

*Lust Under the Veil*. By Um Daoud. Maitland, Florida: Xulon Press, 2004. 352 pp. by Ashleigh Morgan.

*Lust Under the Veil* is written by Um Daoud, who has served as a missionary in North Africa and the Middle East for decades. She is fluent in Arabic and has an extensive knowledge of Arab culture. This book shows Um Daoud's heart for those living in the Arab world and her desire for those in the West to understand life there.

Um Daoud's book, *Lust Under the Veil*, tells the story of a young Syrian girl named Emira, who faces abuse from her father, a religious leader, and her brothers. Along with her own abuse, Emira is forced to witness the constant pain her father inflicts upon her mother. The story begins with Emira's mother being rushed to the hospital after having a breakdown over the news of the father's second marriage. As Emira commutes to the hospital to care for her mother, she meets a taxi driver named Ameen, who agrees to carry her to the hospital on a daily basis. Ameen realizes how broken and alone Emira is, and he listens to her struggles. As they continue to ride together, they develop feelings for one another, and Ameen shares the hope of the gospel with her. Eventually, Emira, her mother, and one of her brothers become believers. Through their conversion, the reader is able to see the transforming effect that the gospel has on their family, especially Emira's father. Towards the end of the story, her father realizes how grotesque his sins are and becomes broken over them. This causes him to doubt his faith in Islam and look to the Christian faith for answers. He also experiences genuine love from his newly converted wife, which causes his heart to soften toward his family. He acts kindly toward them and allows Emira to marry Ameen. At the end of the book, Amira's father is contemplating the cost of leaving Islam for the truth found in Christianity.

One of the greatest strengths in Um Daoud's book is that it provides an insightful view

of life in the Middle East, particularly Syria, and it effectively portrays many of the hardships of life there. *Lust Under the Veil* captures the oppression and loneliness faced by many women in the Middle East. This is most prominently seen through the lives of Emira and her mother. Neither of these women can leave their home freely because Emira's father is afraid of them embarrassing him. They are forced to spend day after day in the home, caring for their family while getting no recognition or appreciation. Both face physical and verbal abuse from the father and sons, and they constantly live in fear. However, even in the midst of oppression, Um Daoud demonstrates that their biggest need is the hope found in Jesus Christ. Emira and her mother's situation makes them feel hopeless and alone, but part of this is due to their view of God. They view God as distant, which differs from the Christian understanding of God. Emira and her mother's conversions show the beauty of the Christian view that God is a loving and personal God who cares for His creation. This differs from Islam's teachings about God, which portray him as distant and which require each person to live up to a certain standard. Once Emira and her mother hear and believe the truth of the gospel, their whole outlook on life changes. They have new hope in situations that are dark and seem hopeless, and they cling to the truth that God is there for them in a personal way. However, this truth is not just for Emira and her mother, but for every single person. Um Daoud shows that these women are not the only ones who are hopeless; she also captures the hopelessness felt by the father and brothers. Although Emira's father seemed to have everything that the world could offer, he had no peace because he realized his own sinfulness and shame. The author contrasts the father's lack of peace with Ameen's peace in Christ in order to show the peace that a relationship with Christ brings. Once Emira's father meets Ameen, he makes comments about how Ameen is very unusual due to his peace, and he longs to have peace like Ameen.

Um Daoud's book effectively shows both the hardship and the warmth of Middle Eastern culture. The reader is able to sense the hospitality and closeness of the community. This is especially obvious in the Christian community, which illustrates what it is truly like to bear one another's burdens by caring for each other in difficult situations. Throughout the book, the Christians constantly encourage each other through fellowship in the Word and prayer. They also demonstrate a life of boldness by sharing the gospel. Um Daoud presents many examples of sharing the gospel with Muslims. Her examples provide helpful topics to address in gospel conversations, like the personal aspect of Christianity and God's loving nature. She also describes the mixture of emotion in different people's responses when they hear this truth. One example of this is when Ameen's Christian friend goes into a Mosque to ask how the God of Islam is both just and merciful. While the religious leaders searched through the Qur'an for answers, their answers were unable to satisfy his friend, so he told them that he would look to the Bible for answers. While this was a risky move for Ameen's friend, he was willing to take the chance in order to force the men in the Mosque to question what the Qur'an teaches about God. This interaction made Emira's father continue to question his Islamic faith and start to wonder about what the Bible taught about God. Shortly after this, her father met Ameen, who was able to share how the Bible shows God as both just and merciful. This story from the book is an example of topics the reader can address when talking with Muslims. The differences between the Christian and Islamic views of God are a good bridge to the gospel.

Finally, Um Daoud's book not only gave the reader insight into life in the Middle East for both Muslims and Christians; it also brings glory to God by telling a story of his faithfulness and love. *Lust Under the Veil* shows how God draws people to himself and is faithful to provide opportunities for people to hear the gospel. Emira did not get into Ameen's taxi by chance, but

because of God's plan for her. God looked on Emira with both love and compassion, and placed a believer in her life who was faithful to share the gospel with her. While Emira's life in the beginning of the story was defined by hardship, the Lord was orchestrating it for her good, which was not merely a physical deliverance but a spiritual deliverance as well. The reader can see how the sovereign hand of the Lord is at work in this story as he pursues and restores his people. Emira and her family were broken and filled with sorrow and bitterness at the beginning of the story, and Emira longed to escape. However, at the end of the story, she was filled with joy and hope after witnessing the Lord's faithfulness and goodness in her life. Not only was her family starting to change, but she also gained a family in Christ that would encourage her and love her. She also had peace in knowing that God was with her and cared for her in a way that is far greater than any earthly relationship. This transformation reflects the transforming nature of the gospel in a seemingly hopeless situation. The gospel is the light of the world and has the power to transform even the darkest places. Um Daoud's book reflects this truth and gives the reader great hope for the work God is doing in the Middle East.

Overall, Um Daoud's book provides a raw view of life in the Middle East. She is able to illustrate both the beauty of the culture and the hardships both men and women face in the Middle East. By doing this, she effectively shows the transforming power of the gospel in a culture dominated by Islam. The reader comes away from this book with a deeper understanding and a greater love for the work God is doing in the Middle East.