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High Mill GCN After Action Report for Armenia

September 23 - October 18, 2004

Overview

Armenia is considered a Biblical land. Mt. Ararat towers majestically over the capital city of Yerevan. Although just inside the Turkish border, Armenia rightfully claims the mountain of Noah's ark as her own. The Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew brought Christ to Armenia in the first century. King Trdat and St. Gregory established Christianity as the state religion in 301 A.D., marking it as the first nation of the world to embrace Christ in such a sweeping way. The third great council of the Christian church was held in nearby Ephesus in 325 A.D. Undoubtedly, some Christian leaders from Armenia must have attended this historic gathering. Today, the nation celebrates with much pride and honor the fact that it has been a Christian nation for over 1,700 years; however, religious orthodoxy, governmental corruption, and economic impoverishment threaten the very lifeblood of this historic nation. Out of the midst, God has raised up the new living churches of Armenia, which are increasingly bearing witness to the fact that God has chosen this nation and its people for a special purpose in the last days. The level of spiritual battle involved just to get our African brothers into the nation was one of the strongest testimonies that this indeed is one of God's chosen nations for the advancement of the gospel of Christ throughout the region, including the surrounding Muslim nations where enclaves of Armenian Christians remain under heavy persecution. This report will show that this operation required a number of adjustments and the highest level of war in the heavenlies in order to weaken ideological strongholds in governmental places.

Highlights

SEPT 23-26 (The 3-Day Miracle) The International Team was significantly reduced before the first members even landed in Yerevan. Taras (Ukraine) called at the last minute indicating he could not come; Santhosh (India) could not come due to his ministry schedule; Ibrahim (Syria) could not get a flight; and our African brothers (Kenya/ Uganda) still did not have official visa approval despite at least ten trips by our Armenian leaders to the Passport Department of Armenia during the weeks prior to our arrival. The USA team experienced a flight delay in Moscow, which prevented them from joining the African team in Yerevan as planned. This all weighed heavily upon our hearts as we proceeded forward to begin the operation. It was very uncomfortable to be separated from our African brothers as they were being interrogated, but God's favor was with them. In fact, as we fervently prayed with other leaders at the Retreat Center near Vanadzor, the news came that government officials had granted a 3-day visa. This was heralded as a great miracle because the reality was that their visa requests had been firmly rejected. James Murunga (Kenya) and Kanito Tomas (Uganda) were received with much rejoicing when they finally arrived in Vanadzor in the middle of the night. The next day it was determined that it was God's will for them to spiritually impart to the 60-70 leaders day and night. Although the authorities promised to approve

longer visas for them in the future, they had restricted them to Vanadzor forbidding them to go to other cities and villages. A Christian businessman arranged a clandestine meeting with a middle level KGB agent in hopes of extending their visas. This unsuccessful meeting took place in Yerevan while James and Kanito opened up the Conference in Vanadzor. The first training day for leaders of the Burning Bush Church Network clearly set the operation in God's order. After a call to come up to the higher ground for the intense spiritual battle under the breaker anointing of Micah 2:12-13, James brought forth an explosive message from Acts 15:32 with a prophetic call to "Let the apostles of Armenia rise up! Let the prophets of Armenia rise up! Let the evangelists, pastors and teachers of Armenia rise up!" The ministry time was at the "breakthrough level" both in the morning and afternoon sessions where Kanito preached from Acts 1:4ff on the promise of the Father. Many received the Holy Spirit and others were set free from bondages. Those assembled broke into high praise and dancing, fondly calling Kanito, "Mr. Pentecost," and James, "Mr. Love." Both preached again the next morning at Burning Bush Church as another team preached in Stepanavan where there were six salvations. They were the first African brothers to preach in Vanadzor and we were told also in all of Armenia. It was difficult to bid them farewell and we wondered what we would do without them. Upon their return, they again encountered difficulties at the airport with authorities who were very disrespectful to say the least. The love and courage of our brothers, however, silenced the authorities and God returned them safely to their homes. James Murunga reported that *"The opposition and challenges facing Kanito and myself were great yet through unity in faith and purpose, we were able to sail through victoriously."*

SEPT 27 - OCT 1 (A New Training Agenda): We were challenged with presenting four more days of training to between 60-70 expectant leaders without the help of our African brothers. This is not how we envisioned the operation, but it was the situation we faced and we had to deal with it. We were now left with our High Mill Church team, which included two student ministers and also a young man from Sweden who was just responding to the call of God upon his life. The entire team participated in laying a foundation for properly understanding the Biblical leadership structure for the New Testament church. We were reminded how Jesus taught the people through parables, but gathered the twelve by themselves to explain all things to them. We shared how God had revealed to us that there was a distinction between Ephesians 4:11 leaders called into fulltime ministry and the motivational gift of leadership in Romans 12:8 given to some members within the local church body. In addition, we presented the necessity of a comprehensive teaching strategy at two levels: one for leaders and another for church members. This new training agenda would define our ministry throughout Armenia. Our young ministry students (Lavern & Noah) impacted the leaders with anointed teachings on the doctrine of Baptisms and an introduction to the spiritual gifts of I Corinthians 12. Breakout sessions dealt with understanding, developing, and functioning in your calling. The next day was filled with teaching on the revelation gifts and the vocal gifts. Each session was followed by an extensive question and answer period. Although questions varied, most dealt with prophesy. The topic for the final training day was giving and receiving. This resulted in a dynamic question and answer session, which could have continued all day. Kevin, the young man from Sweden, shared his testimony at the closing service under a very special anointing that confirmed his calling to everyone present. Pastor Vachagan also shared that the training days marked "a new page and a beginning of the battle."

OCT 2-5 (Stepanavan Area & Our Battle with Sickness): The team proceeded to the city of Stepanavan near the border with Georgia. We again shared the comprehensive teaching strategy with around 20 leaders who were very receptive and eager to receive teaching materials. We prayed for God to increase the teaching anointing upon six key leaders. The next morning Pastor Chuck brought a life-word for the church from Revelation 3:7-10 saying, "You are the church of the open door! Of the third day!" Chuck, Heidi, & David returned to Vanadzor while Mick, Lavern, & Noah remained in Stepanavan to visit some villages on the next day. A number of us were battling colds and some dysentery, but we joined in prayer for God's healing. We proceeded to a nearby house church while Chuck and Arman traveled to Yerevan to meet with the US Embassy in hopes of developing a working relationship that will release our Armenian partners to get visas so they can minister at High Mill Church of the Resurrection. Pastor Caro of Stepanavan has established 13 house churches ministering to over 200 people. He had shared with us the eight points of house churches and concluded with a profound statement that gripped our hearts: "Church does not change on Sunday service, but in the house church!" He had no idea that God had already filled our hearts with a passionate and strategic hope for our own city of Canton, Ohio. He had no knowledge that the Holy Spirit was speaking to us about a radical house church strategy for our city much like in the city of Ephesus. Around 25 people gathered at the house church. After a brief message, Noah taught on faith toward God. There were 2 salvations, 1 baptized with the Holy Spirit, and 2 set free from bondage. We proceeded to the village of Akarak in the evening for an evangelistic meeting. Lavern preached from Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 declaring the gospel as a message of life and hope from God's heart to set people free. There were again 2 salvations and we prayed for those who needed healing prior to returning to Vanadzor. Most of the team

had sickness and were weak in body, but we determined to prevail in the strength of the Lord. Upon our arrival in Vanadzor, Pastor Vachagan's wife, whom we lovingly call, "Momma Jan," nursed us back to health through prayer and giving us warm water in large quantities to induce vomiting and expel the viruses from our stomachs. We had a good nights sleep and began to recover to God's glory. Pastor Chuck, Heidi, and David departed to return to the USA. Again, it was difficult to see them go, but we had settled in our hearts that we would complete the mission. There would be at least 15 meetings over the next 10 days and we would have to labor hard for the Kingdom.

OCT 6-10 (Burning Bush Church & Margahovit Village): We began the final portion of the operation with renewed strength in the Lord. We presented a teaching on the resurrection of the dead at Burning Bush Church. The people responded with many questions which demonstrated their hunger for God's word. The next day we arrived at the village of Margahovit where Noah preached on John 4 to over 50 people. He declared how Jesus went to a well to confront a religious stronghold and spark a citywide revival through a Samaritan woman. It was a great message resulting in 5 salvations. In addition, 5 men came forward visibly touched by God. As we laid hands upon them, there was much power flowing into their lives. Then a number of women came forward and a strong anointing and breaking began to flow upon everyone. Many were set free! About 20 key members of the church gathered in the evening where we again laid down the basics for church leadership structure and teaching strategy. We awakened in the morning eye-level with the clouds. Pastor Marut drove us up a mountain after breakfast to pray over property he has claimed for the Lord. He shared with us that God had spoke to him, "My word does not come through your faith, but your faith comes through My word!" Later, around 50 church members gathered again for teaching. Lavern taught on personal evangelism and this was followed with a requested teaching on Matthew 18 regarding relationships between members and also with the church including how this affects our witness for Christ in the community. Again, there were many questions from church members, which has become an important learning tool. We returned to Vanadzor where Lavern and Noah spoke to young people at Burning Bush Church. The following evening we preached on being born again (what it means, what it looks like, what radical changes to expect). There were 12 women who received Christ. They began one by one to open up their hearts and to let go for God's work to bring new life. They released all to Jesus and walls fell down for most of them. One young woman experienced deliverance from consulting mediums. The next morning, Lavern preached to around 100 people at the Sunday morning service. The message from Romans 8 resonated with many as he declared how God wants to change our way of thinking and set us free by the power of the Holy Spirit. At the conclusion, people spontaneously began coming forward to discard the old and put on the new. This was very strong move of God.

OCT 11-15 (House Churches & The Tavush Region: We proceeded to Tashir where Noah preached to over 50 people in a theater. The Burning Bush Worship Team filled the auditorium with God's presence prior to the evangelistic message from John 14 declaring that God has prepared a place for you and Jesus is the only way to heaven. There were 6 salvations and a strong reaction in the Spirit to the words, "He is not in the grave!" How many were there whose lives were like closed tombs? Many responded and were prayed for. Deliverances began to take place. A woman and her son were delivered from demonic curses. Later, the Tashir House Church gathered together as we shared from Acts 2:41-47. This group was slowly being destroyed due to their inability to focus solely upon the Lord and their system of mass rule under the controlling influence of 3-4 people, whom we fervently prayed for to repent and lay all things down. The Holy Spirit moved powerfully bringing things into God's order as it was apparent to all that two young men, Armen and David, a 17-year-old, were God's chosen instruments to lead this house church. The anointing came upon young David so strongly that the house seemed to shake as he prayed for the people. In addition, a worship team of young girls was birthed by the Holy Spirit. The next morning, the house church gathered again. Lavern taught on authority and spiritual warfare from Acts 19 and the book of Ephesians. We closed with prayer and proceeded to another house church in the village of Mecavan. We quickly observed that this house church was experiencing similar difficulties, which was a clear sign that Satan was greatly opposing the strategy. We shared similar words and ministered to the situation anointing as leaders a man called, "May," and a second one scheduled to return soon from Russia. We also prayed for the wives of the two men and all things were set in order. Over lunch, a woman who had a paralyzed hand reported that she had been totally healed at a service in May 2004 and another reported her severe head and facial pain had departed as a result of prayer for healing. We returned to Vanadzor late in the afternoon. There was an important request the following evening to teach on spiritual authority at Burning Bush Church. We taught on the authority of Christ, the believer, and the church. The next day Lavern and Noah shared with the teen group prior to our departure for an evangelistic meeting at a house church located in Ijevan. Pastor Artyom started and now pastors this church of around 15 believers. Lavern preached a strong message on the power of

the risen Lord from I Corinthians 2:1-5. We prayed for salvations not knowing how many as all in the house came forward for prayer. We spent much time praying for the sick. A young woman testified that her withered hands were healed when she was prayed for on an earlier visit. Noah taught the next morning on faith as over 10 gathered in the house. We left for the frontier region on the Azerbaijan border arriving at the village of N. Karmic in the Tavush Region. We traveled over two mountains to get to this house church of over 30 people. We preached from the book of Acts on the work of the Holy Spirit with an emphasis on the house churches. There were 8 salvations and many were baptized with the Holy Spirit. We arrived back in Vanadzor after a harrowing drive through the mountains in the darkness along the Azerbaijan border.

OCT 16-18 (Final Services): Burning Bush Church leaders gathered at Vachagan's house in the evening. We talked about the qualities of leadership and the necessity of regular teaching for leaders involving a school of ministry. The next morning we preached on prophetic ministry in the church. There were at least three topics that received the majority of questions from church members. These were tithing, spiritual authority, and prophesy. The final service began with a degree of anointing upon worship that is seldom experienced. The preaching followed from I Corinthians 14:1 and I Thessalonians 5:16-22 showing how the degree in which the church operates in spiritual gifts, particularly prophesy, runs parallel with the level of spiritual fire. We closed with prayer for a stronger anointing upon leaders for a greater release of prophetic ministry. Then they turned to the next generation praying and laying hands upon them for the same. It was a very strong move of the Spirit. Burning Bush Church was led by the Holy Spirit to plant a seed of \$200 into High Mill Church of the Resurrection. We humbly received this precious gift in honor of Christ and it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to use the gift to begin the house church strategy in our city.

Lessons Learned

- Spiritual warfare that weakens strongholds over nations at governmental levels requires the apostolic anointing.
- Local churches and church networks must develop a comprehensive teaching strategy for training leaders as well as church members. In fact, leaders and members will not grow to maturity in Christ without such a strategy.
- House churches are a viable Biblical strategy to penetrate a city and region for Christ.
- There are two levels of leadership and two levels of teaching strategy needed in the church.
- Government corruption operates in the sphere of the "unwritten law." Christian leaders must exercise spiritual wisdom in order to avoid any compromise when dealing with authorities who operate in fear and for selfish gain.
- A day for tourism and sightseeing may be used to justify a tourist visa, but it is not the same as a day of rest.
- The pattern of including an early departure group may not be applicable for every operation.
- Leaders must remain open and prepared for the Holy Spirit to adjust the objectives and flow of any operation at any time.

Conclusion

This operation lived up to its forecast involving an intense spiritual battle in the heavenlies. As we were obedient to the adjustments brought on by the Holy Spirit, we emerged victorious over the opposition of Satan. Two apostolic and prophetic leaders from the African continent walked and preached on Armenian soil as a result of this operation. This was a direct fulfillment of a burden upon Momma Jan's heart for at least 15 years. She is truly a mother to nations as has been prophesied over her. James Murunga shared these points: *"Indeed Armenia stands out to me a land the enemy has tried to destroy because of its Divine objective for the region. I do strongly believe the church in Armenia is called to impact the Muslim nations with the gospel. I was particularly touched by the hunger and thirst of the saints for a move of God. Indeed there is need for more training and equipping forums for the future. Of course, the love of these wonderful people for God and for us was overwhelming."* In addition, a comprehensive teaching strategy for leaders and church members was released upon the new living churches of Armenia, which will involve the future establishment of the Burning Bush School of Ministry for Leaders and the Burning Bush School of the Bible for church members. Finally, we received a clear Biblical model for reaching the unchurched of our city through the establishment of house churches. The High Mill Church and Global Church Network praise God for Pastor Vachagan, his family, church leaders, and members whose love, care, and endurance overwhelmed our hearts and caused us to triumph in Christ. We also thank

God for the many partners around the world who indicated they were engaged in great warfare on behalf of this operation. We pray this report will strengthen and encourage you in the knowledge that the Lord heard and answered your prayers.



James and Kanito were the first Africans to preach on Armenian soil.



Young leaders were an important part of the conference in Vanadzor.



Anointed praise and worship at Stepanavan.



Mick, Noah and Lavern completed the village ministry.



Over 30 attend this house church at the Azerbaijan border.

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