

Learning to Trust, Rest, & Obey

Story by Sandy Hodges



Patricia and her husband were on furlough in Texas, but the number displaying on her ringing cell phone was Israeli. The caller was a Jewish friend who had rejected the Gospel for years. Patricia had long felt there was little hope the woman would ever trust Christ; but answering her phone in Hebrew that October 2010 day, she heard the woman say, “I just accepted Jesus the Messiah.” Now, Patricia stated, “She calls me just to pray for me! It’s been an amazing transformation.”

As missionaries to Israel’s largest metroplex since 2004, Patricia and Stephen Apple lead Calvary Chapel Tel Aviv and its many outreach ministries. Patricia knew before their wedding in 1972 that marrying Stephen might mean eventually moving to Israel; she suspected God would call him there eventually. But after 28 years together in California, she thought she must have been wrong. Staying made sense: They were in their 50s, had little money, and lived near family for the first time in decades. Then, they sensed God guiding them to Israel. While facing leaving her family, Patricia felt God directing her to Jesus’ words in Luke 18:29b-30:

“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Initially, she thought God was promising to replace her family. “Lord, I don’t want that,” she pleaded. Then, once in Israel, Patricia sat at a café and noticed several women with babies. Longing to hold a child, she prayed, “Lord, who would let me, a stranger, hold their baby?” Since then several people have lived with the Apples, including one woman and infant. Cradling that baby, Patricia realized that God had not replaced her family, but expanded it. “It’s like having more kids; you don’t love the first any less,” she said.

As the couple settled into Israeli life, Patricia had a dream in which she wandered down a

sidewalk that suddenly ended. Looking into the dark void ahead, she realized, *If I take another step, I’ll fall into nothing.* Yet she felt God calling her to move forward. “And when I did, He put sidewalk under my feet,” Patricia said. To her, the dream vividly represented God’s guidance. “You step out in faith, and God meets you with exactly what you need,” she commented. Over the years, whenever there has been a challenge such as overflowing sewage seeping inside (a common predicament for the Apples) or a need for money to rent space for a ministry, Pat has remembered the dream and fought her fears by choosing to trust the Lord, rather than succumb to doubt. The Apples now lease five buildings. From these they run the church’s many outreach ministries, including a soup kitchen, free medical center, housing for the elderly, substance abuse recovery program, and evangelistic concerts. “In everything, there has never been an abundance, but God has provided just what we need,” Patricia said. Despite Christianity’s rarity in Israeli culture, about 70 locals attend the church’s weekly services.

Initially, whenever Patricia began cleaning the soup kitchen or doing other seemingly-menial tasks, people told her to stop working and sit. “People here think they should serve pastors and their wives instead of the reverse,” Patricia said. She and Stephen have explained many times that Jesus’ example is servanthood, “And serving them has made a huge impression,” she commented.

[Jesus said], “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

Valerie Harrington, who with her husband Mike led Calvary Chapel Bible College Israel until 2009, observed Patricia interacting with a female prostitute who used various drugs. “They developed a relationship that deeply influenced this girl,” Valerie said. The woman began calling Patricia numerous

times daily to ask about her thoughts regarding different situations. “Patricia always responded patiently, with God’s Word, despite having answered the same questions

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repeatedly,” Valerie continued. The young woman eventually began calling Patricia “Mom” and exchanged her lifestyle of prostitution and drugs for a life committed to Jesus. “Seeing God transform her life has been incredible,” Valerie concluded.

Israel’s diverse people speak many languages, including Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Russian. During the women’s Bible study she leads, Patricia frequently pauses for translations. “In normal conversations, I easily lose my place, but I never have during Bible study,” Patricia recalled. “It’s totally God; He wants to make sure people understand His Word.” After reading a Scripture passage, Patricia asks questions to encourage participants to reflect. “I challenge them to ask God to help them obey Him by acting differently than they normally would in any one specific situation,” she said.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

One day, a Bible study member was sitting on a bus when someone bumped into her. Normally, in accordance with assertive Israeli culture, the woman would have yelled at the offender. But in response to Patricia’s challenge and to Ephesians 4:32, she instead asked if the lady would like a seat. The surprised woman sat down and asked why the believer was being kind, which allowed her to share Jesus’ love. She returned to Bible study excited to share the experience. ✨