

The Odyssey Journey of Dr. Olga Clarke, Executive Director - PF Bahamas

By: Donna Varnam

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. Psalm: 126: 5-6 (NIV)

JESUS MADE ME CRY...

There have been few men in Dr. Olga Clarke's life that she has been willing to trust. Her father died when she was a young child, leaving her mother to struggle to raise the family on her own. Then, as a young wife, Olga would face the death of her own husband, leaving her to raise their two children alone as well. These two early life experiences gave Olga a fighting spirit and a promise to herself that nothing would stand in the way of her ambition. Resolved that she would never be dependent on any man, she would use the opposite sex to gain her own notoriety. Those men who she found weak, she exposed their weakness and would use that exposure to earn status above theirs. In men who were stronger, she took them on with fierce competition. One thing she knew, no man could ever make her cry.

Through the years, Dr. Clarke had accomplished much and excelled as an educator. Always politically involved, but never choosing sides, she maintained equilibrium between both political parties, giving her influence with both. When she had the opportunity to go to Singapore as a participant in the Odyssey course, she did not hesitate. After all, she was bound to glean more knowledge and with more knowledge, there was power -- power professionally, personally and politically. Her life was very well compartmentalized and she planned to keep it that way.

Rev. Henry Khoo, spiritual guidance pastor for the Odyssey in Singapore, was one of the few men that Dr. Clarke knew she could trust. She entered his office for their assigned one-on-one meeting well prepared and ready to take advantage of his wisdom and absorb any information that would further empower her ambition. She had her list of personal and professional items for which she would seek his advice. As Rev. Khoo began to do more listening than talking to his new student, Olga Clarke had a strong sense there was someone else in the room with them. The more she talked the stronger the "presence" became until her words became insignificant and the tears that had been absent for so long came forward with unprepared intensity. Could this be what she had heard others speak of, but doubted that she would ever experience in her own life? Could Jesus Christ really be revealing himself to her through the Holy Spirit during Rev. Khoo's counseling?

Cleansing tears would engulf Olga over the next couple of days, confining her to her room and leaving her fellow sojourners to wonder why she had not been able to join them at their regular sessions. However, when a new Dr. Olga Clarke emerged to unite with the others, her compass was set in a new direction and she was ready to explore what she knew would be a journey of a lifetime as she traveled through the Odyssey with Jesus navigating.

As a result of the Odyssey, Olga says she now can sense the peacefulness that passes all understanding by having Jesus in her life. Her spirit is more positive because of Him. In the past, she had been advised to seek God, but no one had ever provided her with the tools to do so. The Odyssey curriculum educated her on what God was all about. She still keeps the materials beside her Bible on the nightstand and refers to them frequently. She states the

spiritual part of the course was the most enriching and the knowledge she has taken away has not been self-serving. She is anxious to bring others into the fold and share her experience openly and freely with an unselfish spirit. Something she admits would not have been possible before. Her anger is gone and she replaces “God thoughts” with any negative thoughts that may surface.

It was with much excitement that Olga attended the second passage of the Odyssey. She felt her first experience in Singapore gave her the building blocks she needed and the second passage took her to a higher level. She laughs when she says after her return home from the first passage, the transformation in her was so obvious that colleagues would say, “You mean Olga had to go all the way to Singapore to change?” When she prepared to attend the second passage of the Odyssey, her employer allowed her to take the time off with full pay. Olga laughs and says, “Guess they thought the investment was worth it.”

Dr. Clarke is more excited about the ministry of PF Bahamas than ever before. The community is now open to having a Sycamore programme and she is better equipped in educating victims on forgiveness and helping offenders understand the consequences of their crime. With a PF Bahamas website to soon start, she knows that awareness will bring more education into the community and the criminal justice system as well. She admits the Youth Arm, a programme to help younger boys before they end up committing the crimes that would send them to prison, is the programme she is proudest of. She is working hard to try to bridge the gap by bringing young offenders to the school to share their stories and to encourage the problematic boys.

Olga admits that before the Odyssey experience that she had feelings of being alone and worried about her future of growing old. She says she no longer has those feelings because she knows God is always with her. She cries freely these days, but knows it is not a sign of weakness. It has taken the tears to help her see life and people more clearly. She thanks Jesus for making her cry