

Elias Malki Blankets Middle East with Gospel TV Programs

Elias Malki's Good News program reaches 20 million Arabs in 77 countries

Most people may not have heard of Elias Malki, but 20 million people in the Arab-speaking world have.

Malki, 69, is a pioneer of Christian television whose Good News talk-and-prayer program, conducted entirely in Arabic, has been broadcast in the Middle East for 19 years. He is arguably one of the most influential Christians in the region.

Malki, the grandson of a Presbyterian missionary, attended Bible school in the United States, then returned to his native Lebanon and in 1977 began hosting a Christian radio program broadcasting from the island of Cyprus. In 1982, Pat Robertson asked him to host the first Arabic evangelistic program to air on Middle East television, with a format similar to The 700 Club.

Today, Malki's ministry, Middle East Gospel Outreach, headquartered in Upland, Calif., near Los Angeles, buys time on satellite networks and broadcasts five times a week to 77 countries.

"He is a celebrity over there [in Jordan and Israel]," said Phil Neely, pastor of First Assembly of God in Grand Junction, Colo. He traveled with Malki to the Middle East in 1994.

"I was astounded," Neely said. "I was not aware of the scope

of his ministry, and it far exceeds any other ministry I know about over there. We couldn't walk half a block without people stopping him and recognizing him."

Neely said Malki was treated with utmost respect and often referred to by the Arabs as a "holy man." Some, including government officials, asked him to send Bibles. One prominent doctor stopped Malki in the street and asked him to come bless his house.

"We met with Presbyterian, Methodist and Nazarene pastors in Jordan who told me: 'The American Christian television programs address problems that aren't of great concern to us, like drug use and divorce. But Elias is one of us. He speaks our language and deals with issues that are relevant to us. This is the man who is filling our churches,'" Neely said.

Malki's style and message are welcomed by Arabs. Testimonies of healing and salvation come in by the hundreds, and Malki is well-known for speaking words of knowledge to people over the screen, then inviting them to place their hands on the television and pray with him.

One Jewish Egyptian living near Nazareth watched the program for six months before deciding to pray with Malki. He suffered from heart trouble, asthma and arthritis. One night when he could hardly breathe, he put his hand on the television and prayed in the name of Jesus.

The power of God hit him, causing him to shake from head to toe. He took a deep breath for the first time in years. His pain was gone. The next morning he took a taxi to a nearby church bookstore and bought a Bible.

"Jesus is my Messiah," he told Malki when they met recently.

Malki one time prayed on the program for a woman who had leukemia, was unable to have children and whose husband had left her. He said if she joined him in prayer, all three problems would be solved.

He later received a letter from a woman fitting the description. Included was a photograph of her—healed of leukemia—with her husband and their new baby. "Ninety percent of those who are healed never write," Malki said. "I only meet them when I travel in the Middle East."

Arabs sometimes call his home in the United States to talk about God. Recently a man called from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and talked for 90 minutes, then received Jesus.

Another Arab man living in Haifa was healed of a tumor. He recalls Malki saying, "You, sitting on the couch, come touch the TV and pray with me." He wanted to respond, but was afraid to pray in Jesus' name in front of his son-in-law. Then Malki said it a second and third time, and the man's son-in-law said, "He's talking to you."

The man touched the television and prayed, and the next morning the tumor was gone, and his doctors were baffled. He gave Malki a copy of his hospital discharge papers.

Malki holds crusades in Middle Eastern countries and oversees a Bible training course for Arab evangelists. He is currently under special missionary appointment with the Assemblies of God. "My congregation is the television," he said.

—Joel Kilpatrick