



## A HEART FOR THE NATIONS: MY REFLECTION ON BEIRUT

*Before stepping into the role of Carmel's Preschool Associate Minister, Tiffany Bass spent 14 years living overseas in the Muslim world. Over the next two weeks, Tiffany shares her reflection on the August 4 Beirut explosion and the calling from the Lord she experienced as a child to serve the nations (and what that looks like from South Charlotte).*

I never quite realized that our top story apartment, complete with a large terrace overlooking the city, actually sat on a hill a bit higher than the rest of our city of 6 million people. That is, until that night. Our world was upside down. We had just arrived back in town and were expecting to move to a new part of town in two days. With no air conditioning, every window in the house was wide open, hoping to catch any cross breeze that might bring a bit of relief from the summer heat. We were just getting ready to retire from the late night of packing boxes when the stillness of the summer night was interrupted by the sound of a massive explosion and rapid gunfire echoed through the silence of our open windows.

As I raced upstairs to see if my sleeping children were okay, I remember distinctly the thoughts that flooded my mind, "Is this war? Are we being bombed? What will happen now?" We were able to see the events of that night unfold in the center of our city from our terrace view. Soon we would learn that there was an attempt to overthrow the current government by force. We spent the night in fear, waiting for the next blast and wondering what this meant for our life and the lives of our many friends.



A few weeks back, as I watched the blast in Beirut on TV, my mind went back to that terrifying night of the attempted coup. I felt helpless knowing that many peoples' lives were destroyed, their homes damaged, and, in an instant, everything changed. We reached out to friends, one of Carmel's global partners in Beirut, a local church who is actively making disciples in that part of the world, to check in and see if everyone was okay. While several buildings were damaged, thankfully, they were safe.

Even before the blast, the whole world was experiencing disruption on so many levels. Will school resume in the fall? Will we have to wear masks forever? Will the entire economy implode? What does this mean for my children's future? How many lives will be lost by this ugly pandemic? Beirut faced those same concerns before that fretful day.

The church in Beirut has been a gem in my heart since David first had the chance to visit back in 2018 and several times since. Much like the location where we served as missionaries, Lebanon is a place where there are very few followers of Jesus. And yet, what was once a small group of believers has blossomed and multiplied into many over the last few years. How did the gospel spread and the church grow in a place where the soil is so hard? God used disruption to draw many to Himself.



Regional conflict resulted in a mass influx of Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Local authorities were so overwhelmed they decided not to help so as to not further exacerbate the situation. Imagine how hopeless you would feel if you suddenly faced a situation where work was scarce, housing expensive, and local schools were closed to your children. Life would look pretty hopeless.

The pastor saw the situation and challenged his church, "We need to care for our new neighbors." "But pastor," they responded, "We can't...these are our enemies." "Jesus said we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us," he reminded them. So, in faith, this church began to share not only their food but, more importantly, the life-changing message of Jesus Christ with their new neighbors. By faith, the church in Beirut courageously stepped into the opportunity that God laid before them.

They began to look out and see who the Lord had put in their path. People who were unlike them; people who were in need; people who did not know Christ, but were willing to listen. And they shared their lives and the gospel as well. God began to work, and through a mighty move of His Spirit, grew His Church.

I think there might be a lesson for us in this too. May we, like the church in Beirut, pray for and step into the opportunities God brings our way to boldly share the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that through faith in Him we can be reconciled to God.



*Pray for the hurting in Beirut, Lebanon today. Pray for those who don't know Jesus. Pray for the church to be able to speak boldly in this tragedy. Pray for the love of Jesus to be felt in such a time as this. Please **give** if you can, so that our friends in Beirut can help administer help to the hurting.*



Carmel is committed to making disciples of those Nearest, our Neighbors and the Nations.

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