

From Islam to Christ

Hicham and Elizabeth have recently been accepted for service in France. Here, Hicham shares with us about his conversion and call to serve God.

Hicham, could you tell us how you came to faith in Jesus?

I was brought up as a Muslim and lived as such till 2001. My parents are practicing Muslims. My brother was the first to tell me about Jesus. He had become a Christian in France. Since I reacted angrily, all he could do was give me an Arabic New Testament before his return to Europe.

Before I went to France myself, I had trouble getting a Visa to travel there. My brother often emailed to encourage me, saying that his Christian friends were praying for me. I was amazed that people who had never met me were concerned enough to pray! Where did they get that love for others?

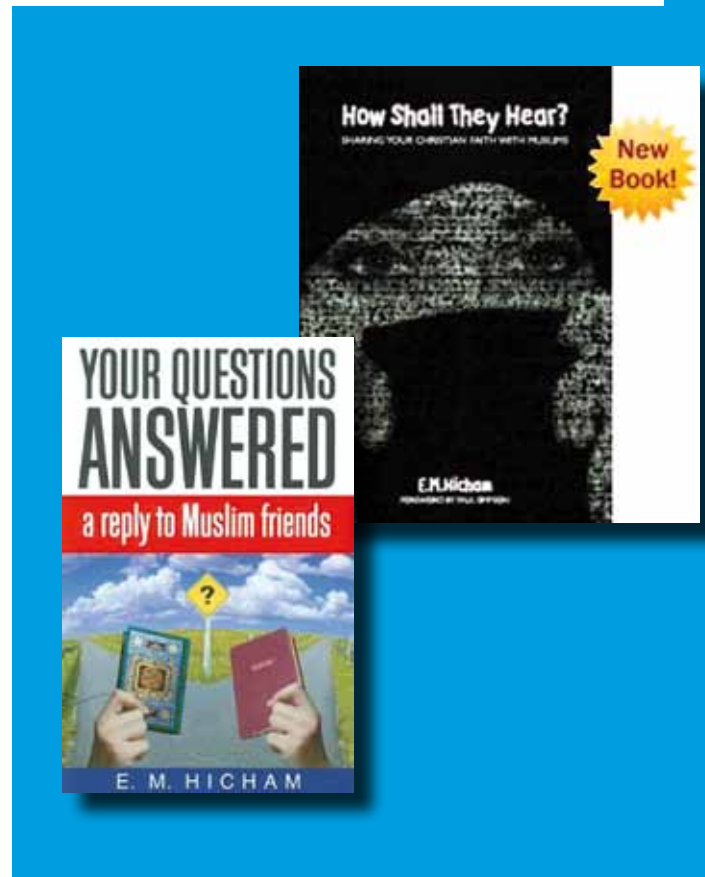
When I went to France I met Kevin, Susan and the family (UFM missionaries) who were friends of my brother. They took great care of me and told me more about the Lord. I was moved by their seriousness, respect and kindness. They told me about the Christian faith, but I saw their teaching in action in their own lives. It was real. That had a great impact on me.

God had mercy on me. In his grace, he helped me to pray and receive Jesus as my Saviour and Lord. That was in early 2001. (For a fuller testimony, please see: www.emhicham.org)

You've since been serving the Lord in various ways - what are some of the things you've learned during that time?

I have been at Milnrow Evangelical Church for five years. As well as pastoral and preaching work, a large part of my week is spent working alongside Kevin reaching Muslims with the gospel. It has been a great blessing to sit under the ministry of my pastor David Harding for five years. Working and learning from the man God used to bring me to Christ (Kevin) has also been a tremendous blessing. The love of the church members has been priceless. As the true family of God, they have encouraged and supported me and I love them in the Lord.

We've seen encouragements and discouragements. About a hundred people from eleven different nationalities now attend Sunday morning services – a beautiful picture of heaven! A third of them attend as a result of church outreach. There is evidence that the Lord has used us in the conversion of several of them. We've seen our first Muslim convert. We met him through our market stall. Through the French Bible study, three Congolese people have come to know the Lord and two more are showing encouraging signs of conversion. I praise the Lord for his work in people's hearts.



Could you share with us something of your plans for future ministry?

I've accepted a call to the pastorate of an evangelical church in Carcassonne, south-west France. The city has a population of 45,800. Its medieval stronghold is a major tourist attraction. The work is hard and challenging. Tony and Barbara Hynes (EMF) have laboured faithfully there for twenty two years. We look forward to joining the church of fifteen members. In addition to pastoral work, we long to reach out to the local North African Muslim community, as well as French residents. I will also be involved in national and international Muslim evangelism. One of my heart-burdens is to encourage churches in Muslim evangelism. This will involve visiting churches and helping them practically. Several Christian organizations have asked me to help record Christian messages for Christians and Muslims in Muslim countries. Of course I won't be able to do all this without the help of my precious wife Elizabeth. She speaks French too and is looking forward to the move. I would value your prayers for her.

We'll start our ministry officially in July 2010, but will probably move to Carcassonne a month beforehand. Please continue to pray for the Lord's work in Carcassonne and in France generally.

(Hicham has written 2 books on the subject of Muslim evangelism, *How Shall They Hear?* and *Your Questions Answered*. Both are available from his personal website – www.emhicham.org)