

the Heavenly Man in China, for example, nor Mazhar, can be imitated. Don't try to be a Mazhar. You can't do it! Such men come along seldom in a generation.

I think the book is especially valuable for people who have been at it for awhile, for people who are living with and struggling with these issues, because Mazhar is a model of a BMB who has come a long way in learning how to live as a follower of Christ in a Muslim community.

Do you have any final comments as we wrap this up?

The most thrilling thing is that I prayed that God would give me a faithful man in the Arab world. He led me and Mazhar to each

other. The first few years were not fun. They were not easy, because he had a lot to overcome, a lot of anger, a lot of misunderstanding. What I pass on to others is, 'Pray that you would meet such a person, and then pray for grace to hang in with him for thirty or forty years.'

I was touched, reading in the book, of the time when Mazhar was struggling in Syria, and called you. You dropped everything, flew out and spent time with him. Your friendship is deep.

And I think that is what every BMB is looking for in a co-worker.

Amen. Thank you so much, Greg. This has been very helpful.

HOW MAZHAR'S GENIUS HAS MOST INFLUENCED ME

by Phil Linton

Phil lived with his family in Morocco from 1984 until 1997 when he returned to the United States and became Minister of Missions at Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church near Detroit.

Mazhar Mallouhi, along with J. Christy Wilson and Wendell Evans, form the constellation that I have steered by as a Christian navigating in the Muslim world. Reading *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road*, like being with Mazhar himself, was helpful – not because it lays out a comprehensive guide for ministry to Muslims, but rather because it presents a model of deeply sacrificial, Christ-like ministry with Muslims that yet again shakes me out of my complacency and lethargy. Reading the book, I could hear Mazhar's voice telling me, 'You can do this, Phil; don't settle for timid little witnessing forays; be a *real ambassador of Christ*.'

The book highlights several aspects of Mazhar's genius that have most influenced me:

1. His courageous and lavish love for people. This is a matter of honour and a matter of obedience to the Master.

Mazhar taught by example that when a brother is arrested, it would be shameful to let fear keep us from visiting. When people needed help, Mazhar was usually the first to act. His willingness to drive long distances, to go to a hospital in the middle of the night or to open his home and wallet for people in need often had dramatic effects – changing casual acquaintance, or even enmity, into deep and abiding friendship.

2. The importance of good books.

Mazhar said that a good book could have a witness for Christ far broader in scope and longer in duration than any one individual. The good book he gave away might be a Bible, but it might also be something by C.S. Lewis (he always kept several copies of *Mere Christianity* on his shelves) or Dostoevsky. As influential as



Mazhar has been as a person, I believe that his legacy as an author and editor will be even greater.

3. His insistence on learning about Muslims from Muslims themselves.

Mazhar is far from being anti-intellectual (see *previous point*), but he had no tolerance for people who claimed to desire to build relationships with Muslims, but whose knowledge of Muslims and Islam came primarily from books. He used to tell me, 'Phil, the most powerful tool in building relationship with Arabs is the sentence, "Excuse me, could you help me?" It shows humility, gives respect and melts hearts. Put down your books, go outside, and start asking for help.'

4. His love of children. I have a video of him down on the floor being a donkey for my son to ride. (Mazhar insists he was being a *horse*, but I'm not convinced.) Mazhar (who is the greatest student of human nature I have ever known) used to say that he learned a great deal about people by watching their children. I believe many people who were waiting to judge Mazhar, finally were convinced that Christ lived in him by seeing a genuine deep love for children.

But there are two other aspects of his genius that are missing from the book.

1. His readiness for conflict. Readers who know Mazhar only from the book might conclude that he is an imperturbable Buddha-like figure, someone who calmly accepts any and all as fellow-travellers, seeing only the good in them. Mazhar in person is much more like Jesus, who did not shy away from speaking a challenge (or even an insult). Mazhar, like Jesus, is quick to say to someone like Nicodemus, 'You call yourself a teacher, and you talk like that?' You may disagree with Mazhar's call to wage peace on Islam, but you cannot dismiss him merely as someone who is willing to surrender in order to have peace. It should be obvious from his history that Mazhar is motivated by a desire to please Christ, rather than a desire to fit in. That he has found it so difficult to fit in is a source of shame and pain to many of us who have been his colleagues.

2. His sense of humour. Although I say I believe it, Mazhar *lives* life as if all things really do work together for good and the chief end of man is to love God and enjoy him forever. In Mazhar that confidence and joy express themselves in zany, outlandish jokes and pranks. I know no one who loves to laugh more than Mazhar. Even when the joke is on him, Mazhar is the one who laughs loudest and longest. His laughter and humility are people-magnets.

