

PART 3: BOOK REVIEWS

Dangerous Love: A True Story of Tragedy, Faith and Forgiveness

by Ray Norman

Thomas Nelson, 2015. 240 pages. ISBN: 978-0718078034.

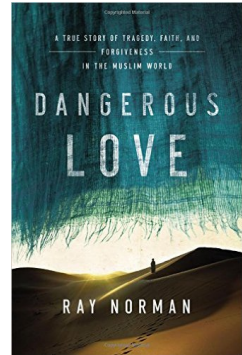
When Don asked me to read and review Ray Norman's book I thought nothing about it except the privilege of being able, once again, to contribute to SEEDBED, a journal with which I have travelled since 1984.

On opening the book, I was immediately personally connected with Ray and his family. Mauritania, World Vision and Oman were threads in my life. Ray (American) and his wife Hélène (French) have a cross-cultural marriage and had facilitated a lecture my wife gave to expatriates at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman in the 1990s. The first name, in a long list of their friends and associates, is Dave Robinson. He and his wife had been close colleagues and friends in France in 1984 before joining World Vision. Finally, I was reminded of the events of June 2009 when Chris Leggett, unrelated to World Vision, had been murdered by Al-Qaeda operatives in Nouakchott and the resulting security concerns of friends. Here was a book I could relate to.

Ray provides us with a detailed chronological narrative of his and his family's traumatic experiences during 2001 and 2002 along with an occasional complementary back-story insert. He writes lucidly and passionately, painting vivid pictures of locations, events and emotions. His accurate recollection of conversations is unsurpassed.

Most of the book is set in Mauritania where he was World Vision's Field Director. At the time of these events the organisation had a very extensive relief programme in the country and was the largest of all the NGOs. The book is worth reading just for the insights into World Vision's operational excellence and the way its values are worked out within the context of a strongly Muslim country.

Ray was a Third Culture Kid (TCK) who had decided to study water engineering and, prior to joining World Vision, had worked as an academic cum field practitioner. They eldest of their two children, Nathaniel, was at boarding school at the time of the narrative, and their youngest, Hannah (10), was with them



in Nouakchott. This is a profound family story which models Christ-centred values in the conflicting and painful context of traumatic events.

The book is written around a shooting in which Ray and Hannah are wounded. Hannah's condition is sufficiently critical for them to be medevacked to Paris. On returning to Nouakchott Ray invites us to come alongside him as he wrestles with personal, family, organisational and international issues. We witness extraordinary encounters and unexpected outcomes in the context of years of faithful prayer. Each chapter begins with a related Scripture verse: don't skip them.

The early chapters set the scene of a post-9/11 world in which the USA significantly raises its military profile in the Muslim world. We learn about Ray and his family and their character development through varied experiences. There is humour in these chapters as Ray and Hélène hone their cultural intelligence skills becoming people characterised by Christ's love.

Following the shooting and medical evacuation to France, chapter 5, 'Soul Trauma', throws us into the deep end of reflection which runs into chapter 6, 'What now?'. 'Confused, fearful and uncertain' are just three of the many words Ray uses to describe their family traumatization. Thank goodness there are now dedicated ministries for such situations but fifteen years ago post-traumatic counselling resources were limited. Those most appreciated were those 'who were quietly understanding'.

After returning to Mauritania their primary focus was security—not just for themselves but for World Vision staff, expatriates and nationals. The authorities and those served by the numerous projects were concerned that the NGO would pull out. The secondary, and more pertinent focus for this edition of SEEDBED, is how Ray and his family handled the tensions while deeply desiring to express forgiveness to the captured gunman, Ali Ould Sidi. One of the most moving stories is how Hélène's emotional needs are met by Mauritanian women.

In chapter 8 private appointments and public meetings provide Ray with extraordinary divine opportunities to explain how he and his family can speak of forgiving Ali. The same vein continues into chapter 9 where we eavesdrop on Ray meeting with an imam to discuss the situation. The imam tells Ray that Muslims are obliged to give to the poor but that his understanding of Christians is that they work with the poor because they love the poor.

If the reader is not already awed, then chapter 10 will take you to the throne of grace. Ray, Hélène and Hannah visit Ali in prison. I say no more.

The closing chapters reminded me of our own mission leadership sojourns, moving internationally multiple times in a relatively short time period. Like many TCKs, Nathaniel and Hannah both faced the challenge of living in the USA, a country only previously visited on furloughs.

In chapter 11 and the Postscript more of God's gracious purposes are recounted and, finally, don't forget to read the Notes and Acknowledgements.

This is a book about a family's love and their expression of forgiveness. Ray's raw vulnerability provides us with insights that all working in today's volatile Muslim world need to process for themselves, with their families, their churches, their organisations and their national partners. As an almost life-long advocate for partnership, I too affirm that receiving from those whom you love and serve is the greatest privilege.

This is a 'must read' for anyone with a heart for missions in the Muslim world. It is a book that will prepare families, couples and individuals for potential crises and trauma. Missionaries and mission leaders will be reminded of the multifaceted nature of crisis management. Supporters and sending churches will be better equipped to understand and empathise with those with whom they partner when crises arise.

It is a book about the sovereignty of God in the most unexpected places.

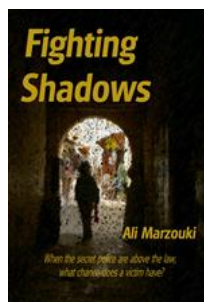
Reviewed by Keith Fraser-Smith

Muslims of the Arab world have been Keith's focus for more than 40 years. He has served in a variety of leadership roles with AWM in Media, the Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, Globalization and UK ministry and he recently retired after leading a local CPM team in the UK. Among his many interests is his pleasure in writing book reviews.

Fighting Shadows: When the secret police are above the law, what chance does a victim have?

by Ali Marzouki

U.K., FeedARead.com Publishing, 2015. 289 pages. ISBN: 978-1786100320.



In February 2011, the 'Arab Spring' reached Morocco and demonstrators took to the streets to voice their dissatisfaction with the ruling system. Set during this time period, *Fighting Shadows* follows the experiences of one fictional character who was assaulted and beaten up during the protests on the street. The story follows his search to obtain justice from the Moroccan criminal justice system, eventually leading to a court case against the feared DST, the country's secret police.

Written by Marzouki, a pseudonym for the writer who now lives in the UK, the story focuses primarily on the justice system of Morocco from the standpoint of one young man hoping to see change in a country where the populace lives in constant fear of the secret police. While