

Examples of Cruciformity

14. Labib Madanat

This article is mainly a condensation of Chapter Four of Julia Fisher's book, *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs share their Stories*,¹ Labib Madanat and I had a good visit together near Jerusalem in January 2010.

Labib Madanat served as Executive Secretary of the Palestinian Bible Society for 15 years. Now he is the Bible Lands Team Development Coordinator, which involves facilitating extensive cooperation of the three Bible Societies of the region. This cooperation is a reflection of the cruciform attitudes and actions of the Jews and Arabs of the Bible Societies.

Labib's family was Jordanian, his father being a pastor of a Christian church in Jerusalem. After high school, he studied agriculture and irrigation in Iraq and Jordan. Labib gave up "his neatly worked out" plan of a doctorate and responded to a request to return to the Old City of Jerusalem, where he was born, to serve as an elder in the church there. Later, the opportunity in the Palestinian Bible Society opened up for him. He moves freely between Palestinians and Israeli Arabs, being fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, and English.

In explaining his deep "divine" love for Muslims and Jews, Labib clearly embraces the goals of cruciform love. He defines Christian love as a love that "equals the Cross of Jesus Christ". His statement that he is willing to do "whatever it takes" to love enemies shows his commitment to accept the Cross as a paradigm for his life. Other references to the Cross and cruciformity: his heart is "changed by the blood of Jesus" and he is willing to lay down his life because "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten son."

Because of his faith that Christ dwells in his heart, he can love anybody, even his "supposed enemy", whether it be a Muslim or a Jew.

¹ Julia Fisher, Julia Fisher, *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs Share Their Stories* (Sparkford, UK: J.H. Haynes Ltd., 2006) 57 - 65.

"God baptized my heart with love for the Muslim people". . .What can I do to bless the Muslims? How do I live in humility? Do I say "Forgive me" when I'm wrong? Do I care for their lives as much as I can? Do I live in honesty among them? And how much do I tell them about the love of Jesus? . . . We are responsible to live the word and be used by the Holy Spirit so Muslims can taste and see how good the Lord is.

How can I help them [the Jewish people] to see their Messiah? . . . there is extra power and strength when we cross the divide of hostility and animosity, hatred and bitterness, with the message of Jesus.

Some of Labib's statements clearly agree with the conclusion of this thesis that reconciliation in Israel between cruciform Jews and Arabs is in the plan of God to be an example first of all to the nation of Israel and then to the whole world:

God's love transforms us from the position of victims to servants . . . There is a very real sense that Arab Christians with this perspective really hold a vitally important key in unlocking God's purposes in this part of the world.

To me it is obvious why God allowed both people to be together in the land here. And we need to ask ourselves, what is God's agenda? . . . Prophecies are God's to fulfil; commandments are mine to obey . . . love your neighbour like yourself and take the gospel to the whole world, starting from Jerusalem.