

Lessons Learned in the Lion's Den

by Daniel Waheli

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It was one very dark night in the small capitol city on the edge of the Sahara. Dust permeated the air as we drove to a poor area of town. I was met by Daniel (pseudonym) and his lovely wife and was ushered into one of the most basic two rooms in which I have ever seen missionaries dwell. Their two young children made joyful noises as I surveyed their furniture-less room, lighted only by several small oil lamps. Three Muslim families shared the same compound, as well as one tiny toilet.

The kids and Daniel's wife retired to the smaller room. Soon 15 young men filed in and made themselves comfortable sitting side by side on the basic rug. I was introduced and proceeded to share, through Daniel's interpretation, the basics of Christian discipleship to these believers from Muslim background, all of whom had been believers for less than six months. This occurred in a country where authorities boast that 100 percent of their population is Muslim... and will remain so!

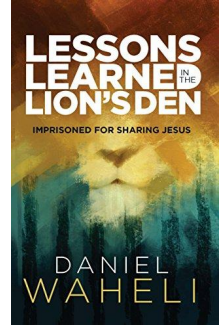
It was a sobering experience to observe this godly family share their hearts and meagre resources with this fledging group of new converts. All who gathered in that room risked prison sentences for their association with the Gospel.

Fast forward to some years later when Daniel and his family moved to an East African country known for commitment to a more radical brand of Islam. Daniel was kept under observation by the secret police. At a certain point they moved in and arrested Daniel, confining him in a dirty prison cell for two months.

Upon release, Daniel, with family returned for a break to his home country. Within a brief time, they, with renewed vision and vigour, took on the challenge of sharing Christ as residents in a land of over 100 million Muslims. They remain there today.

I, along with many others, urged Daniel to share his experiences with the broader Christian community, particularly with those who labour in security sensitive areas of the world. This book is the product of an intense reflection on those dark days.

Many are the missionaries who have pondered how they would react if threatened with death. Or perhaps scarier, what would be our actions and reactions if we were incarcerated and interrogated in a tiny prison cell for 58 days and nights. Daniel determined from the outset that he would fervently seek the Lord. For him,



this meant immersing himself in the Bible that his captors allowed him to have. Daniel fasted and only drank water for the first ten days in jail. Repeatedly he experienced words of prophecy and comfort from the Lord. Here are a few excerpts from Daniel's writing that outline his daily ritual:

Next, I read about twenty Psalms loudly out the window. This helped me to hear the Word as opposed to only reading it quietly.

After this I went into the bathroom and worshipped the Lord. I sang dozens of hymns that I remembered from my childhood and some newer songs as well.

I memorized eight to ten verses per day. After fifty-eight days, I had memorized the whole book of James and all but the last chapter of Romans. Every day I would repeat all the verses I learned previously and add new ones. At the beginning it only took a few minutes. By the end, I was spending a couple of hours on Scripture memorization every day.

Added to this was hours he spent in intercession for family, friends and Muslims worldwide. Daniel was only allowed three brief visits with his wife and two young children. One of the guards watched their interaction closely and commented, "There is so much love in your family. I would like to have such a family one day."

Finally, after such a frightening ordeal, the authorities demanded he pay a small fine and then released him. However, along with his immediate expulsion from the country, more than two hundred other Christian workers were required to leave. Sadly, a number of converts were interrogated and even tortured. Such are the perils of witnessing in a volatile Muslim context.

I salute Daniel for his courage, tenacity and spiritual focus in the crucible. Read this book thoughtfully and be blessed.

Reviewed by Phil Parshall, SIM