

MISSION CAMP: RED SPRINGS

NC Baptist Coed Missions

Meet the Missionaries: Larry Osborne would have you think he is nothing more than a “good ole boy” from Caldwell County who dislikes speaking in public. Don’t believe him. Despite a shy demeanor, humble attitude, and distinctive Western North Carolina twang, Larry is an inspiring orator. Folks who have come to know Larry over the years will tell you it’s not so much *how* he speaks, but what comes out that makes the difference. It doesn’t take long for listeners to recognize that his message comes straight from the heart.

Larry, wife Teresa, and daughter MacKenzie have had quite a missions odyssey over the past decade. This odyssey has led one or all of them at one time or another from Caldwell County to the Asian island of Sri Lanka to New York City to Red Springs, NC. It all started when Larry went on his first mission trip to Honduras in 1999. Like so many other volunteers, Larry became “hooked” on missions. Early on this meant going on mission trips as a team member to places like Mozambique, El Salvador, and the Ukraine. But the tsunami that struck Pacific Asia late in 2004 changed everything for the Osborne family. Larry was part of a small team that went to serve in Sri Lanka, a predominantly



Buddhist island nation just off the eastern coast of India. The devastation and need among the people there was unlike anything he had witnessed before. And yet, there was something more. “The Sri Lankans are survivors. Their will to rebuild their lives touched my heart.”

Upon his return, Larry was quick to tell all who would listen of what God was doing in that remote Buddhist nation. People began listening to this “good ole boy” and they were touched by his passion. Soon, North Carolina Baptist Men asked Larry to serve as the coordinator for relief efforts in Sri Lanka. More than houses were rebuilt. Some of the Sri Lankan people began giving their lives to Christ. That too made an impression on Larry.

“Once they grasp the gospel, they ‘get it’ and they live it. To see a Buddhist go from darkness to light is an amazing thing!” Though Teresa and MacKenzie made periodical visits, and Larry had visits back home, long stretches apart in a land very far away and very culturally different were tough. Still, the Osbornes had no doubt that this was all part of God’s plan – a plan they have learned to listen to and follow.

After two and a half years coordinating work in Sri Lanka, the Osbornes began sensing another call to a mission field some would say is even more daunting – New York City! Through previous mission trips the Osbornes had fallen in love with Graffiti, an inner-city congregation started by Taylor and Susan Field. Graffiti reaches hundreds through a variety of community-based ministries. Taylor asked Larry to pray about coming to serve as mission coordinator and Teresa to be the children’s ministry coordinator. They said ‘yes’ and moved to the big city. Teresa will tell you that life in New York City is not easy. “You can’t just jump in your car and go wherever you want to. You have to plan out carefully where you go and how you are going to get there. Even shopping for groceries is a challenge – not to mention expensive!” But she immediately fell in love with the children she worked with and their families. Part of the appeal was the vast difference she saw Christ make in their lives. “New York City is so different than in North Carolina”, she says. “Within a city block you encounter people who are literally living on the street, some of who are adamantly anti-Christian. We had the privilege of seeing some of the moms we built relationships with give their lives to Christ. When that happens here (in NC) you may not always see a huge difference in a person’s lifestyle. But there’s no mistaking it there. For most it involves a radical change.”



After two and a half years of ministry at Graffiti, God once again had moving plans for the Osbornes. The opportunity to come back to their home state to run NC Baptist Men’s new mission camp in Red Springs was a call they were once more glad to answer. Once again they find themselves in a challenging place of ministry, but one that is not without its rewards. In reflecting what he has learned over the past decade in missions, Larry shares, “God had to take me all over the world to prepare me for ‘home’ missions. Working with different people groups in places like Sri Lanka and New York City has helped me to see that God has a plan for all people. No one is beyond His care or his reach.”