

My life as a missionary to Egypt in 1989

Marie Bond
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I went to Egypt in the beginning of September 1989. There were no members or blessed families when I arrived. The brother who used to be the manager of the newspaper office in Cairo had left so I stayed in his apartment. The national leader Walter Gotesman was in the States with his family in that time. So suddenly I found myself all alone in a Muslim country where you heard the loud prayers at 5 o'clock in the morning waking you up and each time you leave the building there was someone standing by greeting you. Good morning madam. Good evening madam. May I help you? The overpopulated Egypt has a high degree of poverty as well illiteracy. It was a very different culture than Lebanon for sure. But at least it was a safe place even for a young sister who knew nobody there.

Working at Middle East Times office in Cairo was full of surprises and challenges. I took my job very seriously. I used to go to the office around 8 a.m and stayed all day until 8 and sometime 9 p.m. There was nobody in the office other than coffee maker office boys. Actually, they were old men who were hired because they needed a job. So my first responsibility was to let them go. And of course, it was hard to do that.

Then, I started contacting the freelancers who used to send their articles to the office in Greece and to whom they owed them money. I assured them that we would pay them and I encouraged them to continue. The office was really neglected so her job was mostly to put things in order and reported to the main office in Greece. Also to stop any abuse or misuse happening and that was challenging because I needed to face the Egyptian men who were working there for many years. One of them was Hisham. He was the one who picked me up from the airport with a Limousine. He was using the office money for his interest and to show off. He did marketing and advertising. He got a monthly salary and he just brought one or two ads in a month. So I really felt that my job was to clean the office from the lazy and corrupted employees. Also I started herself visiting few companies and businesses and introduced the newspaper to them and asked them to subscribe.

My husband, Larry left his country and came to join me in Egypt and to start our family. Now both of them were working at the Middle East Times, Larry as a copy editor as well writing a weekly column. The office starts having new writers and a marketing team. It improved tremendously and new people start showing up.

I continued working with the Middle East Times during my pregnancy dealing this time with taxpayers. I remembers how hard was on me to visit our offices and everyone looking at my tummy. Also most of the buildings in Cairo didn't have an elevator including their newspaper office. So I used to go upstairs and downstairs around ten times a day. So, my son was born few weeks earlier than his due date. But the most difficult part was to find, in me early pregnancy, that I had toxoplasmosis. It means the baby will be abnormal. I visited ten doctors and all of them recommended abortion. I remembered taking a taxi and hearing the passengers talking about abnormal babies. Even turning on the TV, and suddenly a program pops up about babies who have birth defects. It was like the whole Egyptian spirit world was attacking me. It was a nightmare. But the one, and the only, who stood up against them all and said he believed their son will be okay, was Larry. He suggested to come to United States and to check the doctors there. They did so. They found out that the toxoplasmosis was in my blood before the baby was conceived. Which means the baby is fine. If I had it while I was pregnant, the bacteria will attack the baby directly. This bacterium comes from either eating not well cooked meat or not well washed vegetables. Thanks God, the baby was fine. It was also my first meeting with Larry's parents who were very supportive and helpful.

We came back to Egypt and Donald was born on April 25, 1992, a healthy and handsome little boy. He was the first boy who was born in Egypt from a blessed family. I's mom came from Lebanon to help me

for a month. I kept going to work at the newspaper for another year as a part time as our decided to take turns, I and Larry, in taking care of Donald.

Meanwhile, a new missionary came to Egypt. Young Jin Kim with his wife and two daughters. Also, as Women's Federation for World Peace was established in 1992, Japan sent its first women's missionary to the Middle East and Africa. Suddenly we welcomed around 20 Japanese sisters in Cairo as many of them couldn't obtain visas to their mission country, so they all came to Egypt. They needed a lot of help as they, of course, didn't speak Arabic and even barely spoke English.

Meanwhile, Larry left the Middle East Times and found a job at the American University of Cairo as assistant to Professor Menro who used to write a weekly column in our newspaper. I became pregnant with her second child so I stopped working at the Middle East Times when my daughter Anne was born, on June 12, 1993.

The Kim family rented an apartment beside theirs as well did the Japanese sisters. They started having a Sunday service and doing outreach to women's groups. The Japanese sisters contacted public schools and offered teaching art classes. They also volunteered at hospitals and senior centers. Toward the end of 1993, they received a call from the church headquarter. True Mother was coming to Egypt.

We welcomed first Mrs. Suguiyama, the president of Women's Federation, to prepare for True Mother's visit. Also Lebanese members came to assist us as well other members from different countries came to help including Taj Hamad who was originally from Sudan. True Mother came by the end of December 1993 and around 1000 people attended her speech. It was a great success. But there was a price. The Egyptian authority started questioning our presence and our activities. We were interviewed by the police couple of times asking us about our religion and what was the purpose of them living in Egypt. They started watching us and following our moves.

Meanwhile I became pregnant with her third child and she gave birth to her second son Paul on September 10, 1994. The Kim family changed mission and went back to United States. Half of the Japanese sisters received their visas and went to their mission countries.

One morning, in the beginning of 1996, I received a phone call from the Middle East Times office. They wanted to see me urgently. I went there and I found out that the Egyptian authorities were after me personally. There was an ad or an announcement in the daily Egyptian Newspaper proclaiming that the foreign newspaper, the Middle East Times, had never paid taxes, therefore the person who managed the newspaper in those years, needed to be arrested and put in jail. Thomas called me and asked me to leave the country. He said it has nothing to do with the newspaper; they just wanted to find excuses to kick us out the country. So we packed up and left Egypt in March 1996 and went to Lebanon seeking refuge. Leaving Egypt in 1996 was a dramatic move for our as a family. We already were building a foundation for our church there other than only working at the newspaper. Cairo was a cosmopolitan city. A lot of foreigners were working there. English was the second language as well so Larry could interact with a lot of people in the community especially by working at the American University in Cairo.