egypt get around these restrictive laws by purchasing an existing secular newspaper that already has a publishing permit. Legally it’s not an Islamic newspaper, although in reality it is, as the articles often include favorable editorials on Islam and Islamic groups. One Islamic group — the Muslim Brotherhood is outlawed in Egypt. However, in 2005, this group, running candidates as independents, captured one-fifth of the parliamentary seats in the national election. Laws attempting to restrict Islamic advocacy, even by zealots, fail to stem the movement toward radicalization of Islam in Egypt. They have the money and influence to circumvent these laws, but Christians have neither.

If a church publishes a periodical, the church may only distribute it within the church, or churches, and not on the streets. Even so, the church is not allowed to publish a newspaper that covers the issues of the day: politics, or comparing religions (Islam vs. Christianity). In this kind of climate, it's no surprise that among evangelical churches, a church publication rarely exceeds 1,000 in distribution. Most church publications only have a circulation of less than two or three hundred copies.

When God spoke to me about the newspaper and gave me this prophecy, it was for all these reasons I have just described that I considered such a thing completely out of the realm of possibility. I could not comprehend it. When I shared this vision with other Christian writers and leaders in Egypt, not a single one encouraged me.

“You are young,” they said. “You have a good imagination, and, while there's nothing wrong with dreaming, don't dream that much, because this will never happen in Egypt.”

The only encouragement I received was from a young man in his early twenties. He said, “Nagy, I believe in you and I believe that God will give you this newspaper. This will surely come to pass.” Even years later, whenever we met together, he would usually ask me, “Do you still carry this vision of the newspaper?”

God's directive that I suddenly seek credentials as a journalist could not have come at a busier time in my life. At the time, I was a practicing dentist, with my own office, and whatever spare time I had I devoted to my wife and the ministry. However, in obedience to God, I went to the student affairs office at the school of mass media and journalism at Cairo University to inquire about what exactly would be involved in obtaining the credentials in journalism needed for publishing a newspaper in Egypt. Forgetting, for the moment, the sheer impossibility of publishing a Christian newspaper in a country whose constitution recognizes Sharia law, I wanted to obey God even if I could not see a way for this to practically happen.

In Egypt, there are two systems of academic disciplines. One system, known as practical schools, equips the nation's doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and so on. These require daily attendance for years. The other disciplines are more equivalent to what we call Liberal Arts in America. Completing these programs allow students more flexibility, and do not require daily attendance. You can complete much of the study at home and obtain your credentials through challenging the exams after you've studied all the course material.

Obviously, since I was already a practicing dentist, the flexible, study-at-home courses were the only realistic option. I assumed that mass media studies would fall into this category. I went the school to ask, and I found over a dozen veiled women in the office of student affairs. They were all Muslims — not a Christian was among them.

“Excuse me, I have a question,” I asked one of the veiled women, whom I had chosen out of the group to approach. “I want to register in the school of

mass media. I want to study journalism. Do I have to attend classes every day, or can I register for this program, study at home and then take the exams?”

The woman looked at me and said, “Sir, if you don’t know whether this school requires you to attend every day, or whether you can register and study from home, how come you want to study journalism? This is a practical school. You have to attend daily classes for four years to get your bachelor’s degree.”

“Four years of daily attendance,” I thought to myself. “Whoa.” I hadn’t expected that. The Lord’s voice spoke again in that moment: “You need to study and get a certificate in journalism.”

So, I told her, “OK, I’m ready to come every day and study in the school. How do I do that?”

And, she asked me, “When did you get your high school diploma?”

“Oh, more than a dozen years ago.”

“No,” she said. “You cannot attend classes. The law in Egypt is that you have to have a fresh high school diploma within the past year.”

“How am I supposed to do this?”

“You’ll have to study your last year of high school again, and then take the test over.”

In Egypt, the final exam for high school is not easy, and you have to pass the test with certain scores in order to enter certain programs, like journalism. Even, if I retook my last year of high school, there was no guarantee that I would have the right type of score needed for this program. I know this seems like a crazy thing to an American, but this is the kind of bureaucracy Egyptians and citizens of other Middle Eastern countries are forced to navigate through for their entire lives.

“So, you’re telling me I have to retake the last year of high school, then attend school daily for four years to obtain credentials in journalism. Right?”

“Yes,” she said, waiting to see what I would do.

I thought to myself, “Is there something wrong? Would God really ask me to do this to spend five years obtaining this degree? What about my dental practice? How is this going to work?” Even though I had these questions popping into my mind, I resolved the matter within my heart. I told myself, “Whatever it takes, I will do this. I just don’t know how, but I will do what God has asked me to do.”

“Thank you,” I said, and as I turned to leave, another woman sitting beside the woman with whom I had just spoken called out to me.

“Sir?”

I turned around. “What?”

“Why don’t you take the post-graduate diploma?”

“Madam, did you hear the conversation between me and your colleague? I don’t have an undergraduate degree in mass media and journalism. How can I take post-graduate studies?”

“Yes, I know you are not a graduate from the school of journalism, but we have a program here you do not know about. If you are a journalist with two

years of professional on-the-job experience with a magazine or newspaper, you can enter the post-graduate program. Are you writing for a newspaper or magazine that could give us a certificate verifying two years of work experience in the media?”

I thought about *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, and my experience publishing the *Latter Rain*, and I said, “Yeah.”

“OK. Fill out this application, and bring in this certificate. Then, you can apply to enter the post-graduate program. And, get us a certificate of experience from this newspaper or magazine.”

“Here God is starting to move,” I thought. Then, I also understood why God had led those board members to choose me to be the chief editor. It was exactly the credentials I needed at this time to do what God was now asking me to do. Amazing.

I went to Pastor Sami Labib to ask him for the certificate.

He was skeptical. “Nagy, you know that this woman who told you about this certificate of experience — she was not talking about a certificate from a church. She probably thought you are working at one of the official newspapers.”

And, I said, “Yeah. I know.”

“Do you really think that if I wrote you a certificate of experience from a church, signed by a pastor, that this will be acceptable to this school?”

“In my own mind,” I admitted to him, “I agree with you. I know that they do not have this kind of experience in mind. But, since God has promised me that I will have the journalism degree, I think He can do any miracle.”

“Yes,” he said.

“Do you think I have a talent in writing?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Didn’t you, along with the board, appoint me to be the chief editor of *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*?”

“Yes”

“All I need you to do is just give me this certificate from the church. Tell them you have no objection to me pursuing my post-graduate degree, and that I am the chief editor and that I have more than two years experience working in the media with church publications. If they accept it, OK. If they don’t, I will spend the four years they require to get the Bachelor’s degree and I will go back to high school, too.”

He gave me a certificate from the church. Deep down inside I did wonder how they would allow me, as a Christian, to be a student of this program. I also harbored more than a little doubt about their acceptance of a certificate from a church signed by a pastor. And, even if I passed these two hurdles, there was still the problem of the entrance exam I would have to pass in order to be accepted as a graduate student.

When I took the certificate of experience back to the student affairs office at the mass media school, and handed it to the woman at the desk, she took one look at it, then wrinkled her face in disgust. “What is this? This certificate

of experience is from a church?”

“So, why not?” I asked. “Why not a church?”

Her demeanor now changed. She began to look uneasy. In Egypt, the tensions between Christians and Muslims can quickly escalate out of control. Of course, I would do everything possible to prevent such a thing, but someone else might overhear our conversation and a debate over — “why not a church?” — “why a church?” — could escalate into a conversation that neither one of us really wanted to pursue, because of the potential trouble it would cause both of us. If someone else joined in the conversation, then, tempers really could flare. I think that’s why she abruptly changed course.

“You know what? I don’t want to get into a debate over this certificate. I’ll just take you to my supervisor and whatever my supervisor tells me, I will do it. If she accepts this certificate of experience, then I will, too. If she says ‘No,’ then I’ll tell you, ‘No, I can’t accept it.’”

“OK,” I said. “That’s sounds fine with me.”

She took me to her supervisor — another veiled Muslim woman — and handed my certificate to her. This supervisor did not even read this certificate. I know this, because she gave it a passing glance that took less than two seconds. Obviously, the words “chief editor” were all that grabbed her attention, because she said to this woman, as she handed the certificate back to her: “If you don’t accept a chief editor to study in this program, will you accept like a regular journalist? This is the chief editor. You have to take his certificate.”

I don’t think she ever noticed the signature of the pastor on the bottom of the certificate, or that a church was listed at the top.

“That’s OK. If you allow this, I will take his paper,” said the other woman, and, in a miracle from God they took my certificate. That was the biggest hurdle the Lord allowed me to jump through and to claim the victory over.

Now, I came to the second hurdle: the entrance exam, which I feared would be anything but easy. For the past 13 years, they had examined all prospective candidates for this graduate program with a written exam, but somehow, in this particular year, when I applied, they changed this to an oral exam before a committee of three people. One was the former dean of the school, and a follower of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s party. Nasser had been Egypt’s president until his death in 1970. The vice dean was a member of an Islamic group, and represented this Islamic stream in the school, and the other member was an atheistic communist and represented the communist movement in the school.

I found out that these were the three movements in the school of mass media and journalism. If you wanted to study journalism at Cairo University, you had to belong to one of these three movements. I am a Christian, and I don’t belong to any of these movements. That’s why, when the time of my oral exam came, and I had to go before this committee, I figured my acceptance would be a long shot at best.

When I came in for the exam, the vice dean handed my certificate of experience to the dean — the one who actually addressed the questions to me.

Then, the vice dean said, “Sir,” addressing the dean, “The candidate is chief editor of *The Voice of the Good Shepherd Magazine*. We have a big school in Cairo — a Catholic school called The Good Shepherd.”

So, the dean asked me, “Is this newspaper the voice of the Good Shepherd School?”

Then, the vice dean — the Muslim — answered the question before I could. He said, “No, sir, this is from a church.”

The dean looked at me, and said, “This certificate of experience is from a church?”

And I said, “Yes.”

“What are you doing for this newspaper?”

“I’m the chief editor.”

“What do you mean by a chief editor?”

I said, “Well, I get the articles and see which ones are good and which ones are bad.

Then, I choose which ones to publish and which ones not to publish.”

Then, he asked me, “What are you doing for a living?”

“I’m a dentist.”

“Do you have an office?”

“Yes, I have.”

“Do you have a good income in your office?”

“Yes.”

“So, why do you come to study in this program? We have a saying in Egypt about writers and journalists: ‘Journalism is an occupation of those who have no work.’ So, if you are dentist, and you have an office and make good money, why do you need to come and study journalism?”

And, I said, “You have a saying in your Koran that says God wants each one of you who works to give it his best and to do it perfectly. I’m the chief editor, and I want to do a perfect job in my work.”

Then, he looked at me, and said, “OK. Have a good day, Mr. Nagy.” He didn’t examine me, or ask me any more questions. The entire interview took less than three minutes.

Then, I said, to myself, “This is it. They won’t accept me in this program, because they didn’t even examine me.”

After a few days, I received the results of the oral exam and, to my great surprised, I had passed the oral exam. I don’t know how, but God said to me, “This is my hand. I want you to study journalism.”

Over the next two years, I attended class part time, while continuing to earn a living as a dentist. As the time approached for final exams at the end of the first year, my fellow colleagues, who were all professional working journalists, were in stiff competition for the highest grade in the class. Yet, as they wondered which one of them would earn the prize, they never even

considered me. So, I told them, “Guys, don’t you know that there is someone here — his name is Nagy? He is sitting here among you, yet not one of you has proposed that Nagy might get the highest grade.”

One of them was quick to answer: “Nagy, you are the dentist. You don’t need it. We need it because this will give us advancement opportunities at our jobs at newspapers or magazines. You won’t even use this, because you are a dentist.” (Little did they know God’s plans for how I would use this years later!)

“Maybe, I’ll be the first,” I said. Then, everyone laughed. Truthfully, I never expected to finish at the top of the list, because, for one thing, I was not a professional journalist working in an official newspaper or magazine. And, secondly, I’m a Christian and all the professors are Muslims. There is no way they would give a Christian the top grade. As it was, everyone told me that the only reason I had been accepted at all was because I was the token Christian admitted to the school in order to give the appearance of equal opportunity that, in reality, did not exist for Christians in Egypt.

People had frequently told me: “They accepted you in the program just to put one Christian among these students, because they want to tell everyone, ‘See we are fair. We are even taking Christians in this program.’ But, don’t ever dream that they will give you the diploma.”

To everyone’s surprise, including mine, I was awarded the highest grade in this program in the journalism school.

Then, in the second year of the program, the other students realized I was now serious competition. “Well, we have Nagy, and now we have to compete with him, because he’s a Christian and there is no way that we’re going to allow a Christian to be given the highest grade for the diploma. It will not happen, especially in this school in Cairo University.” That’s what they thought, and everyone was now competing with me. I was not, however, competing with them, because I really didn’t care.

After I had taken the first in the series of the six final exams in that second and final year of the program, my brother-in-law passed away suddenly. He was only 29 years old, so this was a terrible blow to all my family. It was a devastating blow to me, too, because he was a dear friend. In the aftermath of his death, I fell into a stupor of grief. In Egypt, mourning for a close family member is a time-consuming, emotionally taxing process that lasts for weeks, with many, many visits from extended family members and friends. It’s a very tough time. So, I asked the school officials if I could take the exams after the funeral. I had hoped to take them at the next round of tests, a year later, because in Egypt, no one can take these exams unless they are taking them with an entire class of students.

Because I had already taken one test, the school would not honor my request for an extension to take the rest of the exams a year later. If I didn’t take them now, I would not pass the final exam for the program at all.

“Nagy, I know that we are going through a tough time,” my wife told me. “I don’t think it matters what grade you get, just go — even if you get a D

in every subject. You just get your diploma and you do what God has asked you to do. Please go through the exams." She did everything she could to encourage me in this difficult time. "Don't feel like you have to personally meet everyone who comes to give us their condolences."

When my colleagues learned of my tragedy in losing my brother-in-law, they said, "Now Nagy is out of the competition."

I took the tests and, later, while awaiting the results, I had to leave Cairo, so one of my colleagues called me to tell me the incredible news. "Congratulations," he said. "You passed the exam."

"Really?"

"You didn't know that?"

"No.",

"Well, I have a big surprise for you."

"What surprise?"

"You are the first you got the highest grade over all the students in the school."

And, I said, "There is no way. How do you know this?"

"They wrote this beside your name. You got the top score."

I later found out that the school wasn't supposed to have posted the word "First" beside my name, publicly for all to see, and, when I later asked them about it, they took it down. Then, God spoke to me again, and said, "I even let them make mistakes against their own rules. I forced them to write your name as the top scorer so as to tell you that I open doors that no one can close, and I close doors that no one can open."

What a thrilling moment it was!

But, I didn't have long to rest upon my laurels, because God ask me to come to the States, and He opened a new door for my ministry that expanded its reach beyond Egypt to the entire Middle East. Meanwhile, as I was preparing my papers to come to the States, I couldn't help but wonder what God was up to, sending me to the States after I had recently spent two years studying journalism in order to start a Christian newspaper in Egypt. It didn't make sense. And, as I said earlier in my story I went through a painful time of questioning in my first year in the States, because I could not, at that time, see how God would fulfill His plans for me in my life.

However, during the next 12 years, there was not even one time that I truly doubted, in my heart, that God had a plan for me to launch a Christian newspaper in the Middle East. I believed in that plan and knew God had trained me for this purpose, even though, year after year, things only grew worse for Christians in Egypt. Persecution had increased, as the radicalization of Islam began in earnest to take over one Middle Eastern country after another. Even the secular government of Egypt has been hard-pressed to stem this raging tide of Islamic fury aimed at Christians. It seemed to be a less hospitable time to launch a Christian newspaper than ever before in modern times.

Of course, during that same period of time, the United States, too, tasted

the bitter cup of radical Islam. September 11, 2001 forever marked American calendars, and that terrible day has left the horrific sight of the flaming twin towers burned into our collective memories. It was a day that changed America forever. After this day of sorrow, U.S. ministries began to pay much closer attention to the Middle East, and the North American public began to ask questions about Islam in earnest. More North Americans than ever are now praying for Muslims to come to Christ, because Christians understand that only the love of Christ can transform the Middle East.

In 2003, one of my friends from an organization that works to support the churches in Islamic countries asked me, “Do you have any good projects that we can help you to do in the Middle East?” And, suddenly God told me, “Tell him about the newspaper. This organization will help you launch this newspaper in the Middle East.”

This organization offered me \$20,000 for this project, and even though grants like this usually require a lot of time-consuming paperwork, the approval to proceed with the project came in record time.

When I received the money, I went to Egypt and met with the President of the Evangelical Church — now Pastor Safwat El-Baiady — and I told him, “I have a problem.”

“What problem?” he asked.

“I have \$20,000.”

Laughing, he said, “You know what? Money has never been a problem. Just give it to me and I will spend it.”

“No,” I said. “I really do have a problem. I wrote a grant to publish a Christian newspaper in Egypt. Now I have the money, but I’m not sure exactly how to do this. And, I can’t very well go back and tell these people, ‘sorry, I couldn’t do it,’ because I already told them, ‘we will do it.’ I feel this is the time in which God will fulfill His promise to me for this newspaper. This is the time, even though I know the situation in the Middle East has grown much worse for Christians than when God first gave me this promise so many years ago.”

“You know Nagy, it just so happens that today I got a phone call from one of my friends. He told me that he has had a permit since 1952 to produce a Christian newspaper, but this week the government informed him that if he doesn’t use this permit soon, and provide the government with copies of a published newspaper, he will soon lose his permit. So, my friend is talking to me, and he says, ‘We need to find some way to produce this Christian newspaper, because this is a big opportunity in Egypt to have a Christian newspaper, but I don’t have the money to do it.’

“Nagy, you have the money, and he has the permit. Why don’t you two sit down together and see how you can start a Christian-Arabic newspaper in Egypt?”

In five minutes time, this man with the permit and I came to an agreement that I would support this Christian newspaper and he would produce the newspaper, while granting me permission to publish it. We called it *Akh-*

bar Sarra (The Good News), and for the next year and a half, we printed and distributed 5,000 copies of this newspaper a month.

Then, I began to write some controversial articles in which I criticized Islam, and government policies, as well as talking publicly about persecution and human rights issues. This began to frighten my friend, who had the permit. He feared the government would arrest him and put him in jail if he continued to publish my articles.

I told him the project grant’s purpose in funding the paper was to expose human rights issues in the Middle East, as well as giving a Christian perspective on the issues of the day. For years Christians have only heard the Islamic point of view on a range of issues like marriage, politics and economics. In Egypt, the Christian has had no public voice. Middle Eastern Christians have no access to media from a non-Islamic perspective. For example, with the issue of divorce, usually Muslims will quote the Koran and talk about how many wives a man can have. However, Christians have no platform in any mass media tool from which to share a biblical perspective about how marriage was intended by God to be between one man and one woman. A Christian newspaper exposing and discussing these issues serves these purposes. But, at the same time, the authorities don’t like it when you rock their boat with waves of truth.

My arguments made no difference to my friend, because at this point, he was terrified, and this newspaper-publishing venture came to an end. Since I didn’t have a permit to start a new newspaper, I had to stop producing the newspaper.

However, the newspaper was soon to be resurrected. God told me He wanted me to have my own newspaper — a new Arabic Christian newspaper. I said, “God we don’t have a permit. There is no way that I can print a Christian newspaper in Egypt without a permit. If I start to produce this newspaper, they will put me in jail and they will put the staff in jail and this will be a big problem.”

Then the Lord told me, “This is My promise to you: One day you will have an Arabic newspaper that will be distributed not only in Egypt, but in many other Arabic countries.” He said to call this newspaper, *El Tareek*, which means “The Way.” It’s the same term that Jesus used, when he said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*” (John 14:6)

“Guys I know that we don’t have a permit,” I told my ministry team in Egypt. “I know it’s very scary to have an Arabic Christian newspaper. I know we could all end up in jail because of this newspaper, but God is telling me this is the month we have to launch this newspaper, and that we are to name it *El Ta reek.*”

Then, I asked one of my assistants in Egypt if he was prepared to suffer personal sacrifice in order to produce this newspaper.

“I will do it no matter what,” he said, and I thanked God once again for these dedicated believers who do not love their lives so much that they shrink back from what God has asked them to do. Truly, they will be richly rewarded

in heaven! (Rev. 12:11)

Since then, we have produced, as of the writing of this book, almost two dozen issues of *El Tareek*, and with every issue, we continue to expose human rights abuses, and the persecution of Christians, as well as the deceptive philosophy of Islam. All the while we continue to shine the glorious light that God has given us through Jesus Christ. *El Tareek* publishes the Christian point of view on many subjects that impact the daily life of millions in the Middle East: marriage, money, social life, society, justice — many, many things. We speak boldly about these subjects from the Christian point of view.

In my monthly editorial, I've written columns exposing the empty philosophies of Bin Laden, and Hezbollah, and the futility of terrorism. I've written ten articles broaching the topic of the ill-founded belief among Muslims that Christians have corrupted the scriptures. Muslims say this because certain Bible stories conflict with similar accounts in the Koran.¹² This ministry of truthful journalism is so critically important in a country where millions of children have received, unchallenged for the most part, volumes of Islamic-inspired propaganda that whips up fury against Christians, Jews, and the Western countries that support freedom of religion.

In a recent issue, we ran a full-page article talking about the issue of the kidnapping of Christian girls in Egypt by Muslims. These kidnappers force them into marriage and conversion to Islam. We printed the true stories of these cases, complete with the names of the missing girls, and the names of the alleged kidnappers, including their addresses and phone numbers, and other details from police reports grieving parents have fruitlessly filed. After this article was published, even the President of Egypt recognized the impact of this Christian newspaper, and he inquired about the issues of the kidnappings, and ordered an investigation.

Up to this moment, the government of Egypt has refused to give us a legal permit to publish and distribute this newspaper in Egypt. But, thank God, we have continued to distribute this newspaper not only to Egypt, but also to Iraq, Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Algeria, Palestine and Israel.

Even though we praise God for the 20,000 copies we have already distributed, we are praying for God to increase production to 60,000 copies a month by providing more partners for this effort.

El Tareek, with an estimated 80,000 readers a month, is just one of many projects The Last Harvest ministry now supports in the Middle East. (For more about our ministry, please visit www.thelastharvest.com.) We also format and distribute radio and television broadcasts. One destination for these programs is a 24-hour, 7-day a week streaming radio project in Cairo, which is accessible via the web at www.jesustoday.org. Fifty volunteers in Cairo

¹² See Appendix A

support this network, which may be the only source of auditory edification for underground churches in countries like Libya. Listeners span 70 countries all over the world. The top four countries are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and the United States.

Ministry workers in Cairo say the website has 1000 listeners daily, and for every three Christian listeners, they estimate one Muslim also hears the broadcast. This estimate is based on live sessions where listeners communicate prayer requests and ask for counseling.

Another destination for these broadcasts is High Adventure Ministries, which transmits from a mountain in the Middle East, with a range covering 100 million people. In one radio broadcast, I talked about the difference between Moses and Jesus how Jesus was greater than Moses, who said “an eye for an eye.” Muslims who listen can contextually relate such biblical teaching to what Mohammed taught. This way, we open a pathway into their hearts so that they can begin to understand the deity of Jesus.

The Last Harvest also trains native church leaders through correspondence Bible study, and numerous conferences in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Algeria and Tunisia. We concentrate on teaching people how to be Christians who boldly and strategically look for opportunities to spread the gospel in the Land of Islam.

In Egypt, the mainstream churches don’t work with the low-caste people — the street boys and girls — so I developed conferences for pastors and leaders of churches and I pastor them about evangelism, and reaching Muslims for Christ in their area.

We have a Christian bookstore on the most crowded street in Cairo, and in this store, Christians in Egypt will find hundreds of Christian books that equip and encourage them to be bold for Christ. Another bookstore is located in an independent evangelical church the ministry helps support in Iraq. The Last Harvest also rents Christian booth space in a secular book fair attended by millions of people in Cairo. In Sudan, our ministry partners with a native ministry to do three to four book fairs a year. The Last Harvest trains native Sudanese pastors in how to answer questions posed by people who attend the book fairs. We cover apologetics and responses to the different questions that Muslims will pose.

Several books I have authored in Arabic discuss the crucifixion, resurrection, and divinity of Jesus in a context that a Muslim would understand. Our ministry distributes these books throughout the Middle East.

Our network of co-workers in places in Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Jordan, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Palestine, Israel and Lebanon secretly produces Christian materials designed to give Muslims the opportunity to compare Christianity and Islam side-by-side. Some of these materials are manufactured taking advantage of the latest in information media technology. Those who distribute these materials are also trained to answer questions from Muslims who are curious about Christianity. Jesus tells us to preach the gospel in all nations. These workers bravely bring the gospel to those who

may never hear it in a culture that forbids attempts to convert Muslims to Christ.

On December 12, 2006, we established a new nonprofit organization in the United States, called Advocates For The Persecuted, also located in El Cajon, Calif. This organization was a natural outgrowth of the human rights advocacy we’ve done through the publication of *ElTareek*. I prayed for God to send an American couple to me to help me communicate to other North Americans the desperate need right now for addressing the plight of people who suffer persecution, because they do not have freedom of religion in the Middle East. God answered my prayers in June 2006, and my wife and I now serve on the board of this organization along with this couple. Charlie and Jan Fletcher have been burdened with a love for the Middle Eastern peoples for many years. Both are professional writers, and are well informed about the issues of religious persecution in the Middle East. Daniel Marshall, of San Diego, a Christian attorney, also serves on the board with us.

The group that suffers the most in the Middle East is comprised of Muslim converts to Christianity, as well as those Christians from a non-Muslim background who work among them. Egypt requires a person’s religious adherence be listed on the national I.D. card, and Muslim converts are not allowed to change their cards to reflect Christianity as their faith. Some forge this document, and as a result, have been arrested and tortured by police and brutally beaten, and even turned over to murderous mobs, or relatives by the police.

Middle Eastern Christians from a Christian background are also subjected to violent attacks, church burnings, rapes, kidnappings, false charges, false imprisonment, and systematic poverty due to dhimmitude status¹³ in Islamic countries.

Despite these trials and tribulations, through all the activities of these two ministries, we continue to boldly proclaim God’s command to the spirit of Islam and the spirit of Pharaoh that oppress so many in the Middle East. What is this command? It is the same one voiced by Moses over four thousand years ago in my native country:

“Let my people go so that they may worship Me.”

Yet, the title of this book, if you haven’t noticed by now, is slightly different from the English translation of Exodus 7:16, because we live in the last days — a time when God says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” (Acts 2:17)

¹³ Dhimmitude, under Islamic law, or Sharia, defines Jews and Christians (people of the book), as Dhimmis who fall under the protected status of Islamic law. They are free to practice their faith, but only under subjection by the Islamic majority, and only by submitting to humiliating regulations devised for the purpose of causing them to “feel themselves subdued” (Sura 9:29). A dhimmi has no equality of rights under Sharia law.

That’s why the title of this book is:

“Let my people go so they can worship Me.”

The word, “may” expresses the idea of obtaining permission from someone. This word is used in the English translation of Exodus 7:16, because God was asking Pharaoh to grant permission for the people to go, so that they might worship the Lord in a certain place: the desert. God didn’t need his permission, but He gave Pharaoh a choice to obey. However, the word, “can” expresses ability to choose, not the idea of asking permission. English speakers will surely remember how many times they were corrected as children in the usage of these two words: “Not can I, but may I,” our moms told us. Of course, we *can* physically go to the store for candy, but the question really was: “*May* I go to the store?” In Exodus, the Hebrew people *could* worship God at any time, but God commanded Pharaoh to give them permission to physically go and worship God in the desert.

For the believers in the Middle East, they *may* worship God wherever they are — whether in chains or in freedom, because, as Jesus told the woman at the well, “*a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.*” (John 4:21) This time is here to worship in spirit and in truth.

“Can” means to have the opportunity or possibility to do something. Romans 10:14-15 asks four questions expressing this idea of possibility: “*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?*”

“Can” in terms of the title of this book, expresses my heart-felt prayer that God will call more believers to be partners (*co-missioners*) with Him in helping Muslims see the truth of what it means to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). How can Muslims believe unless they hear the gospel?

God is calling us to be the fulfillment of Romans 10:15b: “*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*” God is glorified as preachers and missionaries, and those who support them, give Muslims an opportunity — a possibility to believe in Jesus through hearing the gospel.

God is also calling the Sons of Ishmael to come out of darkness and into the light, and these converts from Islam are growing into a great exodus, as they exit the deception and slavery of Islam, and embark upon a difficult journey, traveling through the desert of affliction and persecution in this life. Jesus sustains them daily through spiritual bread from heaven, which is His abiding presence among us as Jesus our Great God and Savior! (John 6:58)

“Let My people go so that they **may** worship Me in the desert,” says the Lord our God to the evil spirits who have embittered the lives of the children of Islam through cruel bondage to Satan. (Exo. 7:16) Yet, He says to us: “Let My people go so they can worship Me.” God himself, through many ministers, and many miracles, will set millions free, and this vast exodus will change the face of the Middle East! Amen!

Prayer:

Dear God,

Tell the spirit of Pharaoh to let Your people go, so that they may worship You in spirit and in truth! Lord, also encourage me to do what I can to equip the beautiful feet of indigenous Middle Eastern pastors who spread the gospel on the mountains of the Middle East, in places where I cannot go, to a people I cannot reach. Through the message of these ministers, I pray that this last harvest before your return will give You glory and honor for ever and ever! I thank You and Praise You for setting the captives free.

Amen.

My Thoughts:

Appendix A

How to minister to Muslims

The following two articles are from the ministry's radio and television broadcasts.

(A reproducible version of this apologetic tract is available for free www.thelastharvest.com/muslimtractl.pdf)

Muslims are taught that Christians, over time, have corrupted the original scriptures in the Old and New Testaments. This article, using logical arguments, offers an apologetic response to this issue, in an effort to motivate a Muslim to reconsider the integrity of the Bible as compared to the Koran.

Bible Corruption - Questions and Answers for Muslims:

1. The Christians have corrupted the Bible, haven't they?

The question of the corruption of the Bible is a most important issue. First, we need to clarify that the Bible is not an ordinary book written by a man, but it is the Law and the Covenant, by which The Lord is going to judge and deal with men. If the Bible has been corrupted, then the foundation for determining one's future eternal destiny is in question. That's why this issue is so crucial.

2. When did the idea that Christians corrupted the Bible first appear?

This idea originated when Islam began to spread into Christian countries, and people began to compare the accounts in the Koran with the accounts in the Bible. Our Muslim brothers were faced with a challenge: Which book is the book of God? Which book should the people believe? The accounts in the two books are very different — there is not the least agreement about the main issues that determine man's eternal life and destiny. When people who had moved into these Christian areas discovered these two conflicting accounts, some claimed Christians had changed the Bible in order to avoid questioning the Koran. We cannot say that the Koran is false or that the Bible is false, so something must have happened so that the Bible was not in agreement with the Koran. The Bible must have been corrupted. That was their thinking.

3. Why are people so convinced the Bible has been corrupted?

People are easily convinced of this idea, because it means they do not have to accept God's commands in the Bible. In this way, they are able to escape responsibility for obeying these commands. And, people are also easily convinced by this idea, because it is the only way they can take what was written in the Koran and combine it with the Bible and have an explanation for why the two contain conflicting accounts. If we say that the Bible was not corrupted, or the Koran was not corrupted, then theoretically, the stories should match regarding all the events contained in each book, and there should be no differences between the two of them. Otherwise, we are forced to answer the question of why the two are different. And, they are not only different in trivial issues, but in the most important issues related to human life and the nature of God and so on.

4. What are the differences between the Bible and the Koran? Are they simple differences or major ones?

The reality is that the differences are not only major, but also very obvious. They are totally different regarding many topics of extreme importance to every human being. These differences cover a wide range of issues. For example, just in the details of story narration, many stories contained in the Bible have a completely different version in the Koran.

5. Can you give us some Biblical examples for the purposes of comparison?

Let's discuss the story of Jesus' birth as an example. In the book of Matthew, in the first chapter, verse 18, we find the story of the birth of Jesus from the Christian point of view. When the Lord is speaking to Christians in their book, one would think it should be as obvious and as accurate as possible.

So the references we are using in this instance are taken from the book of the Christians. The Bible says: “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.”

In the Koranic version, the Koran never mentions the story of Joseph, Mary’s fiancé, at that time. Then, the Bible says, “but after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. “ The word Holy Spirit here means the Spirit of God. Islam does not believe that God has a spirit. Islam believes that God is One and has no spirit. When we mention the Holy Spirit, we do not speak about an Angel, for the Angel said, “what is conceived in her is from the Holy spirit.” According to the theory of Islam, the conception took place through an Angel. But, it is obvious here that no angel had anything to do with the conception of Jesus, blessed be his name. The angel was just a messenger who delivered a message of the birth of Jesus. In Verse 21 we read “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” The statement — “Jesus is the one who saves his people from their sins” — is not accepted by Islam, or any other religion. “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ — which means, ‘God with us.’”

The Bible mentions Jesus was born in Bethlehem in a manger for cows, as there was no other place for him to be born, but the Koran says that Jesus was born under a tree. The Bible never mentions that Jesus spoke when he was just a baby in the cradle, but the Koran says that Jesus spoke as a baby in the cradle. If this were true, why did the Bible not mention this specifically? Surely, it would have been considered a miracle of miracles for a child to speak while still in a cradle, saying: “I am the Servant of God. He gave me the Book and made me a prophet.” If this truly took place, this incident should have been recorded in the Bible, but for some reason it was never mentioned.

6. Is it possible that the reason for these two different versions of the same story is that each writer wrote the story from his own point of view?

It’s true that one could see it this way. However, there is a difference between the two accounts in the honor given by God to the newborn child, the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus truly spoke as a child in the cradle, this is not a mere difference of opinion, or a different point of view, but the complete omission of an event that was supposedly witnessed by many people. According to the Koran, everybody saw and heard Jesus speaking, as they came to the Virgin

Mary questioning her. And, in the *Koran*, people said both of Mary's parents were decent people. So where did this baby come from? Apparently, the baby Jesus spoke just *a* few hours after he was born. If this was true, it should have been mentioned in the book of the Christians. This is a miraculous story. If the Christians were trying to prove that Jesus was a living miracle, they should have used this story. In fact, the *Koran* mentions this miracle in order to honor Jesus. However, if Christians admit this miracle occurred, it would bring them into conflict with a very important Christian doctrine.

7. What is this Doctrine?

This doctrine is the fact that Jesus was a normal child in every sense of the word, and that he lived as a normal man. He grew and matured until he became thirty years old, and then he began his ministry telling the people that he is God who has come in the flesh. If Jesus spoke as a child in the cradle, then he was not a normal child, and, it also follows that he was not *a* normal man like us. He was a human man, yet without sin. If he were not a normal man, like us in every way except that he was without sin, he would have not been qualified to represent us as human beings before God Almighty. We Christians believe that Jesus was born as a child from a mother only, and that he had no human father. Islam as well believes the same. And, we believe that nothing extraordinary happened during his childhood except, perhaps, when he was 12, and taught in the temple and argued with the Pharisees. This is not out of the ordinary however, in terms of being miraculous, as we often see children today who demonstrate great potential and intelligence. However, the birth of Jesus in the *Koran* is completely different from the account that is in the Bible in regards to this miracle and other things, too.

If the *Koran's* version of the event were true, then the Virgin Mary would have been required to give clear evidence of where the child came from, because she was not married when she conceived the child and this was not acceptable to the Jews, as the Bible teaches. According to the Old Testament law, such a woman who conceived a child outside marriage was condemned and stoned, and they would not have let her go unpunished. The Bible says the Jews were hardened of hearts, therefore the Bible mentions the fact that Joseph was her fiancé, and not her husband, and this account clearly states that Joseph never knew her in the way *a* man knows a woman until the child was born. This story clearly differs in Christianity from Islam. And, there are many other stories where we see differences, such as the story of Joseph and the story of Moses. In the story of Moses, the person who drew him out of the water was the daughter of Pharaoh in the Bible's version of this event. In the *Koran*, the person who drew Moses out of the water was Pharaoh's wife.

There are many differences between these two books, both in stories, and even in geological issues. The *Koran* says that the land was flat and God es-

established the earth by creating mountains on it to keep it stable. It also speaks about Alexander The Great, and says he followed the sun to the sunset, and watched the sun falling into a well of mud, but we know that the spherical earth has no limit or end. On the other hand, in the book of Job, which was written thousands of years before the Koran Job described the Earth as a sphere even before anyone had invented the telescope, or other new inventions that prove the earth is a sphere. In times past, many people could not believe the earth is a sphere, but the Bible mentioned it thousand of years before this event, and before the Koran was even written. I mention one of the differences regarding facts in geology between the two books.

8. What about the disagreement concerning the topic of redemption? Is there anything related to the concept of redemption in Islam or Judaism?

This is a very essential topic, because redemption, as known in Islam, is represented in the feast of El Adha, or the Feast of the Sacrifice. Some of the Muslim Imams say that there is no redemption in Islam. But, we see redemption recorded in the book of Genesis, in the story of the son of Abraham, when God asked Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice. The Koran says this son was redeemed by a “Great” sacrifice. But the Koran does not admit that this Redemption was related to the person of Jesus Christ. To admit this would be to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Lamb who came to redeem the world from its sins. Islam does not accept this at all, because if they did, they would also have to accept the cross of Jesus. But Islam does not accept the cross of Jesus, and if they acknowledge this redeeming cross, this brings us back to the fact that the Bible was not corrupted, and, here we are again: back to the same old problem of Bible corruption.

9. What is this problem?

The problem is that we have to believe one of two theories. We have to choose which one to believe. Either Jesus came to redeem men, and He was the sacrifice, or there is no such thing as redemption or sacrifice. Christianity is completely based upon the issue of redemption, and IF there was no redemption, and IF Jesus did not die on behalf of men, then Christianity would not exist, because the entire basis of Christianity is founded upon the principle of redemption. This principle states that man is a sinner, and is in need of redemption, and that Christ redeemed him. Therefore, IF there is redemption, then Christianity is the true religion man has to follow, and not Islam. So as you can see, we cannot combine the accounts of the two religions, as the disagreement between the two is not a difference of mere opinion, or discrepancies in the details of story narration. No, the disagreement between these two accounts concerns nothing less than the eternal destiny of all men. IF there were redemption for you, and you did not discover until the actual Day of Judgment that you were not redeemed and, because you were not redeemed,

you should go to hell, this would be a disaster for you! But IF redemption exists, and Christ redeemed me, I will go to eternal paradise. So, the question is: Does redemption exist or not? Christianity says there is redemption, but Islam says there is no redemption.

10. How does God deal with the issue of forgiveness of sins in the three religions? Can we start with Judaism?

The issue of forgiveness of sin is very important, as it deals with man's eternal destiny. The truth is there is nothing more important to man than his eternal destiny. As the Bible says, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange of his soul?" So, the issue of the forgiveness of sin is one of the most important issues that should preoccupy man. In Judaism, in the Old Testament, forgiveness of sin took place through offering animal sacrifices. The one who sinned had to take a lamb, or a pair of pigeons, to offer as a sacrifice. There was also a sacrifice offered on behalf of all the people once per year. Only the High priest could offer this sacrifice. When offering a sacrifice, a man would put his hand on the head of the sacrifice and confess his sin, and admit that he is a sinner and in need of God's forgiveness. The punishment for sin was then transmitted from the man to the animal, as the one who offered the animal sacrifice was now forgiven.

11. What about Christianity?

Christianity did not abolish the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament, as some people imagine. Jesus came to complete what had come before in the Old Testament. He offered himself as a sacrifice, instead of all the animal sacrifices that were slain in times past. He offered himself as a sacrifice on behalf of men. The Bible says he found Eternal Redemption. This is the idea of redemption: that forgiveness of sins does not depend on my works, or that my good deeds will wipe away my bad ones. If we believe in the theory of Christianity, then every human being is a sinner and was born in sin and has to be redeemed, as we said before. Consequently, forgiveness of sin in Christianity is based on accepting Jesus as a personal savior and Redeemer and confessing that He is the One who came into the world, and He is the one who saves us from sin through His cross and death and resurrection. He is the only way to heaven as the Bible says. He is the only way to Salvation and nothing else can forgive our sins. This is the concept of forgiveness of sins in Christianity.

(A reproducible version of the following apologetic tract is available for free at www.thelastharvest.com/muslimtract2.pdf)

This article uses logical arguments, linguistic facts, Jewish history and culture, and scripture to explain how the names of Jesus given to Him in scripture reveal the person of Christ.

The Beautiful Names of Jesus: explaining the person of Christ to a Muslim

1. Who is the person of Jesus Christ?

One of the important, yet controversial issues on which Christianity and Islam disagree is the person of Jesus Christ — blessed be His name. This question concerns one of the most controversial personalities in human history. The person of Jesus Christ has many names in the scriptures. Some of these names are easily understandable, and accepted by the majority of people, but other names of Jesus have not been welcomed by the other main religions such as Judaism and Islam. In fact, these names are a source of disagreement.

2. Why do people disagree about the person of Christ?

They disagree about who Jesus Christ is, because He is not just a common, regular person. He said Himself that He came from heaven, and then lived on earth. As God, who showed Himself in the flesh, Jesus died, was buried and resurrected, and now He is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is still alive — many acknowledge this is true — and He is sitting by the throne of the Almighty God. For this reason, it is not surprising that many people would disagree about His names and His character attributes. Among the many names that were given to Jesus in the scriptures and in the New Testament that are specific to Jesus Christ are: the Word of God, Emmanuel, and the Son of Man. These are the names of Jesus, and not His attributes. His attributes are many and vary greatly among different religions.

3. Let us consider each one of these names. For example, the first name mentioned was the name, “Jesus.” When did this name first appear?

The first time this name is mentioned is in the Gospel of Matthew, which is the first book of the New Testament. In the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, verse 18 and 21, we read, “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about [...] because he will save his people from their sins.” This was the good news the angel delivered to the Virgin Mary. Here we see that Joseph, Mary’s fiancé, did not give this name to Jesus at that time. It is the name the angel gave to Mary, and he said that His name “shall be called Jesus.” This name was given from heaven.

4. Was the angel aware at that time of how Jesus was going to enter the world and die?

Yes. The angel knew the fact that the Lord Jesus was to come and die for man's sins, and, then, would be raised from the dead. This event was no mere accident. Everything concerning the person of Jesus was previously mentioned in the Old Testament. Many prophecies about His name, His birthplace, His manner of birth, the timing of His birth, and even the village where He was to be born were all recorded in great detail in the Old Testament centuries before He was born. So when the angel came to Mary with this message of what name she was to give her baby, he knew exactly what was going to happen. All the attributes given to Jesus are wonderful ones, but the name of Jesus was given to Him from heaven itself, and it is the Greatest name, in the absolute sense.

5. What is the meaning of the words "to deliver his people from their sins," and what kind of sins do these words refer to?

The word Jesus means Savior. The name of Jesus is a very important name: It is a message to all mankind. We know that all mankind make mistakes, and are born in sin. This, too, is a controversial issue as viewed by different religions, and especially between Christianity and Islam. According to our New Testament, Christian belief recognizes human beings are born with the sinful nature, and that there is a difference between being born with a sin nature and actually committing personal sin. A man is a sinner not because he does wrong things, but because he is born with the nature of sin. If men are born with the nature of sin, then this sin needs to be forgiven. The word "sin" and not "sins" in the plural, is talking about a sin nature, as opposed to many individual sins. If a man is born with sin, then this sin should be forgiven, wiped away and cleansed before God Almighty. For the sin to be cleansed and wiped away, an innocent man must die, instead of a guilty one, or the guilty one himself should die. For only an innocent man with no sin can redeem a man with sin. Islam, however, believes a human being is born with a good nature that has the potential to do either good or evil.

6. Was the person of Jesus this innocent man?

Yes. This is true because Christ was the only human ever born of a virgin woman. Both Islam and Christianity admit the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin woman and not from the will of a normal man. He is the only man who has had such a unique birth. We know that Adam, of course, was not born, but was created. He had no mother or father because he was the first human being that existed on earth. So Jesus was the only One who was not born as the result of the union of a man and woman. He did not receive the cor

rupted human nature of sin, and that’s why He alone is the only One qualified to redeem man and deliver him from his sins. For, we know that it is only right and just that either the sinner should die, or another one should take his place, and this substitute should be a man, one who is blameless and does not possess the nature of sin. When God Almighty looked around for someone who possessed such attributes, He could find no one but Jesus. Therefore, He carried the name of Jesus, which is a serious name, as He is the only One qualified to deliver His people from their sins. The words “His people,” which are mentioned here, signifies all those who acknowledge Him, all those who look for Him, and all those who accept His salvation and have their sins forgiven. The people of Jesus today are not only the Christians or the Jews of His time, or other nations. The people of Jesus also include everyone who confesses and acknowledges that Jesus was the perfect man who came in the flesh to die on behalf of us, in order to pay the price of our sin, and to save us from that sin.

7. The second name is “Christ.” What does the name Christ mean?

The word Christ comes from the word meaning “anointed one.” Anointed one means the one who has been set apart for a specific purpose and who carries a specific anointing to fulfill this specific purpose. In the Old Testament, the oil of the anointing was a specific kind of oil or ointment that was poured upon specific people in that time, who were set apart for a spiritual ministry before God Almighty.

8. Who are those anointed ones? When do we call someone an “anointed one?”

There were three kinds of people in the Old Testament whom we call anointed ones: The prophet who received his office from God Almighty, priests who did the work of the priesthood, and the king. These three kinds of people were anointed with the ointment of anointing, but Jesus was not just called “anointed one,” but “The Anointed One.” To be called an anointed one, he had to be one of the Old Testament prophets, kings or priests, but He was not any of these three in an earthly way of looking at things. We have never heard that Christ joined the priesthood and offered sacrifices in the temple. He could not have done this, as He did not come from the tribe of Levi, whose descendants were the only ones dedicated to serving in the priesthood. He came out of the tribe of Judah.

The Lord Jesus was not a King in the Old Testament sense either, or else He would have established His own kingdom. And, He was not a prophet in the Old Testament sense, because He authored no books, as did the other Old Testament prophets. This said, it is very important to understand that Jesus was *spiritually* a Priest, and a Prophet, and a King. He was a unique prophet

because He spoke words from the mouth of God. He was a unique priest because He offered not just animal sacrifices over and over again each year to atone for the people's sins, but He offered Himself as a sacrifice to save His people from their sins. And, He was also a unique King in that His kingdom was not, and is not an earthly kingdom. It is a spiritual one, and this was clearly stated during His trial when the Jews asked Him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" and Jesus answered clearly, "I am and my kingdom is not from this world." There are many anointed ones, but The Anointed One is the unique person of God Himself as seen in the world in the person of Jesus Christ.

9. When Christ was on earth, was He anointed with oil, as was done in the Old Testament?

Christ was not anointed with oil, because He was not an earthly priest, or an earthly king or an earthly prophet, but instead, He was a spiritual king, priest and prophet. He said about Himself: "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me" (Isa. 61:1a). When we speak about the Holy Spirit, we are not speaking about angels. Instead, we mean the Spirit of the Almighty Himself. Christ was not anointed with oil, but with the Holy Spirit of God Himself because He came from heaven and went back to God. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. As the Bible says, the earthly oil or anointing has no value when understanding who the person of Christ is. Instead, He is anointed with the Holy Spirit. And, in the baptism of Jesus, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the shape of a dove. This was the anointing that came upon Him. (Luke 3:22)

10. Why did the Jews refuse to acknowledge that Jesus was the One whom God anointed, or the Anointed One?

In fact, the Jews had understandable reasons not to admit He was anointed, because He was not an earthly priest or king or prophet in the way they had previously understood. This made it more difficult for them to acknowledge He was Messiah, which means "The Anointed One." In their way of thinking, when the Messiah comes, He will come to rule over the nations, as these nations submit to Him as King of the earth. They believed He would come to deliver the Jews from their enemies and would make their nation the supreme nation on the earth. But, when Christ came, He did not come as a king or as a military leader who would fulfill the dreams of the Jews. Instead, He came as a humble man. When He fed 5,000 people, the crowds wanted to crown Him as their king, because they felt He must be the king who is coming to rule the world, since He had fed the multitudes. Instead, He refused to be an earthly king, because as He said, His kingdom is not from this world. He clearly said that He was going to be crucified for the forgiveness of sins. When it became obvious to them that He was not going to fulfill their dreams of bringing other nations into submission to them, they did not accept Him. They were

expecting a strong Messiah who would destroy their earthly enemies. When Christ came around 2,000 years ago, He came to die on behalf of humanity.

11. The third name is “Emmanuel.” What does the name Emmanuel mean?

The name Emmanuel is one of the names that confuse many people, and this name has caused disagreement among different religions. This name is the name that was given to Jesus from heaven, and it was also mentioned in the Old Testament, not only in the New Testament, in the story of the birth of Jesus. In the book of Matthew chapter 1 and verse 21, the angel says, “She will bear forth a son” (speaking about the Virgin Mary), and His name shall be called Emmanuel, which means God is with us. So the word Emmanuel means God with us. The first chapter of the first book of the gospels points to Jesus as God with us. From this, we see where the disagreement originates among the different religions.

12. The fourth name given to the person of Jesus Christ was the Son of Man? What about this name?

The word Son of Man means He is the son of humanity. It means He took the form of man and appeared as a man — that He took on the form of human flesh. He gave this name to Himself.

13. How can God become a human being? Isn’t this limiting God to claim He lived in the form of a human being? How can that be, when He is the Almighty unlimited God?

Jesus was the one who called Himself the “Son of Man.” This name merely reflects His humility, but this does not limit His Sovereignty, for He is the One who sits on His throne and fills the universe. As the Bible says, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but He took on a human form. If He wanted to take on human form, no one has the right to question Him, for He can do what He wants. But, more importantly, there is a reason why He came in human form. As we said, the one who would redeem a man has to be a human being, and at the same time must be equal to God, too. Because, if He was only born a natural man, with an earthly father, He would have been born with a sinful nature as well, because all men are prone to sin. No ordinary human being could redeem men. If a normal human being undertook this task, he would not have the essential qualifications, because sin has separated all men from God. So whoever redeems man should be equal to God and to man too, and would therefore come in the form of a man. Therefore, Jesus was given the name Emmanuel — God is with us — for the same reason He called Himself the Son of Man. He was not a normal human being, but the only one who is qualified to be our Redeemer.

14. What about the Name “Allah,” — one of the names of God?

The Name Allah is one of the names of God that has a different implication in Christianity than it does in Islam. Both of the religions, Islam and Christianity, acknowledge that Jesus is the “Word of God,” but they differ in the implication of what this entails. There is a difference between the spoken word of God, and the Word of God as mentioned in the Gospel of John in the very first verse: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Both the Jews and the Greeks, who were the greatest nations during that time, clearly understood the term “Word of God.” In their minds, the ‘Word of God’ was equal to the word “God.” The Jews knew that God created the world by His Word, and the word in this sense is not the spoken word, but the noun the Greeks understood to mean “The Word” in person, or what in that time they termed the “mind of God,” or “The Logos.” He is the Word as it was understood in its meaning in the original language in which it was written, not in the English language in which it was later translated. So, when we say Jesus is the Word of God, it means He is the Mind of God and that He is equal to God. In other words, He is God Himself. We can see that this name has serious implications.

Finally, I want to ask you about this One who is called the “Son of God.” As you can see, all the names of the Lord Jesus were not simple names. Each one we have examined has created more controversy than the previous one. The name “Son of God” caused serious disagreements, but as I said before, these names were given to Him from heaven. He did not lightly, or frivolously claim to be the Son of God or equal to God, but He spoke a truth that had been revealed from heaven. When we hear the word “Son of God,” we think in human terms of understanding. We think God took Himself a wife in the same way a man marries a woman. But, every sensible man who uses the simplest reasoning cannot accept the idea God married a woman, and fathered Himself a son, in the way a human father does. God is the One seated on His throne — the One who reigns over the universe. God forbid that He has a son in the commonly understood human way through sexual procreation. The sonship of Jesus is a spiritual sonship, and not a carnal one. He is the One who reigns over the universe; therefore He has no need for human assistance. The name Son of God here signifies that Jesus was born after His likeness, and not through natural sexual reproduction. Jesus, as we read in the four Gospels, came from heaven: God’s dwelling place. It is written in the book of Hebrews that He is the essence of God. That is why He was called the Son of God — a name that caused many problems in the minds of people who refused to believe that God would have a son. We refuse this, too, as Christians, if it is understood in simply the carnal sense. But, there is huge difference between *begetting* a son, and fathering a son. The One who came from heaven is the only begotten Son of God.

Appendix B

About David Joseph

Native-born Egyptian David Joseph is founder of The Last Harvest, Inc., in El Cajon, Calif., a Christian nonprofit organization that ministers biblical truth to Arabs and Muslims worldwide. A practicing dentist, Joseph is also a pastor who holds a doctorate in theology.

He is also founder of Advocates For The Persecuted, also in El Cajon, a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to track, advocate for, and render help to those individual members of communities who are maligned or marginalized because of the exercise and practice of religious beliefs, and as a result, may suffer human rights abuses in Middle Eastern nations.

Known affectionately by his Egyptian name, Nagy, to his friends, Joseph came to the United States in 1991, following God's lead in order to establish a base of operations for a ministry to the Arab and Muslim world that now operates throughout the Middle East. The Last Harvest equips indigenous churches, supports church planting efforts in the Middle East, and proclaims the gospel through radio and television broadcasts and the distribution of Christian materials. Joseph became a U.S. citizen in 2000.

Joseph's vision is to prepare the highway of the Lord between Egypt, Israel and Assyria (Isaiah 19), by informing Christians of the need to expose the spirit of Islam, and teaching and encouraging them to pray strategically

for Muslims in order to reach and win them to Christ.

In Egypt, Joseph founded The Egyptian Christian Youth Union, co-founded The Egyptian Medical Fellowship, served as a youth minister, a teacher at Christ Bible School in Cairo, and was *chief editor of The Voice of The Good Shepherd Magazine*.

Joseph embraced the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal savior Oct. 17, 1972 in an Arabic church in Cairo.

In 1989, Joseph received his postgraduate diploma in Journalism and Mass Media from the faculty of Mass Media, Cairo University. From 1988 to 1991, Joseph taught at Christ Bible School in Cairo. In December of 1991, he was installed as pastor of The Last Harvest Christian Arabic Church in southern California.

In 1997, Joseph co-founded the Arabic Christian Medical Association in California and served as the organization's vice president. In 1997, he planted the Last Harvest Middle East Church in El Cajon, Calif. In 1999, he assumed a teaching position as a professor of Islam and Middle East culture at Southern California Bible School and Seminary, in El Cajon, Calif. In 2000, The Evangelical Fellowship in Egypt, an organization that serves all the many diverse evangelical Churches and para-church organizations in Egypt, appointed Joseph to serve as secretary of the ministry's Exterior Affairs. Joseph was elected in September 2006 to serve as president of the Middle Eastern Evangelical Churches Fellowship of America (MEFCA).

Joseph is the author of several books including: *Do They Crucify Him or His Likeness? The Gospel in the Mind of Jesus the Son of Mary, He Has Been Risen, The Divine Nature of Christ*, and *Let My People Go*. Joseph is married to Dr. Carol Joseph who co-labors with her husband in their ministry to Arabs and Muslims. The couple has two sons: Andrew, 17, and Timmy, 11 and live in El Cajon, Calif.

Appendix C

About The Last Harvest

Can you tell me about your ministry?

The Last Harvest is changing the face of the Middle East through planting churches; equipping native pastors, giving aid, encouragement and Christian materials to persecuted Christians in the Middle East; and broadcasting the gospel through radio, television and print in this region of the world.

Are you affiliated with a denomination?

We are a non-denominational ministry drawing support from many churches in the Body of Christ, as well as providing ministry and support to many churches in the Middle East.

What is your doctrinal statement of faith?

We believe in the unique divine inspiration, entire trustworthiness and authority of the Bible; the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; the death of Jesus Christ as a necessary and the only effective payment for the sin of the world; the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration; and, the expectation of the personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is your mission statement?

We believe we have been commissioned to prepare the Lord's Highway before His second coming. In Isa. 19:23-25, we read that the Highway begins with Muslim countries (North African countries) and ends with Mus

lim countries (Assyria, Turkey, part of Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, Syria and Jordan.) Between the two groups of countries stands Israel. This vision is a powerful impetus to us to do all we can to prepare the highway in the Middle East by removing the “stones” that lie in the way of Middle Easterners’ understanding of the gospel message.

How does the Last Harvest work?

We help remove these stones by supporting the work of gospel proclamation through local churches; encouraging and building up indigenous pastors in the Middle East; and conducting a television and radio ministry throughout the Middle East. We also help persecuted churches and believers in Islamic nations, and encourage them to continue to witness despite the hostility they may face.

How many countries are you working in?

The Last Harvest is working in Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.

What is distinctive about The Last Harvest ministry?

Although many ministries are fulfilling the Great Commission around the world, the fields are white unto harvest in the Islamic countries and more workers are needed. As a native Middle-Eastern pastor, The Last Harvest founder David Joseph has developed hundreds of contacts with “in-the- field” pastors and church leaders who are active in spreading the gospel and planting churches in places where the government restricts Christian expression and worship. This gives The Last Harvest great opportunities to assist the Church in Arabia.

Muslims are precious souls for whom Jesus died. Islamic leaders have a goal to spread Islam over the globe, and we should take to heart the need to spread the gospel in Islamic countries and support the churches on the front lines of this spiritual battle that contends for the souls of men and women.

How can I help The Last Harvest?

You can pray for The Last Harvest; provide financial support to produce and distribute Christian literature, further gospel proclamation by indigenous pastors, plant more churches, and provide aid to persecuted believers; pray for Muslims in your own community; and speak to your pastor about mission support for The Last Harvest. If you are interested in volunteering for the ministry or joining us on a future mission trip, please contact us at 1-619-449- 0702. If you would like to make a donation to The Last Harvest, please visit our donation page at <http://www.thelastharvest.net/newsletter/donation.html>.

The Last Harvest, Inc., is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.
Contact us by mail at: 772 Jamacha Rd. # 254, El Cajon, CA 92019

Additional copies of this book are available for a suggested donation of \$18.00, which includes delivery within the U.S. (Media rate).

Please send requests to:

The Last Harvest, Inc.
772 Jamacha Rd. # 254
El Cajon, CA 92019

All income from the distribution of this book will go toward The Last Harvest ministry projects in the Middle East, which spread the gospel and encourage, equip, and build up the churches.



The Last Harvest, Inc., is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

Contact us at:

772 Jamacha Rd. # 254

El Cajon, CA 92019

1-619-449-0702

Email: thelastharvest@aol.com

Web: www.thelastharvest.com

“It was only through God’s timing that I met David ‘Nagy’ Joseph back in 2004: A time when the world was watching in horror at the atrocities going on in Iraq. I wanted to go there, but couldn’t. I wanted to minister to the Muslim people, but didn’t know how. It was at that time I met Nagy. We immediately became instant friends and partners in ministry and continue to this day. He has a true heart for the Muslim people and a desire to reach them with the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He shared his vision . . . he gave us direction. Nagy and his ministry partners throughout the Middle East are literally putting their lives on the line every day for the sake of the Gospel. Through this book, you will get to know the life and vision of an ordinary man God is using to advance His Kingdom in a difficult and tumultuous part of the world.”

Vernon Brewer - President, World Help

“We often hear the title ‘Man of God.’ To some people this means someone who wears a certain type of clothing or says certain religious words or who always looks calm and dignified. My friend, Dr. Nagy, is not this kind of man of God. He is God’s man. The Holy Spirit has used him not only to survive, but also to encourage and assist Christians in some of the most difficult places in the world. May we all be possessed of such a spirit.”

Tom White - Director, The Voice of the Martyrs

In his autobiography, native-born Egyptian David Joseph shares a powerful vision of how God is preparing the spiritual highway between Egypt, Israel, and Assyria (Isaiah 19), by informing Christians of the need to expose the spirit of Islam, and teaching them to pray strategically for Muslims in order to reach and win them to Christ. Joseph shares his personal story of coming to Christ as a young man in an Islamic nation: enduring persecution and interrogation by secret police; establishing an extensive ministry in the Middle East; planting underground churches; ministering the gospel to Muslims; and, following the Lord’s voice in all his endeavors for Christ. His powerful testimony and prophetic vision for the Middle East will inspire and encourage you. Come be a part of this vision, and see what the Lord is doing in the Middle East! God is shining the light of Christ upon thousands of Muslims, and, by this great outpouring of His Holy Spirit, the Lord is transforming the Middle East!



David and Carol Joseph

Joseph is founder of The Last Harvest, Inc., in El Cajon, Calif., a Christian nonprofit organization that ministers biblical truth to Arabs and Muslims worldwide. A practicing dentist, Joseph is also a pastor who holds a doctorate in theology. Known affectionately to his friends by his Egyptian name, Nagy, Joseph came to the United States in 1991, following God’s leading, in order to establish a base of operations for a ministry to the Arab and Muslim world that now operates throughout the Middle East. The Last Harvest equips indigenous churches, supports church planting efforts in the Middle East, and proclaims the gospel through radio and television broadcasts and the distribution of Christian materials. Joseph became a U.S. citizen in 2000.

