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Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity

by Nabeel Qureshi

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2014. 296 pages

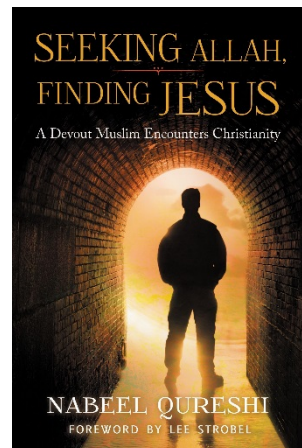
This is a beautiful seamless narrative biography of how a young, devout, brilliant Muslim young man, raised in a Pakistani, God-fearing Ahmadiyya family in America, is befriended by a Christian classmate, and through years of struggle and much researching, and finally through dreams that were answers to prayers, comes to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also of interest to note that Nabeel lived through the horrifying events of September 11th, 2001, which shattered his assumption that Islam was a religion of peace.

In the Introduction, Nabeel states his three purposes for writing this book. The following are the lead sentences in each paragraph (pp. 17-18):

1. To tear down walls by giving non-Muslim readers an insider's perspective into a Muslim's heart and mind.
2. To equip you with facts and knowledge, showing the strength of the case for the gospel in contrast with the case for Islam.
3. To portray the immense inner struggle of Muslims grappling with the gospel, including sacrifices and doubts.

At the very beginning of this well-crafted narrative, the author candidly states certain liberties that were taken with the material. "The words I have in quotations are rough approximations. A few of the conversations actually represent multiple meetings condensed into one. In some instances, stories are displaced in the timeline to fit the topical categorization" (p. 19).

From the Prologue and throughout Part One, the reader is taken inside Islam as practiced by this devoted and affectionate family. For non-Muslim readers, unacquainted with the intimacies of a devout Muslim's day to day routine, the author shares how God-oriented every aspect of their family routine is. Arabic phrases uttered during their prayers are shared with their



translations. 'Glory be to Allah, the Highest.' Another shorter variant of this is 'Glory be to Allah.' 'God is great.' 'I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger.' 'I seek forgiveness from God.' 'The peace and mercy of Allah be upon us.' These exclamations and many others illustrate the God orientation of this devout Muslim family.

Testimony is given to the great influence of his mother in inculcating the teaching of the Islamic faith to Nabeel and his sister. It is also of interest to know that his father is one of those Muslims who has been trained to propagate their faith and that his mother was the daughter of such a man. Two of the foundational teachings in the home were that the Quran is the perfect book and Muhammad was the ideal man. Later in the narrative, the reader will learn just how hard it is for a Muslim who has been taught this all his life to tolerate those who would question either of these 'truths'. To these above teachings were added that righteousness comes through prayer and obedience to the teaching of Muhammad.

Because Nabeel's family was of the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam, there is a necessary explanation of the diversity that exists in Islam among the different sects, and this diversity exists also in the various schools of Islamic Law (Sharia).

For the Muslim who has been taught that Allah is high and mighty and to be feared, 'Dreams are the only means by which the average Muslim expects to hear directly from God.' Later in the text, the reader will learn that there are standard books on how Muslims are to interpret dreams, and in the case of Nabeel, how his mother's interpretation of one of his dreams was crucial in leading Nabeel to faith in Jesus.

Nabeel highlights the differences that exist between Muslim young people growing up in the West compared with those who grow up in a totally Muslim milieu in a predominately Muslim country. To the point, the Muslim receiving an education in the West learns to think critically and reasoning becomes the rule, whereas, Muslims growing up in a totally Muslim culture is taught that authority is the rule and questions are not to be asked. This is dramatically illustrated in Nabeel's agonizing ordeal as he learns to question and to reason – a practice that inevitably leads to a clash with his father who is bathed in the aura of unquestioning authority.

In the providence of God, Nabeel was befriended by a classmate who was a dedicated Christian. This long-term friendship lasted through the teens and adult years and is still ongoing. This friendship was critical to Nabeel coming to faith in Christ. David, his friend, ably defended his Christian faith, much to Nabeel's surprise, for Nabeel came from the Ahmadiyya branch of Islam which has been famous for debating and confusing Christians.

Eventually, the ground shifts from Nabeel's attacks on the Christian teachings about Jesus being the Son of God who was crucified to David challenging Nabeel on why he believed what he did. This is when Nabeel's struggle really begins. The reader will be fascinated as every point of Muslim teaching about the Quran and about Muhammad is challenged and to see how hard put Nabeel was to respond, not blindly, but with the new tools of reasoning.

Not only was David blessed with his own brilliant reasoning powers used to the full in defending his faith, but he was assisted by others who were Christian leaders well-schooled in the field of apologetics. In this light, one of the turning points in Nabeel's life was when he began to see that his father, an authority of Islam, could not reasonably answer questions raised by these well-informed and well-trained Christians. As the narrative approaches its climax, Nabeel is led to abandon the acceptance of his Muslim faith based on submission to authority and to begin to really look at those parts of the Quran and the Hadith concerning the life of Muhammad. What followed was shattering.

From Qur'anic and Hadith sources alone, Nabeel learned of Muhammad's encounter with a frightening spirit being that early on led Muhammad to contemplate suicide. He learned of Muhammad's marriage to a six year old, of his raiding and looting his neighbours' caravans, of his taking his adopted son's wife as his own, of his assassinations, of the beheading of hundreds of Jews and the enslavement of their wives and children, of his coming under the spell of a witch's curse. His disillusionment became total.

And finally the hard part. What would his conversion do to his family? For Nabeel truly loved his mother and father and his sister. His family lived in a shame and honour culture. Nabeel knew that if he openly professed Christ, his family would be shattered – disgraced in the eyes of the Muslim community

It is at this point the reader will be surprised to learn that Nabeel asks God for three dreams (not just one) to lead him to the decision to openly declare his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Contrary to what most of us in the west might believe, the Lord answered Nabeel with three dreams, one of which his own mother interpreted (not knowing it would lead to her son's leaving Islam).

The final dream, illustrated so dramatically on the cover of the book, has Nabeel standing before a narrow door leading to the light on the other side of the door where his Christian friend is waiting for him. When Nabeel shared this dream with his friend, it was David's privilege to point Nabeel to Luke 13:22, (Jesus speaking) 'Make every effort to enter through the narrow door...' In the Epilogue, Nabeel writes of his painful but ongoing relationship with his beloved family who did not permanently reject him.

This book is an education on Islam from an insider, and will also teach the reader in rich detail not only how to defend one's own faith, but will also teach how to gently and lovingly lead the Muslim to investigate the false foundations on which Islam is based. I believe that this narrative biography of Nabeel Qureshi should be a must read for anyone wanting to work with Muslims, even for those who have already been doing so because of the thoroughness with which all issues have been tackled.

Reviewed by Don McCurry

Don is a former missionary in Pakistan and a long-time worker in many Muslim fields who has been training workers among Muslims for decades.

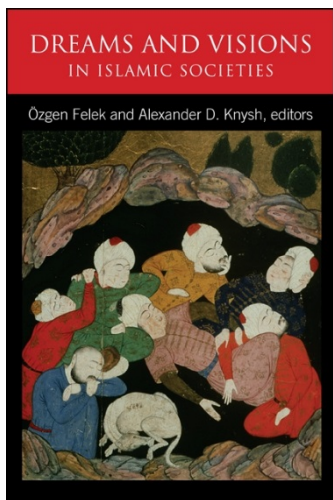
Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies

Editors: Ozgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh

New York City: State University of New York, 2012, 322 pgs.

This volume provides a scholarly and decidedly Islamic look into the world of dreams and visions. This is a subject that has become particularly prominent of late in mission circles with regard to Islam. The editors' purpose in this book is

not so much an appeal to listen anew to the messages brought by dreams and visions as it is to give a historical overview of how dreams and visions have functioned in Islamic societies from Mohammad to the present. To do so, the volume is divided in two sections.



The first section gives a summary of dreams as they have been preserved in biographical, historical, theological, poetical, oral narratives as well as current web sources of explicitly non-Sufi Muslim societies. In so doing, the selected contributors make a solid case for dreams and visions as generalised experience of regular, ordinary Muslims both historically and inter-communally. It is evident throughout that the principle, 'each

good Muslim could expect guidance from God in dreams' (p. 1) has been, and continues to be, a worldview expectation of normal religious experience.

The second section deals with the significance of dreams and visions in Islamic mysticism in general and in Sufism in particular. Here the authors' contributions serve to shed light on a particular aspect of Sufism by which