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Unexpected Lessons



SANDRA DORSAINVIL

Earlier this summer, Sarah McCloy, Special Assistant to STM, had the opportunity to travel to Israel & Palestine. Here are her reflections.



"This summer I had the unexpected blessing of spending two weeks in Israel and Palestine. Being in the Holy Land was an amazing experience. It was a chance to walk where Jesus walked. Each day in the Holy Land brought new adventures and a chance to approach Scripture in a whole new way. As I read a passage, it appeared before my eyes in the surrounding topography and ancient ruins. Jesus calling the apostles on the shores of Galilee. Jesus being baptized in the Jordan River. Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Each story came alive in a new way as I walked streets that Christian pilgrims have trod for centuries.

It also altered the images I had in my head of certain Scripture passages. For example, I had always pictured the Garden of Gethsemane at the top of the Mt. of Olives. I pictured Jesus praying at the top of the mount looking out over all Jerusalem. Imagine my surprise when I visited the Garden of Gethsemane and it was located at the bottom of the Mt. of Olives. The garden still looks out towards the walls of Jerusalem, but with a perspective totally different than I had imagined.

Traveling in the Holy Land can also add new detail to the images Scripture evokes. There are many Gospel passages which talk about fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Interestingly, I learned during my time at the Sea of Galilee that the fish mentioned throughout the Gospels are tilapia. I know exactly what tilapia look and taste like. I can now picture more clearly the fish Jesus multiplied at the feeding of the five thousand. I can taste the fish our Lord cooked for the disciples on the Galilean shores in John 21.



I also learned some unexpected lessons in some unexpected places. One of these was at the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is famous for being a place where it is impossible to sink. The significant amount of salt and other minerals in the water makes it easy to float and creates

a mud used in many skincare products. While swimming at the Dead Sea, I was reminded of the importance of trust and the support of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

My roommate on this trip—Regiani—has a fear of water stemming from a childhood incident. She doesn't swim and was nervous about getting into the Dead Sea. Our group all entered together and one by one each of us leaned back, lifted our feet, and started to float on top of the water. Regiani was the only one who did not. She said she was too scared to try it. She had never floated before and was worried she would sink.

Sometimes we are too scared to do something alone. I grabbed Regiani's hand. Another of our friends grabbed her other hand. Together we encouraged her. "Lift one foot off the ground. Now the other. Then slowly lean back. We're holding you, and we won't let you sink." Slowly Regiani did just that. She was floating! I gradually loosened my grip on her arm and let go. Our friend did the same. Regiani let out a shout of joy as she realized she was floating by herself in the Dead Sea.

Sometimes it is too scary to do something alone. We need a community we can trust. People to support us and help us. To make us feel secure enough to take the leap and slowly lift our feet and float. Maybe you feel this way about traveling to the Holy Land. You want to go and walk where Jesus walked. You just need a community you can trust to help you feel safe enough to embark on the journey. International Ministries can be that support. Next summer IM is offering a short-term mission opportunity to visit Israel and Palestine. If you have always wanted to travel to the Holy Land, but have been afraid to go, I would encourage you to prayerfully consider this opportunity. "



For more information about the Israel/Palestine and Christ At the Checkpoint gathering, contact volunteers@internationalministries.org