

T.L. Osborn: One of the Greatest Missionary Evangelists in History

T.L. Osborn, one of the greatest missionary evangelists in the history of the church, is now home in heaven. Osborn slipped into the presence of Jesus Feb. 14, 2013 at age 89. He was one of three people who most shaped my missiology. His nation-impacting evangelistic meetings in more than 100 nations brought millions under the sound of the gospel and into an encounter with the living Christ.

Our family has been intertwined with the ministry of T.L. and Daisy Osborn since their ministry's inception. My mother was the first secretary of the newly formed Osborn ministry in 1949. In March of 1950, neither my mother nor I was expected to survive my birth. As my mother was in labor, my father, a Tulsa pastor who served on the Osborns' board, waited anxiously at the hospital with T.L. Osborn. Osborn was strongly impressed to pray for my life and my mother's. Turning to my father, Brother Osborn said, "Warren, we've got to rebuke the spirit of death right now."

They agreed in prayer, stood in faith, and God intervened. What appeared to be certain death for both mother and child (who weighed less than four pounds) was turned into victory for the Lord. It is now 63 years later, and both my mother and I are serving the Lord. On a human level, we may owe our lives to the sensitivity and faith of missionary-evangelist T.L. Osborn.

At first, the records and files of the young ministry were kept in our family home's spare bedroom. But when I came home from the hospital, that room became my nursery and Osborn acquired office space on North Utica Street in Tulsa. So I

jokingly say I'm the guy who launched T.L. Osborn into a faith ministry!

My parents, along with T.L., Daisy, and T.L.'s brother comprised the first board of directors for the Osborns' fledgling ministry. Sometimes my parents took me as a child to the board meetings. While I played in the corner, my subconscious mind absorbed the hum of their optimistic discussions about world evangelism. I remember Osborn coming back from his now historic crusades with a passion for souls in his eyes. We wept as we watched the pagan rituals captured on raw footage that would later be embedded in his classic mission films.

Throughout his ministry Brother Osborn kept the main thing the main thing. "One way: Jesus! One job: souls!" was woven deep into the ministry's DNA. T.L. and Daisy were an exemplary team and early advocates for what we today call justice issues that affect women worldwide, especially in the Majority World nations.

T.L. and Daisy came to our home to comfort our family shortly after my father's death. I was a heartbroken teenager and he took me aside, assuming a fatherly role, and spoke words of strength and life that helped sustain me. Brother Osborn preached my dad's funeral and his message of hope resonates in me to this day.

T.L. Osborn was a world class evangelist and missionary statesman of the first order. He was often afforded an ambassador's welcome by the heads of state of many nations. Even non-Christian presidents and prime ministers knew intrinsically they were in the presence of greatness when they were with T.L. Osborn. His compassionate demeanor, authority, anointing and the dignity of his calling identified him as the gospel's global ambassador for Christ. It has been my privilege to minister in 60 nations. Almost anywhere I go I see that the large spiritual footprint of T.L. Osborn has

preceded me. This humble servant who was welcomed in kings' palaces was also joyfully received by the neediest people.

A few years ago it was my privilege to share a meal with him in his home. "Brother Osborn," I asked, "what is the best ministry decision you ever made?" With his trademark smile and a wink in his eye he replied in his animated style, "Oh, David! That's a good question. I don't think I've ever been asked that question! Let me think about that for a moment." He paused and replied, "The most important ministry decision I ever made was to invest my life for neglected people. I'm an old man now. I'm so glad that when I stand before Jesus I'll be able to tell Him, 'I invested my life for the neglected people of the world.'"

Now T.L. Osborn rejoins his wife Daisy at the feet of Jesus. Their joy is complete. Their reward—incalculable.

"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament. And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

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