

PART 2: BOOK REVIEWS

Connecting with Muslims: A Guide to Communicating Effectively

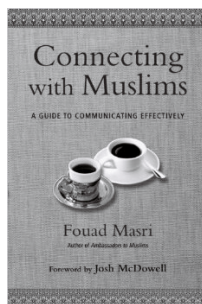
by Fouad Masri

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014

'You don't need a PhD in Islam to share your faith with a Muslim. You just need the heart of an ambassador. Discover how' (back cover).

In his forward to this book, Josh McDowell points out that the track record for Christians relating to Muslims has not been stellar. He notes, however, that there are Christians who are involved in effectively sharing God's love. This 190-page book, divided into two parts: *Practical Ways to Connect with Muslims* and *Always be Prepared to Give an Answer*, helps us learn how. The eight appendices are helpful additional resources.

In the introduction, Fouad lays down compelling reasons for writing this book. He believes Christians fail to share the Good News with Muslims effectively largely because of ignorance. He also notes the challenge of a largely unfinished task in the West. He refers to a *Christianity Today* report 'that 42.5 percent of Muslims in North America do not personally know any Christian.' He asks, 'Who will welcome Muslims? Who will invite them into their homes for coffee or a meal?' Fouad also challenges three myths Christians have about Muslims: that they hate us, they are not interested in Jesus or Christianity, and that God doesn't care about Muslims and Islam. His message to the church is: get involved and relate.



Fouad shares about growing up in Beirut. His grandfather brought the gospel message back to Lebanon from America, but due to tragic events Fouad grew up hating Jews and Muslims. In his turmoil he read about Jesus washing the disciples' feet and even the feet of Judas. He understood Jesus' message in his head and submitted his will and life to him. It wasn't until tragedy struck a friend that his head knowledge of the love of Jesus moved to his heart. He prayed, '...The more hate there is in Lebanon, the more I want to be a soldier of love. The more war there is in Lebanon, the more I want to be a soldier of peace.'

I love the author's many 'on the way' testimonies of how he was able to fearlessly share the gospel or give a New Testament to Muslims while travelling. The

way he introduces spiritual topics looks quite easy and natural. (Of course he has several advantages over most of us in that he is a native Arabic speaker and will naturally be able to move the conversation with an Arab Muslim along faster than a non-Arabic speaker!) Not only do these stories make for a fascinating read, they are useful options for engaging with our own Muslim friends and neighbours.

Each chapter has some great ‘Action Points.’ For example, in the first chapter, ‘Our Role in the Great Commission,’ he writes, ‘Invite a Muslim friend to dinner or coffee to your home, or visit a Muslim in his or her home. Make an effort to meet Muslims’ (34).

Fouad encourages us to learn from Jesus’ witnessing style in John 4 as Jesus took the initiative and guided the conversation with the Samaritan woman. He stresses the need to move a conversation with Muslims from a felt need or something trivial to the spiritual. There are pitfalls in friendship evangelism if the messenger is not intentional about sharing spiritually. He has a point in that many Christians are ‘being nice’ to refugees and losing sight of spiritual goals.

Fouad stresses the cultural importance of gift-giving and hospitality in relating to Muslims. He also encourages utilising varied witnessing styles, including asking questions, sharing Bible verses, using our personal testimony, and telling stories from our own experience or from proverbs and parables. He is keen to use the Word of God as his authority. In fact, he often gives a New Testament to the Muslim he is talking to or quotes a Scripture verse he has memorized.

At the end of the practical section, he mentions that ‘Muslims appreciate commitment.’ In other words, we need not be afraid about voicing our faith and convictions. Another interesting comment that doesn’t appear in other witnessing books is ‘Relax, don’t panic.’ He points out that, as in swimming, we have to surrender our body to the buoyancy of the water. We too must surrender and trust God to help us in each situation with Muslims.

Examples given in the book are mostly short-term introductory type evangelistic opportunities. He does not deal with the unique aspects of witnessing to Muslim women, children, or youth. Nor does he address the challenges of dealing with messy situations or what needs to happen after giving someone a New Testament.

I highly recommend this book especially for Christians beginning a ministry to Muslims in the West. He lays down great principles, leads by example, and has faith that God will do something when we are faithful to share the Good News. In *Connecting with Muslims* Fouad Masri delivers on informing, challenging and equipping the Christian reader.

Reviewed by Ed Loewen

Ed is a practitioner with Pioneers 'In Canada Missions.' Visit his ministry blog 'Reaching Muslim Men in Context' at: www.edloewen.blogspot.com. Also, Ed's wife and long-time ministry partner has an excellent ministry blog as well. Visit: www.joyloewen.blogspot.com.

You've Got Libya – A Life Serving the Muslim World by Greg Livingstone (his autobiography) Monarch Books, 2014

The book begins with twenty-nine endorsements by international mission leaders which prepare the reader for 'the whirlwind' that follows, which is Sally Livingstone's description of her husband. Greg tracks his frenetic life from his inauspicious birth to the present day with a relentless frankness which is refreshing, challenging and often very humorous.

Scene 1 is Greg's traumatic early years. Several foster parents and 'other arrangements' negotiated by his showbiz mum leave him with a deep fear of abandonment and a desire to be accepted and to belong; to be somebody. In this topsy-turvy world he eventually ends up in a loving Christian family and comes to faith in Christ at the age of sixteen.

Scene 2 is his years of early Christian discipleship. He attends Wheaton College and in 1959 becomes a member of George Verwer's Muslim world prayer group at Moody Bible Institute. Attracted by George's radical approach to Christian discipleship and evangelism, Greg attributes his call to apostolic ministry to Muslims from this date. Christian 'persons of influence' pepper this period of his life and instil in him the 2 Timothy 2:2 spiritual reproduction principle.

Scene 3 opens with his engagement and marriage to Sally and his inclusion on George Verwer's recently-birthing Operation Mobilization leadership team. One of his first responsibilities is to charter a plane for \$27,000 to fly 113 people to Paris for a summer OM European campaign. He gave the charter agent \$15 and then had to recruit the people! Next he had to transport a team from the UK to India in OM vehicles renowned for their unreliability. Predictably, unexpected incidents occur. This is followed by a three-year stint in Europe during which time the OM 'Operation University Team' was birthed. Greg describes himself as a 'sheepdog' at this time. A period of leadership in the OM European office in Brussels confirms that he is neither an evangelist nor a linguist, but his very strong mobilizing gifting has become blatantly obvious.

