

106 From 9/11 to Missions in the Middle East

Speaker 1 0:10

Welcome to the Practical Missions Podcast. I'm your host. We all know that life never plans out like we think it's going to. God often leads and guides us in ways we never would have imagined, and oftentimes in ways we never would have chosen for ourselves. Today on the pod, my guest had a sense of calling to Arab Muslims since she was eight years old. We follow her journey as God used her family and her basketball career to prepare her for serving the Lord overseas. Then, after just two years out on missions, how God called her back to her home country to get married. We talk about what it takes to get back on the field as a married couple, different tactics the devil uses to derail us, and much more. I really do have the perfect guest for you today, so stay with us.

Longing for the 9/11 hijackers to be saved

Speaker 1 1:03

What year did you come out to the field?

Speaker 1:04

I came out in 2022 long term.

Speaker 1 1:07

Okay, so you came out to the Middle East long term in 2022, but take me back before that. What was the journey for you from being back in your home country, doing what you were doing, to going out to the Middle East full time?

Speaker 1:20

When I was eight years old, I guess in 2001, I was eight years old, and that was when 9-11 happened. I actually remember being at a Parents' Day Out program at my home church. I had spilt paint on my pants, and so I had to go up to the office to call my mom to bring me a fresh pair of pants. When I was up there, I saw the news headlines of the events of 2011 happening, and I saw buildings falling to the ground and everything like that. Well, at the time I kind of just thought, oh, a dramat, another dramatic news story. But then my mom came to give me some pants and she said, Pray for our nation, we've just been attacked. My first thought was like, oh no, are they gonna come here next? But I remember at that time I started to hear terms like terrorists, and that was my first exposure to the Arab world. I remember thinking, hearing all these scary terms that I'd never heard before. But when I saw the pictures of the attackers in the newspaper, I expected to see monsters. But when I looked at them, I thought they just looked lost. I thought, oh, if I could have talked to them two weeks ago and told them about Jesus, they never would have done this. But I feel like I was convinced. I was convinced. But I feel like that was a seed that the Lord put in my heart at an early age to go and share the good news with those who have never heard, specifically in the Muslim Arab world. But then I grew up and I had dreams and ideas of other things I would do. But when I was 12, that's when I really understood. I had conviction and knew that I was in need of a savior, that I had this gift of the gospel that was a treasure in my heart and I couldn't keep it to myself. It wasn't something I could keep to myself. And I thought, well, I'm 12. I don't have a plan for my life. Why don't I just plan to go? And that my plan for life would be to become a missionary to those who have never heard. And then when I was in college, I took a worldview class that gave me a bigger picture of God's heart for the nations, for his glory to be made known in all the earth. And I was more exposed to the Arab culture, more exposed to that worldview and in Islam. So that's kind of when I committed, unless the Lord clearly redirects, I want to go to the Arab world. And so that's what I continued to pursue. But at the

time I was playing basketball in college, I kind of felt like I was missing out on a lot of opportunities to do internships, to do get cross-cultural exposure, cross-cultural work. And I'm here, I'm at a Christian university, but all of my teammates really, their lifestyles don't reflect that of a true born-again believer. I kind of just felt like I'm not taking steps towards cross-cultural long-term cross-cultural work. But I also knew, okay, the Lord has me here for a reason. I know I'm supposed to be playing basketball and here, getting a college education. But after college, I started doing some internships, got a few more years of training and experience. I came to the Middle East for the first time in 2021 for two months. I fell in love with the culture, the people, the language, the food, and committed to coming back. And so the Lord allowed that by his grace in 2022. I was in the Middle East for around two years, and then I went back to get married at the end of 2024. I returned, got married, and then Lord willing, we're planning to come back here long term together next year. So that's just kind of a little bit of a an overview.

Speaker 1 4:59

Wow, that's beautiful. It's incredible that exactly 20 years after you kind of had your first calling in 2001 when you were eight years old. Exactly 20 years later, in 2021, you went to the Middle East for the first time. Absolutely incredible. It's also really amazing just to hear how that spark that was lit all those years ago in your childhood never went away and just continued to grow and grow until you ended up going out to the Middle East. I find it fascinating that I I as well, you know, when I when I first came to the Middle East, I loved, I say was love at first sight, you know. I love the people, the culture, the food, all those things you just mentioned. But I was also very naive, and my expectations were nothing like reality. Uh, what was it like for you? You know, you have these expectations. Man, if I could only share with these 9-11 attackers, I'm sure they would fall in love with Jesus. Uh, what were your expectations compared to reality when you

came out to the field, when you came out to the Middle East to live there?

First Field Reality Check

Speaker 5:58

Good question. And, you know, that's an interesting connection. I never realized to put it together that it was exactly 20 years from when I first had a heart, uh, the Lord put it in my heart, till going to the Middle East. But some of the expectations, just the differences that you, you know, men and women aren't going to interact on a heart level. You're not gonna have, you're not gonna do ministry with males here. That obviously was different. I think learning language, you think, oh, okay, yeah, I'll go overseas, I'll learn the language, and then go and continue doing ministry, doing church planting or whatever it is, but you don't actually realize how difficult that is and the years that it takes, the perseverance that it takes to be able to have a deep conversation and then even to have a deep spiritual conversation. It takes a lot of time and investment, patience. And this is why I'm grateful for the experience the Lord gave me in college basketball. I felt like He really used that to shape my character and teach me about his character. And so I didn't know it at the time, but it really was the best and most refining pre-field training I could have received. Not only was I working as a team towards the same goal that was a goal that was bigger than yourself, a lot of times things don't go your way. You don't get to choose how things work out, whether you get playing time or not. You don't choose your teammates, but you have to work alongside one another and you have different gifts and abilities. And looking back, you know, I didn't get, I guess, the glory that as an athlete you're hoping to perform well. And looking back on it, I couldn't have worked harder in basketball in my career, spending time in the gym for hours, practicing with the guys' team in high school so that I could compete better just in the gym every day, took a ball with me on our family vacations, but it became this

obsession. It became, it became my identity. When I got to college, the Lord completely stripped me of that, of my identity being tied to basketball, my worth being tied to my performance in basketball. And our college team was super successful, but the Lord taught me that I could glorify him more at the end of the bench than I could scoring 20 points a game and being on the cover of the newspaper. And I'm probably dating myself by saying that, but the Lord read me of the idol and was reshaping my identity that everything, and this is how it plays into cross-cultural work, is that everything is about his glory, not mine. And this is something that that I'm still learning in different ways, but also just the perseverance of learning the language, that it's a daily practice. And there were time, there were days when I am in class and I have a headache, and I think I'm just hitting my head against a brick wall and hoping it's gonna fall down. But I stayed in class remembering those days when I was playing basketball and I'd come out of a horrible practice and I'd take off my shoes thinking I'm never gonna put those on again. And I throw them in my closet and I just want to forget about the game. But the next day I go and I lace up my shoes again and you go back out and you practice. And I think that was the perseverance that the Lord was teaching me of every day that you are doing this for my glory, not for your own success, not for your own glory. And it's gonna be challenging, but it's worth it because Christ is worthy.

Speaker 1 9:22

Amen. That's amazing. I love how basketball taught you the character you were going to need, the perseverance you were going to need, the consistency you were going to need for the mission field. Who would have thought that God was shaping you and molding you through basketball into being a good cross-cultural worker? I do find it interesting this idea of being on the bench or being on the or scoring points on the on the court. And it does seem like a lot of cross-cultural work is almost like being on the sidelines, is being on the on the bench rather than being in

the spotlight. Or it could be the exact opposite. Where when you're on the field, it's like you're on the bench, and then when you go back to your home country, you go back and you get to speak in churches, and people are amazed at what you're doing. Oh, I could never do that. Then all of a sudden you're in the spotlight. How did you deal with this feeling of maybe, man, I'm never gonna get this, I'm never gonna be good at this. This is taking a lot longer than I ever thought it was going to be.

Speaker 10:24

I think it was daily surrendering the process to the Lord, knowing that I can put in the hours, I can put in the work, but the Lord is ultimately, the results are in his hands, and all that I do is for him. And ultimately, his glory is not at stake because of how well I speak in the language. And so remembering that of keeping the Lord and understanding he is sovereign, he is in control. But it was a struggle, and I struggled even with this battle of not trying to find my identity in how well I spoke in Arabic or in comparing. Oh, I think I often battle the lie of this this person is more qualified than me, this person can do it better than me. God would use that person, but He He wouldn't use me in my Arabic or in my ability to reach people effectively with the gospel. But then again, the focus is on me and not on the Lord, and that this is his work, not mine.

Speaker 1 11:25

Those are some really big things.

Breaking The Snare Of Compare

Speaker 1 11:28

I think a lot of cross-cultural workers, and I'm one of them, struggle with what I call the snare of compare. I heard somebody else say that. Obviously, I'm not smart enough to come up with clever rhyming words like that. But this idea of like, man, it seems like everybody's doing better than me. It seems like everybody

else's ministry is better than mine, everybody else's language is better than mine, everybody else is more qualified than I am. And you're right, it can do something to our identity. Yeah, what would you say to the person who is struggling with comparison? The person who is struggling to understand how what they're doing is glorifying God anyway. They're like, you know, like you said, pounding their head against the wall. They just came out of another four-hour session of Arabic or whatever language it may be. What encouragement would you give that person? What advice would you give that person?

Speaker 12:17

Uh, you mean myself? What advice that I give myself?

Speaker 1 12:21

Yeah, or me. Or me. I'm raising my hand here. I need this, I need to hear this.

Speaker 12:25

It's interesting because I was actually just talking to my mom, my parents about this uh several weeks ago. I'm just feeling this discouragement. A lot of times here too, you can you can have uh you can be with out with a friend. I had this experience when I first got here, and we are around the same phase level of Arabic, but people would compare us, like, oh, her Arabic's better than yours. Or now I'm here with my husband and he hasn't studied Arabic yet, and they're they're like, oh, your Arabic is why doesn't he speak Arabic? And there's this this comparison that is done in the culture that can actually, that's actually very offensive to us, but they don't realize that, or they don't know the the lies or the battles that we're fighting in our in our minds and our hearts. I mean, it was it was challenging when I'm like, I'm trying really hard in class every day to grow in in Arabic, but I'm being compared to this girl over here who's studied Arabic since she was 12 years old. And I also I also struggle with this uh I also struggle with this this idea that oh, I need I should be doing

better. I should be doing better than I am. Uh I'm not doing good enough. But even when they could, I I'm not happy when people compare my Arabic with my husband, it doesn't make me feel any better about myself. But also one of the things that my mom shared with me a few weeks ago was God isn't gonna give your good blessings to someone else. And God isn't gonna give their good blessings to someone else, that he has a specific purpose, a specific role for you that he's gonna use your giftings in for his glory. It also reminded me of Peter. When Jesus is talking to his disciples, I think this is in John chapter 21. Jesus is kind of explaining to Peter that he's going to suffer and die for the glory of Christ, for Christ's name's sake. And Peter says, Well, what about John? And Jesus says, Don't worry about John. What's that to you? To me, it's like, okay, her Arabic is great. She knows the culture, she is just a natural, she's extroverted, can't spend hours upon hours doing social events and building relationships. And I feel so limited in my capacity, but realizing, what's that to you? What is that to you in how God has wired you and where he has you on your on your Arabic journey? That that is just another ploy of the enemy, plot of the enemy to distract you, to pull you away, and to get you focused on yourself again rather than on the Lord, and that the Lord is actually doing all this work through us, and that we're working towards the same goal. A verse from Philippians actually comes to my mind that is protect the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Just to remember that we are all, we're brothers and sisters in Christ, united in one purpose and set on the goal of glorifying Christ. And that if we our our primary aim is that that we grow less and less important in the grand scheme of things.

Speaker 1 15:26

Yeah, what a what a perfect word of encouragement from your mom to remind us that God isn't going to give what he has for us to someone else, and we can trust his plans, even when maybe uh like we would choose something different. Uh, what God has for us is ultimately the best, and that we are on the same team,

and we we shouldn't look at other people as competitors, but learn to rejoice in the success of other people, even when their Arabic is better than ours, or it seems like God is blessing their ministry uh or whatever it is more than ours. I know it's very challenging, but it's so important.

Ministry Without Finish Lines

Speaker 1 16:07

It's so important. And also, you know, I think another thing is with cross-cultural work, I think like 95% of it is almost kind of invisible. 95% of what a cross-cultural worker does, he can't put in his newsletter and send home. Uh it's kind of invisible. The hours of language study or developing relationships or trying to understand the culture or trying to figure out how to present the gospel in a way that the person in front of you understands all these things are kind of unspoken, unseen. I don't know, they're unquantifiable. And I think sometimes that can make it hard for us when we look at our own ministry. Oh, what am I doing? You know, it's this unquantifiable aspect uh of ministry. Did you ever struggle with that? I want to get back to uh what you said about you and your husband here in a minute. But let me just ask you if you ever struggled with this idea that ministry kind of has no beginning and no end, and every day just kind of flows right into the next day. Uh, and they're very there's very little of like feeling of accomplishment, even with Arabic, it's like this slow progression over a long period of time that's kind of hard to see it. Did you ever struggle with that?

Speaker 17:15

It is challenging because there's not an arrival point in language learning or even in ministry. And I think even in our spiritual lives, I think I always have it in my mind of, oh, once I arrive, once I'm 80 years old, I will have had it figured out and just be completely at peace. Once I reach X number of hours in Arabic, once we see the church planted, that kind of thing, but there is always continued work, continued growth, and it's messy. It's not just

this clean, perfect journey. It's a roller coaster and it has twists and turns. And some days it feels like you're regressing, like you get worse before you actually get better. And that's something that my brother growing up playing basketball had told me because some days I would just get so frustrated practicing, like I can't make a single shot. I played a terrible game, whatever it was. And my brother told me, you have to get worse before you get better. And so there are days in Arabic when you just feel worse than you did when you first started. Or I think sometimes even within the church, it can sometimes feel like there we're not growing, we're not moving forward, it's messy, but the Lord is continuing to work and he's doing something that in us that we can't see. We can't see everything that he's doing. And so just to remember, remember that and to depend on the Lord every single day and trust him that he is doing the work.

Speaker 1 18:45

I was talking to one of the elders at our church uh out here. I was kind of complaining that there was, you know, on the on the holidays, Christmas and Easter, the places were packed, and then like during the year, there's so few people in the church. I was kind of complaining to him. Uh and he said to me, I would prefer that there would be less people, but the people who come are people who actually want to engage with God, you know, who actually want to grow and learn and develop. Then there'd be a building full of uh people who are just kind of like half-heartedly there or uninterested. And I really like that. I really like this idea of that what God has given us, God has given us for a reason. And to make the most of that and to trust in His in His sovereignty over these.

Long-Distance Relationship While Serving

Speaker 1 19:33

things. Should we pivot to uh you and your husband's relationship and how how that worked? So were you were you

already engaged or in a relationship when you came out to the Middle East?

Speaker 19:44

Well, it's kind of a long story. When I came to the Lord had clearly prompted my now husband at the time, a few years ago, to reach out and start pursuing me. Well, I was on the path to go to the Middle East. I had my mindset. I feel like the Lord had put it on my heart. Unless he completely redirected, that's where I was headed. I had known my husband for several years prior. He was good friends with my brother and they had worked together and he had a successful corporate career, but he was a new believer. He had no concept for the mission field. And I've been, I felt like the Lord had been preparing me my whole life for this. So he started to get to know me. And at first it was like, he's like a family friend. I felt very comfortable with him. There was nothing of interest really between us, but then he definitely started expressing more and more interest. I had no idea how the Lord was using specific scripture for him to reach out to me during that time. I was in the process of raising support. He was starting to pursue me more and more, but I'm thinking I can't commit to two things at once. I can't commit to going on the field and commit to a long-term relationship. And I'm I'm not planning to live my life as a wife of a corporate successful businessman and raise a family in this. I just didn't feel like that was what the Lord was leading me to. But the thing is, is that he walked alongside me through every step of the process. He knew every training I did, every uh support appointment I had. He made me a graph to measure my support raising goals to kind of celebrate as I was raising more and more support to go long term. And he knew that once I got fully funded, that I was leaving him. But yet he just he trusted the Lord in that process and was just my best friend. Right before I left, he asked me, he said, I know that I told you before that once you leave, you're gone. But can we commit to one another? And I told him, and I told him, No, we can't. I'm I'm committing to the Field, I'm committing my life to the field, and

you're asking me to commit to this. And what do I tell supporters and people at church? They're gonna think I'm, you know, messing around with this guy and then I'm going on the field. No. But then my parents were like, he's been supporting you this whole time. Why can't you just go and just trust the Lord that He's been your best friend? Why can't He continue supporting you from afar and just see what the Lord does? So I thought, well, who are you? And what have you done with my parents? Because the fact that they would tell me this was just out of character. So I said, okay, I am gonna trust the Lord. And I feel like the Lord really used our relationship, used my husband to support me from afar on the hard days that he was indirectly learning the culture through my experiences. And so we would send voice messages, you know, back in the the olden days, you know, people would send letters. And for us, it was voice messages. And so we would start our day, and there was play an eight, eight-hour time difference. And so he would, I would be finishing my day as he's starting his day. And so we would get to hear about each other's days through through voice messages. It was just really sweet to be able to share life in that way. And he came to visit four times while I lived here, came with my parents and got to experience the culture. And so he knew every day, the everyday grind of what life was like from afar, from going to Arabic, from driving in the traffic, from getting into having hard cultural experiences as a foreigner, feeling taken advantage of in certain areas. And but he just walked alongside me, he prayed with me and supported the whole time. It was honestly just the most beautiful gift the Lord could have given me as he gave me a gift in the fact that I did want to come single. I wanted to have that experience of, okay, I want to know that I can do this with just me and the Lord. But also he gave me my now husband to kind of walk alongside me in that process and that God was working and shaping my husband's heart for a greater purpose than he had imagined as well. And so it was, it was a journey of trust, of trusting the Lord in uncertainty of this seemed impossible. How could this possibly work out? He's working a

corporate career, very successful, new-ish believer. And I've been, I feel like the Lord has been directing me to go to the fields for decades. But the Lord can can work through all of that and he is sovereign. It's a it's a beautiful story.

Speaker 1 24:23

Yeah, it is an amazing story. It's a really cool story. And now you guys are married and you're coming back out long term to the field together. And how did you guys come to that conclusion and that decision together?

Returning As A Married Woman

Speaker 24:37

It was a process. I mean, I was praying to the Lord, journaling all throughout my time here. How does this gonna work? Just continuing to entrust it to the Lord. My husband was doing the same thing. It didn't really make sense to him, but he came to a point in his career where it was clear that the Lord was redirecting him and asking him to leave, where he had spent 16 years of his life building this dream, a successful dream, uh, with this company that he loved and he's so passionate about it, about it. But the Lord slowly started shifting his heart and changing and making it in his work environment, okay, I'm not gonna be here forever. Then I think there was some question of, oh, well, is he just wanting to go on the field because of me? That was something he had to really work through. He never felt that in his heart, but he also needed to know for himself, okay, this is where God is directing me. And so through actually through John 21 and the life of Peter, God has really used uh the life of Peter in my husband and in his faith and in his spiritual growth. Through that, the Lord has revealed to him, okay, this is what's next for you. My husband doesn't have the typical, I guess, missionary story, quote unquote, but he has a unique story in that he wants to be obedient to the Lord and where the Lord is leading him. Just because he doesn't have the typical

missionary story doesn't disqualify him. And he has unique giftings that's actually gonna be to his advantage working here that I don't have, that other people don't have.

Speaker 1 26:14

Yeah, you know, one of the things I always say, and I don't know how much I believe it in my heart, but I believe I know it's true in my head. But I always say, you know, we're not called to a people or a place first. We're called to a person who is the Lord Jesus, you know. First of all, before all other things, our calling is to God before we're called to a place, before we're called to a people group. And so, yeah, our callings do look different, which is also 100% okay. I'm wondering about are you concerned at all? Are you guys concerned, you and your husband concerned at all, about the power dynamics after you come back to the field full time? You've got the language, you've got the culture, you've got this sense of like calling, maybe in a different way than he does. Maybe he feels called, but in a different way, but he's coming in at his as a zero in the language and the culture, maybe not a zero, but you know what I'm saying. Uh, are you is that something you guys have talked about or are worried about?

Speaker 27:07

Well, I'll let you know uh in a couple of years how it's all kind of panned out. But actually, since that's right, since we've had an opportunity to come and serve here a couple of times since we've gotten married, and that has been actually really good for us to realize the things that we each struggle. We each struggle with different things. Each struggle with different things in the culture, different things in the language. We respond differently to different situations. And I actually think that that is an advantage and a gift. My husband doesn't struggle with comparison like I do. And I think that is so a gift. He just has this humility that I really admire, especially in learning the language. And so his challenges are definitely different than my challenges are in learning a language. But learning how can we support one

another, have grace with one another, and patience with one another in the process when something, a cultural situation, is upsetting to me, but it's not necessarily upsetting to him. Like the other day, something happened in traffic that was really upsetting to him, but to me, it was nothing. But how can I understand? Okay, this is an adjustment for him. How can I support him in this, even though I can't really relate to it? In a way, it's a refreshing to be able to submit under the leadership of my husband here, because for the longest time that was something that was a stressor for me. Like if I just had a husband, I wouldn't have to navigate the situation in this way. It would be so much more, and I'm so grateful for those things. But again, we are still growing and learning how to be teammates and also stay unified as we're navigating different uh stressors that come up culturally or with the language to work together and realize that we are on one team. We're one team. We want the best for for each other.

Speaker 1 29:02

That goes a long way in a relationship. And I like what you said about like your the things you you're you're challenged by are different and your giftings are different as well. So it complete each other or they they they help each other, they they complement one another, uh, which is really helpful. So it doesn't have to be a lose-lose, it can be a win-win or a win-lose, you know, when one person is struggling, the other person is feeling strong, or whatever it may be. I have so many more questions, but I have uh kind of two questions that are still on my mind that I want to get to before we run out of time. And one is if you take me back to when you were single on the field, what was it like trying to build relationships with Arab.

Arab Women Friendships And Marriage Views

Speaker 1 29:43

women? Were there some things that you struggled with, some things that you really liked about it? How was that for you?

Speaker 29:49

There were some challenges because as you learn the language more, you realize how differently you think or how different the world view is than what my background is. And so I think that was something that I really struggled with. And I think I struggled with some of the false assumptions that people have about Westerners, uh specifically Western women, that our lives are just like Hollywood, that we have these loose immoral lifestyles. That wasn't how I wanted to be perceived, but it actually led to a lot of really good conversations where of reshaping people's assumptions or stereotypes. And I feel like the Lord also opened up opportunities for me to build relationships through through basketball and through specific friends who are willing to walk alongside me as I learned Arabic and have patience with me. And now we're we're really, really good friends. I've made one friend who's become really, I would say, a best friend here. But even as I'm learning, getting deeper into the language exposes deeper parts of the culture. Even as now, as a newly married woman, seeing the different perspective of the marriage relationship is so different. And I was talking to this friend last week. She was talking about just how men are, as long as their wife is happy and they don't know, they're happy to talk to other women. And that one specific man was like, you know, my just picture a basket of fruit. She was told this by a man, a married man, my wife is a as a banana. And but and I like bananas, but sometimes I want a strawberry or an apple. I think that to me was just upsetting. You know, I went, I went home and I cried because just that know that that is that's the reality of marriage here, but it makes sense that someone who is a life apart from Christ is gonna be in darkness. It stirs in my heart a deeper desire for people to know the perfect, faithful love of Christ, for that to be reflected in marriages. I think it also put on my heart, okay, I want my, I want my marriage to glorify Christ. I want that to be a picture of Christ so that other people can see that. And that's my desire is that their their lives, their marriages will be transformed and not

defined by the culture or the religion here. And so I'm grateful for the perseverance the Lord has given me to continue in the language because even though it's hard at first, hard to have relationships at the beginning, moving forward step by step, it's so worth it in the end. There's so much fruitfulness and it's life-giving as you're learning from them when you get to a deeper part of being able to have those relationships.

Speaker 1 32:47

Yeah, it's fascinating. I've heard guys say this as well about the banana and the strawberry and the apple. They say, you know, you just want something, uh you want something new. And it's also interesting because the concept of marriage in Islam is so different than the concept of marriage in Christianity, where we have the fidelity of Christ with his church, the covenant-keeping God is what marriage is reflecting. So that's the original. The original is Christ in his church, and marriage is a reflection of that. And so we are covenanted together in marriage. Where in Islam you're contracted together, it's a contract, Islamic marriage, you know, like divorce is actually part of the contract. So what what are you gonna pay if you get divorced, you know, like in the marriage itself, in the contract of marriage, is the assumption that divorce will happen. But then also Islam says that a man can have four wives, you know. So if he's married to you, he doesn't have to be faithful to you, he doesn't have to not look at other women. He can go on dates with other women if he wants to, because that's his right in Islam. You know, it's uh it's such a horrible view of marriage, of what of this beautiful thing that God has given to us, the institution of marriage. And it is sad to see, but I think you you know, they say like uh the the uh the the guy who wants to sell you a diamond puts the diamond on black velvet, uh, which helps you see the diamond in all of its beauty because that contrast is there. And I feel like that's how the marriage uh Christ or or our triune God's desire for marriage shines all the brighter in against the black backdrop of Islam uh and how it uh envisions marriage. May God give the marriages of

our cross-c married cross-cultural workers, may He give give us strength, healthy marriages. We need healthy marriages in the church back in our home countries and also on the field, don't we? It would be interesting to see. I I really don't know because I'm not married, so I'm not I don't get into the marriage world very often, but it would be interesting to see how the culture at large affects the church here in the Middle East as well.

Marriages in the church. If it does, I don't I don't even know if it does. Maybe we can talk about that in a couple years' time. Uh when you and your husband have gotten deeper into the culture with other married people. I find it very interesting, uh, this whole thing about marriage. And uh yeah, I'm glad you said what you said. It's really uh it's really encouraging to hear and also challenging to hear as well. But before I go, or before I let you go, before we we go, I would I would like to know if you ever experienced times of discouragement.

Loneliness Ramadan Lows And Spiritual Habits

Speaker 1 35:24

I know we talked about it a little bit on the field, uh, but of course you you had this calling from childhood, you know. And even with this uh with your potential marriage, we're like, man, I'm going out. You know, we can be friends, but I'm going out. But did you ever uh have a time of like feeling total despair or despair, wondering, like, am I really called to this place?

Speaker 35:46

There's definitely been times of loneliness or times of questioning, am I up for the task? Or feeling this overwhelming sense of unworthiness or insufficiency, inadequacy. I don't know that I would use the word despair. I do know that there have been times when I've been in my home country and longing for going on the field, just seeing, and it feels like it's never gonna come. It took me years to get to the field, and then having to go back to my home country, get married, and then come again longing to

go back and seeing the work here, the needs, the needs here, uh, the needs of the church, but then also for the work. And so there's this desperate longing, I think, uh, that feels like, oh, it's it's never gonna get here. But there are times when then when there are when I am here and I'm exhausted from the social, uh, the social life, the night life, that a lot of the social life happens late at night and my battery is just going down at night, even getting out in traffic that it can just it can grade on you and can wear on you, or during Ramadan, it can just feel like a darker, it's just very much more a present um apparent. Um, and Islam is very much in your face during that month. And so I think those have been times of of loneliness, of just kind of a lower period that always in need of moments of refreshment. And so I I don't think I would use the word despair necessarily, but but I've also haven't um I'm not as seasoned as you are.

Speaker 1 37:33

So or maybe maybe you're just a bit can more connected to the father than I am. Maybe your vision is a bit clearer than mine is.

Speaker 37:43

I don't know about that, but maybe again in a few years I can I can share with the story.

unknown 37:49

Yeah.

Speaker 1 37:49

One of the things as cross-cultural workers that's so important for us is to stay close to the Father. And sometimes I think it's easier for us to preach the gospel to others than it is uh for us to preach the gospel to ourselves or to receive the gospel, receive the comfort of the gospel, uh, but also being taken out of your context and maybe put into a context where you're not really being fed very much as well, where maybe you're not even like understanding the language and there's more isolation. How

were you able to stay uh close to the heart of the father? What did you need to do to keep your spiritual life healthy?

Speaker 38:24

That's a good question. And I think it's something that can easily get swept aside if we're not diligent about pouring into ourselves spiritually and being making sure that we're getting spiritually fed. But one of the things that aside from just a daily quiet time, daily being in the word, I process things by journaling, process my thoughts and things like that. So journaling prayers to the Lord, and a lot of times He's He brings up scripture to me as I'm as I'm writing and processing through things. I also found it very comforting to stay connected with my home church back in my home country. And so continuing to listen to the worship services on YouTube or through podcasts, and then where there's a women's Bible study that is once a month at my church, and so I would ask for the recordings of it, and so I could follow along with the women's Bible study through the through the recordings, just having support from my home church of people who I know are praying, who I can who I can talk to. But even here, even though, and there were days, you know, I attend an Arabic-speaking local church here in the Middle East. Early on when I go to church, it would be after six hours of Arabic class and driving at least two hours in traffic, then going into the church service and it's all in Arabic and I can't understand anything. And just I remember like tears would just kind of stream down my face. It was so sad. But as I continued every single week, okay, go to church, go to church. There was just this encouragement of I'm going to fellowship alongside brothers and sisters in Christ, although it's in a different language, and it just, this is my family in Christ. And there was a refreshment of, oh, I'm with believers, I'm safe. And that the Lord can even minister through his body here as well. That his body is not just in one specific, in one specific church, in one specific location, but it's worldwide and it's such a gift to be able to have that here. And how he blessed

and provided relationships through the local church here as well made a big difference.

Local Church Commitment On The Field

Speaker 1 40:30

Well, amen. I love that. So one of the things I'm really passionate about actually is that cross-cultural workers are committed when they can be, when there is a local church available, that they're committed to the local church. There's so many people on the field who aren't attending, even an international church, you know, church planters who aren't good church members. Find it interesting. But I don't want to be judgmental uh or uh derail the ship or derail the train. I think it's fantastic to have this conversation with you. Very insightful uh and very encouraging. Thanks for being on the pod with me today.

Speaker 41:08

Yeah, thank you so much. It was a privilege to be on an honor.

Speaker 1 41:11

Amen to that. Well, I really feel so encouraged after this conversation. I love to see the compounding effects of a Christian family, how it affects the children generation after generation.

Final Encouragement And Closing

Speaker 1 41:24

Well, thanks for making it to the end of the pod. And before I let you go, I just want to remind you that it's okay to be in the