

Making History in the Middle East

When God called me to Pakistan, I never envisioned the harvest we would reap there or the miracles He would pour out that Nation's hungry souls.

In late February and early March 2003, the country of Pakistan was repeatedly in world news headlines. On Friday, February 28, two guards at the U.S. Consulate were shot and killed in Karachi. On that same day in Lahore, radical protesters demonstrated against the United States.

On Sunday, March 2, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the suspected mastermind of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, was taken into custody in Islamabad.

One key story didn't make it into American newspapers, however: On Wednesday, February 25, the first American woman to hold public religious meetings in Islamic Pakistan returned for her fourth Miracle Crusade.

You didn't see this last event in the headlines, but the 2003 Marilyn Hickey Ministries Miracle Crusade in Lahore, Pakistan, was a history-making event—for our ministry and for Pakistan. It was that country's largest religious gathering ever, Christian or Muslim. Nightly as many as 100,000 Pakistanis, more than 70 percent of them Muslim, poured into the crusade to witness the healing and miracle-working power of Jesus.

For five days the city of Lahore pulsed with the power of God. Miracles occurred and thousands were healed—a large percentage of them children. By the end of the fifth night, more than 400,000 people had participated in the event.

PAKISTAN BOUND

When I first set foot on Pakistani soil nine years ago, I had

no idea how God would use my ministry to reach this Muslim nation. Since that time, I have witnessed world events I could never have imagined, including the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Some people have questioned my decision to minister in Pakistan in such dangerous times. All I know is that God told me to go.

The 2003 crusade was my most dangerous one to date. But once in Pakistan, I understood why God sent me at such a critical time. Tens of thousands of Pakistani souls were ripe for the harvest.

God's uncommon favor was on this outreach from the very beginning, when our national chairman, Robinson Asghar, first obtained permission for us to use the city's new 100,000-seat field-hockey stadium.

During the meetings, the stadium manager, a devout Muslim, could be seen shaking his head and muttering in disbelief that he had allowed Christians to lease his facility—when he had never allowed anyone to use it for anything other than sports. This was a great miracle and a great start to an awesome event!

The enemy did his best to impede the crusade. A legal challenge was brought against the ministry to stop the meetings, but it was dismissed. A sudden downpour threatened to shut down our daytime pastors meetings being held in an open tent, but an alternate meeting site was found just in time.

We heard that Muslim extremists were planning a violent protest. Following their prayer, or salat, they stormed out in search of the “intruding” Christians. But along the way, the angry mob dissipated and never made it to our meeting place.

Despite the violence, protesters, fierce rain and the

competition of a national sporting event, the crusade exceeded my expectations. It was a beautiful, humbling thing to see thousands of repentant Pakistanis stand to receive Jesus. In one meeting alone, we saw more than 40,000 accept Christ!

We were able to minister healing to thousands suffering from sickness. Men, women and children suffering with tumors and diseases of all sorts were healed and restored in the name of Jesus.

One man who had been on a stretcher for 14 years got up, strong and walking. A young girl with a severely twisted foot was healed and able to walk completely normally. A Muslim woman with 26 growths around her neck was prayed for, and each one disappeared!

Many deaf and blind children and adults were healed. I would quietly speak the name of Jesus in their ears—and they would repeat it for the crowd. For many of them, it was the first time they had heard or spoken; and the first word they heard or spoke was the name of Jesus!

One awe-inspiring moment came on the third night as the 100,000 Muslims, Christians and others in attendance sang the chorus “Hallelujah.” The presence of God became so thick, it permeated the whole stadium.

INHERITING THE NATIONS

The dream to hold nation-impacting crusades and Ministry Training Schools in places such as Pakistan was birthed years before I ever traveled there. In 1976 the Lord spoke Isaiah 11:9 to my heart, confirming His call on my life: “For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (NKJV). The vision of covering the earth with God’s Word was planted so deep in my spirit that it has become the cornerstone focus and foundation of Marilyn Hickey Ministries.

Soon after that, the Lord spoke to me about praying for each

nation of the world—one nation every day. So I did. And as I prayed over the nations, God tucked Pakistan in a special place in my heart.

I asked God for the nation of Pakistan according to Psalms 2:8: “Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance.”

Before the 2003 crusade, I shared with my staff a compelling quote from Hudson Taylor, missionary to China. I replaced the nation of China with the nation of Pakistan:

“We did not come to [Pakistan] because missionary work here was either safe or easy, but because He had called us. We did not enter upon our present positions under a guarantee of human protection, but relying on the promise of His presence.”

I relayed to my staff my heart for the multitudes in Pakistan who need to hear about the God who loves them and who sent His only Son to die for them—that they might live.

And so we went.

A HEART FOR PAKISTAN

The first time I was invited to hold a Miracle Crusade in Lahore was in 1995. I was warned that nothing similar had ever been attempted by a woman in Pakistan. No woman had ever publicly preached in that country.

Still, I knew in my heart it was right for me to go.

In those meetings, we had crowds of around 15,000. God performed many great miracles, and thousands received Christ.

Two years later, in 1997, God sent me back to Pakistan, this time to the city of Islamabad. We were absolutely astounded to see crowds of 70,000 people, mostly Muslims, at the meetings.

The Pakistani media took notice. A nationwide Pakistani TV talk show invited me on to talk about the crusade. People in

35 countries saw that show.

This crusade got Satan's attention too. He tried to stop us at every step.

One week before the event, a torrential rainstorm hit, unlike anything the area had seen in more than 100 years. Hundreds lost their lives.

The crusade venue was soaked in more than 18 inches of standing water. Yet, miraculously, the site dried out in time to hold the meetings.

Then, during the event, the strongest earthquake recorded in a decade shook the nation—just one more futile attempt by the devil to keep God's Word from reaching the hearts of the Pakistani people!

Two years later, in 1999, we marched back into the country for our third Miracle Crusade, this time in the city of Karachi.

We had rented the national cricket stadium and distributed tens of thousands of fliers throughout Pakistan to advertise the upcoming event. One week before the crusade, however, city officials revoked the permit for the stadium because of "safety concerns" and delayed granting permission for a second location.

I could have canceled my trip, but I felt certain that God had called me to go. The ministry team proceeded as planned and began putting up the sound system, platform and tents at the new location. The very afternoon the crusade was to begin, the mayor's office signed the permission forms!

Despite little advertising for the new venue, 8,000 people attended the first night of the Karachi crusade. Word of the miraculous healings spread, and attendance grew to 35,000 by the third night.

The final night, 100,000 people came to experience the healing

power of Jesus and hear the gospel message. I was completely awed at the power of God!

NO STRANGER TO DANGER

Now that I have been to Pakistan a number of times, met these dear people and seen firsthand the seeds of revival beginning to grow, I have an even greater heart for the Muslim world. I do not want to waste one day—one hour—that could be spent reaching souls God has called me to win.

Worldwide, the Muslim population has grown from 12 percent to nearly 20 percent in the last century. The hotbed for that growth is the Middle East. With its more than 1.2 billion people, the Muslim region is the “last unevangelized area of the world,” according to Pat Robertson, president of the Christian Broadcasting Network.

In light of current events, the importance of reaching these nations for Christ seems clear. But taking the gospel into predominantly Muslim nations is not only daunting—it’s dangerous. We have seen firsthand the persecution, oppression and violence directed toward Christians in these countries.

Yet we can’t let fear dissuade us from following God’s call with passion and purpose. Revelation 12:11 tells us we must not love our lives unto death.

All ministries face constant challenges when holding major events, distributing Bibles and reaching nations for Christ, particularly in the Middle East. We at Marilyn Hickey Ministries are no different. But we must press on.

I know personally that I must continue to pursue the dream God has given me of covering the whole earth with His Word. I want to set the example for my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I want to leave steps that others can follow.

As long as God gives me strength and opens doors of opportunity, I will follow His heart to Pakistan—and

everywhere else He leads. Time is too short and too precious for me to do otherwise.

Marilyn Hickey is founder and president of Marilyn Hickey Ministries and Word to the World College. She is an anointed Bible teacher and author whose ministry reaches the world through television, books and crusades. Hickey's husband, Wallace, is the founding pastor of Orchard Road Christian Center in Greenwood, Colorado.