I WAS A SPIRITUAL MIDGET
By Bill MacLeod, Executive Director

Al Fadi is a former Wahabbi Muslim from Saudi Arabia who writes for several ministries including "Answering Islam" and runs an outreach ministry designed for non-Muslim and Christians. He is also a keynote speaker for Crescent ConneXion next weekend.

Al's religion informed him from an early age that he had no hope to be accepted by God without doing things for God. His highest hope to have his sins forgiven would be to go on jihad, and at 16 he was inspired by a charismatic, dedicated neighbor who lived only three blocks away – Osama Bin Laden. However, his parents forbade him to go.

So, he decided to go on a mission to America to invite people to join Islam; and through an international student welcome program, Al befriended an American family to learn more about American culture and practice his language skills. He thought that just by virtue of their relationship, the family would convert to Islam.

It turned out to not be that simple because the family were Jesus-followers. He was baffled asking, "Where do they get this moral value from?" They began studying the Bible together, and he said, "I felt like a spiritual midget next to them – as if I [was] lacking something!" More and more he began to think that "Islam may not be the religion that I grew up thinking it was." His pilgrimage toward Jesus continued after he completed graduate school and went on to his first job in America. To hear the rest of Al's story, you will want to register, and plan to join us for Crescent ConneXion – Loving Your Neighbor from the 10/40 Window!

Workshop Topics at Crescent ConneXion:

- Resilience: Tools for Thriving, not Just Surviving on the Field
- Islam 101 & Islam 102
- Proverbs, Cultural Stories & Conversations about God
- Honor/Shame in Muslim Cultures
- Reaching the Nations Next Door
- Trauma and Refugees
- Henna Storying
- Islam and the Great Commission
- The Art of Hospitality in Islam
Is This Our Calling?
By Josh and Risa Hobson

Is this our calling? Is this something that is needed or wanted? These were the questions we had as we walked into Mission ConneXion Northwest five years ago. My wife, Risa, has been a counselor for 20 years. I have been in the restaurant industry for over 20 years. Ever since we got married, we dreamed of opening a retreat center to offer hospitality and care. 15 years of church planting and other experiences revealed to us the difficult jobs pastors and missionaries have. They serve others constantly, but who serves them? With missionaries and pastors leaving the field on a regular basis, we started to feel a strong call to care for them.

So we went into Mission ConneXion Northwest seeking affirmation of this call. Do missionaries need help? Are there people already helping? How can we get involved? The first booth I came to, I started to discuss my ideas and ask questions. During the conversation, another person approached and apologized for eavesdropping. She asked about our calling, professions, and ideas. She then asked if we would come to West Africa, right then. She was the leader of a group that just had three missionaries leave for a variety of reasons. Counseling is not really available, she said, and many are simply homesick, which a good home-style meal might help.

This conversation and the many others that followed were a huge affirmation for our ministry. Since then, we have attended many of the member care and other Mission ConneXion tracks in order to better understand and care for ministry workers and their families. We also met our sending agency, TEAM at MCNW. Now we are pursuing God’s call to Portugal to develop a retreat center that will care for missionaries and pastors all across Europe and North Africa.

Josh and Risa Hobson, along with their two daughters, are currently raising support to make God’s vision of a member care retreat center in Portugal a reality. If you are interested in finding out more about this ministry, please email: familiahobson@gmail.com.

The Journey Deepens - April 6 & 7

If you sense God is calling you into missions but need help in discerning your direction, The Journey Deepens Retreat is a great next step for you! This retreat is a place where you can explore the next step in your life of service before the Lord.

The Journey Deepens Retreat is sponsored by MissionNext in conjunction with MissionConneXion.

Find out more information and register at thejourneydeepens.com. Early bird discounts end March 24th.
A Sad Farewell 😞

By Bill MacLeod, Executive Director

After a meteoric, two-year role which helped transform almost every aspect of the ministry from an organizational and systems’ standpoint, Mission ConneXion will be bidding a sad farewell on March 9th, to Gloria Ames, who has accepted a job as administrative assistant at her home church.

When Gloria came to MC, there was little documented in many areas, so a large focus of her time was spent getting systems authenticated so that they could be handed off, ensuring more effective transitions between volunteer roles. Some of those areas included:

- Monthly Newsletter
- Monthly Reports
- Event Data Summaries
- General office admin
- ConneXion Events Support
- MCNW Event Coordinator
- MCNW Exhibit Coordinator
- Plenary Workshop Track Leader & Plenary Liaison
- Leadership ConneXion Event Coordinator

We list these areas to let you, our faithful MC friends, know that we are actively seeking the Lord for who will be the next person to fill this vital part-time, administrative assistant role. If you, or someone you know is passionate about the mission of Mission ConneXion and has the entrepreneurial skills required to serve in this capacity – then we’d like to hear from you! Please drop us a line at: info@MissionconneXion.com.

Gloria, I personally want to thank you for how you have helped me grow this ministry, and how much of an investment of your personal time, talent, and treasure you made, especially among our volunteers! Don’t be a stranger! We wish you well; and we know that wherever the Lord leads you, significant results for the Gospel will follow.

March 16-17 Crescent ConneXion
April 6-7: The Journey Deepens
May 18-19: Prayer ConneXion
Nov 2-3: Student ConneXion

Mission ConneXion is proud to be a member of ECFA. Your tax deductible donation to Mission ConneXion allows us to continue to bring high quality education and networking opportunities to all of our events.

Mission ConneXion exists to connect local churches and individuals to mission so that increasing numbers of believers are actively serving in areas of the world’s greatest need and opportunity.
20 Questions to Help You Prepare for a Mission Trip

An abridged article from our friends at TEAM.

Some of these questions will be easier to answer than others. You can consult reliable websites or the long-term missionary serving in your host country. If possible, you can even connect with a person from your host country living in your area now.

Worldview:

Worldview can be affected by things like age, life experiences and beliefs, and, thus, is difficult to state generally (and accurately) for an entire culture. Answer the following questions keeping in mind that you are painting with broad brushstrokes. On your trip, you will be able to see how your experiences with real people in the culture support or refute these generalizations:

- Is my host culture honor/shame based, fear/power or guilt/innocence based?
- How do people in my host country view authority and age?
- What is my host culture’s view of timeliness?
- Is the society individualistic or collectivist in how they relate to others?

Clothing:

Before we even open our mouths, our clothing makes an important statement for us. Before packing your suitcase, consider the following questions:

- What is the appropriate clothing for the climate of my host country?
- What is the typical dress of a person my age and gender in this culture?
- What is the culture’s standard for modesty in dress?

Language:

It might not be possible to be fluent in the local language before your mission trip, but you can learn basic phrases as a sign of respect and goodwill. Be sure to ask your host missionary what level of language learning is expected of you before your arrival and if there will be an opportunity to further your learning abroad. Here are some other questions to research on you own:

- What is the primary language spoken by the local population?
- Are many locals also fluent in other languages or dialects?
- How do I greet a peer? How do I greet an authority figure?
- How do I express gratitude in the local language?

Spiritual Life and Practice:

Knowing the spiritual context of your host country will help you as you develop meaningful friendships.

- What is the primary religion of my host country?
- How does the average citizen practice his or her beliefs?
- What knowledge will the average citizen have about Jesus?
- How are evangelical Christians generally regarded in my host culture?

Customs:

Birthday traditions, annual holidays and colorful cuisine are the little things that make a big difference in community life. Will there be any culturally important holidays celebrated during my mission trip?

- What expectations are placed on giving and receiving gifts?
- What is typical cuisine? What dining etiquette should I be aware of?

For more insights, including video and worksheets, please visit TEAM’s website for the full version of this article: https://team.org/blog/20-questions-prepare-for-a-mission-trip.