



## Equipping Children's Ministry Workers

By Ayad Bebawy

*"I used to wonder how God could use me in reaching children with the message of the Bible. Now I see that God can use what I have, and I am willing to give it to Him."*

Peter, a young man in his 20s from the north coast of Egypt, recently attended a children's ministry training conference sponsored by Future Generation Ministries. After participating, he shared this testimony: "I used to wonder how God could use me in reaching children with the message of the Bible. Now I see that God can use what I have, and I am willing to give it to Him." He has renewed confidence in returning to his church to reach the next generation for Christ.

Peter's feelings are very much like those of thousands of teachers serving children in churches throughout Egypt. Many are fervently praying and asking God to send someone to help them.

### **The Church in Egypt**

Many Westerners are not aware that there is a large Christian community in Egypt today (about 15 percent of the population). The Church of Jesus Christ is alive and well! Christianity was first introduced to Egypt by the writer of the Gospel of Mark. For three centuries, believers in Christ suffered greatly at the hands of the Romans, but by the fourth century, the majority of Egyptians had converted to Christianity. During this time, the Eastern Orthodox Church, or Coptic Church, established a large theological school in Alexandria and became a leader in the stand against heresy

and in the creation of the Nicene Creed, defending the deity of Christ.

In the seventh century Egypt was invaded by the Arab people, and Islam was introduced to the nation. Today, the majority of its population is Muslim.

There is a great influence from the Islamic world in Egypt. Still, the Christian presence is strong. Egypt can be a door to missions work in the Middle East. Local churches are looking for help to make a difference in this dark place, and it was in this context that Future Generation Ministries (FGM) of Egypt was founded.

### **Start of the ministry**

Working in partnership with a U.S. organization, Every Generation Ministries, an interdenominational board of evangelical Egyptian Christians was established in 2003. I was called to serve as the director for the ministry. Its purpose is to equip children's workers in churches by providing innovative, creative and Biblical training and materials.

The beginning of the ministry of FGM focused in the area of children's ministry leadership development. Churches were eager for assistance, and many local training events took place, primarily in Upper Egypt and in the urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria.

## **Leadership development**

From the start, FGM desired to not only offer philosophical training but also hands-on children's ministry experiences where the training could be utilized. Since 2005, seven regional conferences have been held, where children and children's workers were both invited, meeting both of these needs. Training for adults takes place at the conference, but the trainees also have an opportunity to work directly with the children, immediately using what they have learned.

A national children's ministry conference has been held each year in January, and the number of participants has grown each year. In January 2007, more than 250 attended. Plans are being made now to accommodate as many as 400 children's workers at the national conference in 2008.

Conference attendees have included people from all walks of life. In the villages throughout Egypt children's workers sometimes cannot even read or write, but still have a desire to teach the children about God. Students and professional people from the cities also want help to reach the children. FGM is ready to help each one.

## **Publications**

FGM publishes a quarterly children's ministry journal that provides creative ideas for children's ministry as well as inspirational articles which emphasize the heart of God for the children. At this writing, 3,000 children's workers are receiving this important resource. In 2006 and again in 2007, the first children's ministry curriculum materials were produced. This vacation Bible school program was written by Egyptian church leaders for use by Egyptian children's workers among Egyptian children. As far as we know, this is the first attempt to produce these kinds of materials in Egypt. The curriculum included several features

(experiential activities, creative Bible teaching methods, discussion starters and response activities) that have been very well received by the churches.

Over a two-year test period, more than 18,000 children participated in church programs where this curriculum was used. The teachers are thankful for curriculum that is imaginative and culturally relevant. The success of our first two pilot projects encouraged us to embark on an aggressive plan to create a three-year Sunday school curriculum for the churches to use on a weekly basis. Three age levels are included: 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. This new curriculum is in development and will be available starting in the Fall of 2008.

The need is so great. This new curriculum is a great step of faith for this small ministry with a big vision and a small budget, but we are moving forward with God's help and are trusting the Lord to provide all that is needed.

## **A vision beyond Egypt**

Future Generation Ministries desires to be used of the Lord to make an impact throughout the Middle East. The curriculum and training materials that are being created in Arabic can be used in a number of neighboring countries. The methodology used in the leadership development programs will be of great use to the churches in these countries.

Already, there are many requests to see a similar ministry established in several Arabic-speaking countries nearby. We are asking God to bless the ministry in Egypt so that this country can be an open door for children's workers throughout the region to get the help they are longing and praying for.

*[Ayad Bebawy](#) is the director of Future Generation Ministries.*

*Future Generation Ministries Ayad, the EGM web site says the FGM web site address is [www.fgm-eg.org](http://www.fgm-eg.org), but the link does not work in Cairo, Egypt, is affiliated*

*with Every Generation Ministries <http://www.egmworld.org/>.*

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