



# When the Middle East meets West



Middle Eastern attitudes toward the West are generally positive



**Terry\*** works as a teacher in the Middle East. He has worked in several schools in the past 11 years and is ideally placed to see the way the younger generation views the West and how local communities accept Westerners. His experiences may come as a surprise ...

\* Picture disguised and name changed for security.

**How do young Middle Easterners view the West?  
Is Western media's portrayal of the Middle East accurate?  
Do communities accept Westerners into their homes and lives?**

"Generally, I'd say my students are *not* hostile to the West," Terry, a MECO teacher in a relatively open Middle Eastern country says. "I have stood at the front of a classroom of 12-year-olds and said that if I had a Western passport in my pocket and I could put their name on it, who would like that? All of their hands shot up into the air."

"I presume if you did the passport experiment in a room of adults, you would get the same response because most people in the Middle East just want to have a prosperous life in peace. And they see they could have that in the West where the standard of living is higher."

**Being willing to adapt**

"There is a negative stereotype of the region. Where I come from, and I think this goes for many countries who get 'Westernised' news, the Middle East is described as an unpredictable place where most people want to cause others harm. That's just not true." "I think there are problems when Western culture is trying to dominate another culture or 'improve' that culture by turning it into a copy of the West. That's when we run into trouble."

"But if you are willing to adapt, to fit into the local culture and even adopt some of the Middle Eastern culture as your own, then you become part of the family."

*"People here are open ..."*

Hostilities occur if you have your point of view and you are unwilling to change or accommodate the culture of other people."

"But if you try, then even if you do make a mistake, most of the time you are given the benefit of the doubt. People are very welcoming and they will make allowances for your slip-ups."

**Showing care breaks down walls**

"If someone does have reservations about mixing with a Westerner, it's very easy to overcome that. All you have to do is show that you genuinely care. In difficult times it speaks volumes that you are suffering the same way they are. Praying for them is another example that shows that you care."

"Simply, the fact that you are willing to leave your home, your country, your family, and come to serve the people

in the Middle East has an amazing impact on the people who live here."

"I would invite anyone to come and see for themselves. It's not as scary as you think. We need to be like Peter in the boat. He saw Jesus walking on the water and as long as he kept his eyes fixed on Jesus he was fine. I'd challenge you to be willing to leave your comfort zone and fix your eyes on Jesus.

I believe you will experience Him in a completely different way."

*"... most people just want to have a prosperous life in peace."*

"In the meantime, I would urge you to not believe everything you hear and see on the news.

Yes, the region has its troubles, but people here are open and are not as hostile as they are portrayed.

Please pray for the Middle East, and for those that have a relationship with Jesus and are His ambassadors here." 