



25 May
to
4 June 2013

REACHING OUR NEIGHBOURS

God at work

In late May 2013 an international team of Christians, including people from China, Finland, Canada, Brazil, USA, and the Philippines, gathered in Birmingham to reach out to their Muslim neighbours in a Birmingham community. Despite the rainy English weather, the team was able to connect with people in the community and experience practical outreach.

For the first few days the skies opened up and it rained. And rained and rained. Though it was disappointing for the team to remain inside for those first few days, it also gave them an incredible opportunity. Not only were they able to connect as a team, but also to learn more about Islam and prepare for the conversations God had ordained for them.

“It was amazing to see God’s hand in everything!” said Melânia (Brazil). “When it was a rainy day we

could get to know our team, we had time to pray and worship God together, and after that we kept going with the schedule.”

“We don’t always understand God’s plan,” said Mary (Hong Kong). “Those first few days gave me time to read books about Islam and watch videos of Muslim testimonies. It prepared me to talk with a Muslim guy whom I met later in the outreach. I understood that God has different plans for different people. God has good plans for Muslims and loves them so much that He gives them visions and dreams. God is helping me to understand Him more bit by bit. I just need to trust in Him.”

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Community Outreach

Working in connection with a local community centre, the team participated in the weekly girls’ and boys’ clubs, the Chai club for men and the Fitness club for women, run in connection with the local community centre. In addition, they held a book table in the city centre, gave out Christian literature in the community and went door to door with a Jesus DVD with information in a variety of languages.

“I was surprised and challenged by four Muslim girls I met when I was giving out Christian literature near Victoria Square in Birmingham city centre,” said Monica (USA). “I was surprised by their enthusiasm in discussing their faith and by their friendliness and open-mindedness. They didn’t come with a hostile attitude but showed genuine interest in knowing more. At the same time I was challenged by questions that they asked. Questions like, ‘If the Bible is so perfect, why would God send Mohammed & the Qur’an?’ Or statements like, ‘The Bible has been corrupted.



Jesus was sent as a prophet, he is not God and he didn't die.' I realize that I need to know a lot more in order to defend my faith. It really got me thinking I have to be more serious about apologetics. Yes, sharing my testimony is always a way but I need to know more specifics as well. Many Muslims are serious about God, but they need help to point them to the real God."



Holiday Club

The highlight of the outreach was the three-day holiday club at the community centre. OM Lifehope's Kids 'n' Things team brought their performance of Lionheart and the Quest for the Lost Treasure, with puppets, songs, games and crafts, plus bible verses for the kids to memorise at home. As many as 51 children from the community participated. Some of the parents stayed for part of the activities and two mothers stayed for an entire day. It was an amazing opportunity to connect with whole families!

"It was amazing to see how great an impact we made just being there and interacting with the kids, giving our time," said Martin (Finland). "You never know what happens in the hearts and minds of little ones."

"Two mothers came with their children to attend the holiday club," said Jodie (Philippines). "They learned of it from a flyer we had given out the day before. After attending Holiday Club for three days, they also brought their children to the weekly girls' club and they joined the women's fitness club too."

"One little girl was busy memorizing all the Bible verses to get points for her team," said Debora (Brazil). "On the last day she asked me to help her learn the Bible verse for the day – Jeremiah 29:11, 'I have good plans for you. I will give you hope and a good future.' She wanted to learn the verse even though

Outreach in a Muslim context has its challenges and can be intimidating, but the team jumped in with great enthusiasm. For many, it was a great opportunity to meet people they might not have connected with in their day-to-day lives and a chance to understand Muslim culture and worldview a bit better.

"God uses our obedience in the small things," said Brooke (USA). "It was great seeing the team interact with the people from the community."

"Going door to door, one house we went to was unoccupied," said Aiden (Canada), "but two Pakistani men doing renovations were happy to meet us and to take a DVD from us."

"I was so amazed to see the rain stop and the sun shine when we were doing the book table," said Melânia (Brazil). "It was great to have many opportunities to talk with people and to give out DVDs. To me it was an encouraging reminder that God is doing all the work and He will be exalted. My challenge is to keep my soul still!"

"It was an encouraging reminder that God is doing all the work."

she wouldn't get any points for it. While helping her, I prayed that she would see the meaning of this verse, feel God's love and hope."



Growing in your faith

Short-term outreach is a great opportunity to stretch and grow in your faith. Often you find yourself in places you never imagined, doing things you never thought you would do. This team experienced a strong sense of God's hand at work in their lives as they stepped out of their comfort zones to reach out to this community.

"My faith has been stretched during this outreach," said Monica. "This is serious stuff. There is a great need out there. We need to mobilize and train more people."

"This has been a stretching time," said Aiden. "My attitude towards missionary work has changed in that I used to think that the hardest part of becoming a missionary would be leaving all the things that make my life comfortable. Now I think that may

be the easiest part. The planning and perseverance in ministry might be the hardest part. The team here are truly joyful, even though at times the ministry seems difficult."

"My husband and I came here in faith and to take a step closer to experiencing long term missions," said Noemi (Canada). "We wanted to know how God wants us to live for Him with our time here. I have seen how God uses all kinds of people in all parts of their walks to minister to Muslims. I praise God for His creativity. His ways are higher than mine. My faith has grown this week. God makes His heart known – He loves people and is actively seeking the lost."

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* In this report all names have been changed to protect their identity.

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