

Growing Up Years

Martha Myers was born on March 13, 1945, in Birmingham, Alabama. She grew up in a strong Christian home and was a compassionate caregiver even from a young age. She was always taking care of her siblings or anyone else who would let her. She professed Christ as her personal Lord and Savior at age nine. An active participant in WMU's missions education for girls, Girls Auxiliary (now Girls in Action), Martha was especially enthusiastic about missions. When she was in fifth grade, she told her church she wanted to be a missionary.

Martha also developed an interest in the medical field as a young child. She would sometimes imitate medical procedures on her younger brother while they were playing. One time she pricked his finger with a pin in an effort to give her a pretend blood test, he recalled.

The Myers family moved to Montgomery in 1955, and her father became the state public health officer for Alabama in 1963. Martha grew in her faith at Dalraida Baptist Church. And she grew in knowledge, too, receiving many honors in high school. She was developing an impressive intellect that would serve her well through college and medical school.

Martha went on to graduate with a bachelor of arts degree from Samford University and began medical school at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.



Reaffirming the Call to Missions

After her third year in medical school, Martha participated in a preceptorship program through the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board). As part of this program, she spent two months doing medical mission work at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen. The time she spent there impacted her deeply and changed the course of her life. She came back with an even stronger call to missions and, specifically, a call to Yemen. She had seen such great need among the people there, and they captured her heart in a way that was powerful and inspiring.

She came home and worked diligently to finish her senior year of medical school and completed her internship and residency in obstetrics at the University of South Alabama Medical Center in Mobile. As classmates began their lucrative medical practices in the States, Martha sacrificially gave her career, gifts and talents for an eternal reward instead. In an effort to be the best medical professional and soul winner she could, Martha took additional training in surgery, attended seminary classes and began learning Arabic. Her drive and passion were undeniable as she set her face toward Yemen, the country that would become the home of her heart.

Living a Life of Sacrifice

Dr. Martha, as she was called, spent the next 25 years working tirelessly to bring healing and hope to the country of Yemen. She was well known among the people in Jibla, as well as areas farther out from the main city. She was determined to reach the unreached, often walking for hours in terrain so rugged her Land Rover couldn't traverse it. She would walk into an area, set up a little clinic and see patients until she was beyond exhausted and the light of day began to fade to evening. This was her regular practice, and her loving touch earned the respect and admiration of the locals far and near.

Dr. Martha's specialty of obstetrics and gynecology was a particularly effective way to live out the Gospel in a culture that did not, as a whole, think highly of women and girls. From behind their full head coverings, their timid eyes would meet her smiling ones, and there was no mistaking that she had something different and special. The greatest joy was getting to tell anyone who would listen about the One True God who could make this same difference in their lives, too.

“Things don't really matter, but people do.”

—Martha Myers

In addition to giving compassionate medical care, Dr. Martha was known to be a woman of incredible generosity. She literally would give the shirt off her back to someone in need. She very often went without creature comforts so that other friends and colleagues could enjoy them instead. She lived humbly so that there would be more resources for the hospital and the spread of the Gospel. She often reminded others that, “things don't really matter, but people do.”

A Spiritual Giant

It was this belief that every person matters—that every person created by God has dignity and worth—that drew so many to Christ. And sadly, it was this same belief that ultimately caused a member of an al-Qaida cell in Jibla to be filled with such rage and fear that he burst into the hospital on December 30, 2002, and murdered Dr. Martha and two other American missionaries. His wife had been attended by Dr. Martha, and upon her return home she remarked that no one had ever treated her with such love and compassion. This man believed he must kill this doctor in order to stop the spread of Christianity in his country.

He was very wrong. Instead of stopping the Gospel, his heinous act served to highlight its power. The testimony of Dr. Martha and her slain colleagues continues to impact the Yemeni people in untold ways. The life she lived there overshadows the death she died, and Christ continues to be glorified through her sacrifice.

Dr. Martha Myers is a spiritual giant, and her testimony is a stellar example of what Alabama Baptists strive to embody. When the state missions offering was launched in 2016, there was no doubt she would be a fitting namesake. The Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering continues to further the Gospel that Dr. Martha gave her life to proclaim.