



Making Friends Among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan

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First-time author Larson is compelled to tell the story of the man who had been his best man: Dan Terry. The son of American Methodist missionaries, Terry had been raised in northern India and was familiar with the Hindu Kush mountain range between Afghanistan and Pakistan. For more than 40 years—through the Soviet invasion, Taliban takeover, and NATO-led invasion—Terry traveled the Afghan highlands “making friends,” becoming a “trusted guide... toward a more peaceable country.” It is doubtful that anyone other than Terry’s childhood friend Larson could have captured the nuances, adventure, faith undertones, and raw beauty of Terry’s story. Larson spins an elegant and exhilarating tale of heroism, love, recklessness, and altruism played out against one of the world’s oldest cultures and the longest-running U.S. war. In 2010, Terry’s execution-style murder, along with that of nine other aid workers as they returned to Kabul from a medical mission, made international news. While reminiscent of Greg Mortenson’s *Three Cups of Tea*, Larson’s look at an American in Afghanistan takes the reader beyond any facile definitions of enemy into a territory of dangerous love, where peace, sturdy and resilient, can neither be built nor dismantled at the point of a gun. (Oct. 19)

Making Friends Among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan Details

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From Reader Review Making Friends Among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan for online ebook

Justin Melter says

For the FULL REVIEW please check out LazyDay.CA the direct link can be found here:
<http://lazyday.ca/making-friends-amon...>

I received this books from the GoodReads First-Reads program! Thanks to GoodReads, Jonathan P. Larson and Herald Press!

Making Friends Among the Taliban tells the story of of Dan Terry, a humanitarian aid worker who worked for thirty years in Afghanistan before being ambushed and killed while on a health aide mission in a remote part of the country. The story is written by his childhood friend Jonathan P. Larson and follows Dan's journeys/experiences over his life in the constantly war torn Afghanistan.

Dan himself was one of ten victims of this ambush, it made world headlines and was later referred to as The Badakhshan Massacre. One man was spared to tell the tale as he was Afghan. Many interesting facts surround the deaths of the medical team. This was an organized attack, not just a random act. Who had money to do it? How would they know which path they were taking? The team had all the proper clearances from governments, officials, warlords and even the Taliban. Was this an act by a local insurgent group or perhaps something/someone much bigger? I really do question it myself.

Dan really tried to help everyone with any type of problem from hunger, disease, drug addiction, medicine, training, mechanics (a personal love of his) and once even persuaded a whole border to open for a friend to get home on time. At one point he started snapping pictures of soldiers at a checkpoint just to get them to stop beating a bus driver's aide. Obviously very risky but bloodshed in Dan's eyes was always unnecessary. This in itself is a testament to Dan's message of peace and love for others.

One story tells of how Dan is captured by a warlord and after realizing that there is no worth to him they share a meal and quickly become friends. Years later on a mission, Dan is driving with his medical team and the Warlord with his soldiers in the middle of the desert. As they cross paths on a road the trucks abruptly stop and the two men, much to the bewilderment of both groups, start hugging on the side of the road. I can just imagine how funny and odd this would look!

At one point Dan is imprisoned, after being released an armed troupe show up at his door asking nicely for him to return to prison as his sentence hadn't yet been fulfilled. Dan went along willingly. As he arrived the yard was filled with prisoners cheering as he had saved and made a difference in many lives during his incarceration

One last interesting story from the text that I feel really proves just how integrated with the people and how devoted to his cause of preserving life concerns a downed American drone. Anyone who can successfully broker a deal between a greedy warlord and the American military definitely had talent. He did this all to prevent the killing of innocents that would ensue if the Americans were left to retrieve it on their own.

Overall the book itself for non-fiction was a very entertaining and yet sometimes angering read (more on this below or at LazyDay.ca). Dan gave everything for peace & overall betterment of Afghanistan only to be removed so brutally and unfairly from it. I feel that non-fiction and fiction readers alike will enjoy Dan's

story. Perhaps if you want to have a bit more of an insight as to what the realities are in Afghanistan I do recommend this book. It is labelled as a religious/christian title by some but I don't agree with such a label. One quote of the bible and suddenly it becomes a religious book. I do not consider it as such. In order to progress in Afghanistan or anywhere in the world with hatred Dan summed it up perfectly "Above all we must love them".

Thank you once again to GoodReads, Herald Press and Jonathan Larson for sending this out. R.I.P. Dan.

If you liked this review, want to read the extended review of this book or read about other hot new titles please come check us out at <http://www.lazyday.ca>

Steve says

It feels rude or even callous to give this book a weak rating - it is a poignant, often moving story told of a remarkable individual in a fascinating, maddening, terribly misunderstood place and time. Indeed, it appears to be a labor of love written by a good man (alas, a first-time author, writing about, it appears, his best man, childhood friend, and trekking partner), delivered in the inconsistent style of a series of parables from the pulpit (which seems a comfortable vehicle for the author, but not terribly effective in constructing a compelling book). Alas, particularly given its brevity, the book (and, similarly, the story) left much to be desired (for someone legitimately interested in the story). In another author's hands, guided by a strong editor, this could have been an epic work (or, at least, significantly better) - to which, on balance, the likely response is that the author deserves kudos for bringing an otherwise small (but meaningful) story to the public's conscience. Ultimately, I'm not sorry I read the book. I am glad I learned about Dan Terry's life and gained broader perspective on the peace-building enterprise in Afghanistan. But I'm hesitant to recommend this to others without full disclosure.

Krysta says

Source: Goodreads First Reads

Readers expecting to learn about the history of the Middle-East or the current conditions of its people will find little of those matters within the pages of Larson's book. Instead, the author focuses on celebrating Dan Terry's life and principles through a series of vignettes that highlight the good he accomplished simply by believing in the inherent decency of people. His caring, spontaneity, determination, and joy combined to make him an ideal bridge-builder, a man who could communicate with others from vastly different backgrounds and work with them to achieve a common goal. His story is nothing short of inspiring.

Perhaps most strikingly, Larson's source material comes largely from the people Terry helped and they give him high praise indeed—that, as a Westerner and a Christian, Terry exemplified many of the positive qualities of Afghans and Muslims. He looked after the less fortunate, acted as man of honor, and, above all, welcomed everyone as a potential friend. He possessed the ability to look past labels and stereotypes to see the people with whom he worked as just that—people. This knowledge, combined with a complete faith in God, enabled Terry to cross into dangerous territory to do the tasks he knew needed to be done. Larson notes

that Terry achieved the nickname “crazy” as a result of his extreme fearlessness.

Larson’s book is a heartwarming testimony to the power of the individual to accomplish a lot of good through little means. Terry did not set out to transform an entire country, but simply tried to meet the needs of communities as he saw them arise. His work makes a lasting peace in the Middle-East seem like a real possibility, if only more people took the time to sit down together and drink a cup of tea.

Lissa says

I won this book through the Goodreads Giveaway. Dan Terry spent a good portion of his life doing humanitarian work in Afghanistan. He aided with peacekeeping and community initiatives and earned a reputation for his open-minded and realistic approach. This book is written by his friend and serves as a memorial to Terry's accomplishments before his untimely death. It is an important book and should be read by diplomats, officials and aid workers before heading into Afghanistan but I know that it won't.

The book is not perfect. Downsides to Terry's method of work are not included and he is portrayed a little too saintly, which I am sure he was not. Overall, this is a good book about an intriguing and important man and I hope that it is well read by those who are entering humanitarian work.

David says

The characters and responses between this story and the story of The Boys Kings of Texas stand in stark contrast. In "Boy Kings", the author is surrounded by dysfunctions, abuse, and hopelessness. The things entrap him and plague him through his adult life. In the story of Dan Terry, a peacemaker in Afghanistan, he grows up in dysfunction, war, and hopelessness as a son of missionaries in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Instead of this cursing his life and causing him to flee, Dan Terry falls in love with these places and commits his life to bringing light and hope.

The life of Dan Terry stirs a flame deep within me - maybe it is because he liked to hike and climb mountains. Or maybe it is because he thrived when he was solving a problem. Or maybe it is because he loved hanging out with the marginalized of the world. Or maybe it is the way he did "Jesus-styled" ministry, walking as Jesus walked. I love his story. Here are few notes from the book:

pg. 66 - "The ultimate affirmation of the goodness and appeal of this moniker (Pagal - crazy) came when a circle of war-weary Afghans in the central highlands proposed the formation of an informal society around the notion. Not surprisingly, Dantri held office in it for many years. Its name? The Hezb-i-Pagal: the "Party of Crazies." The sole condition of membership is a mad pledge to seek the good of the community and to disavow fighting and corruption. With a measure of whimsy, it runs counter to a political life often based on religious zealotry or ethnic interest that has yielded only a harvest of suffering."

pg. 119 - the silent throng of mourners at Dan's memorial service is testimony to a life well lived.

Jjudyfl says

I won this book from Goodreads.

I once reviewed a book and quoted the old line, "Stay out of places you wouldn't be caught dead in," but that was FICTION, and it was an amusing, appropriate quote.

.....But " Making Friends Among the Taliban" is NOT fiction. Before we even open the book, we know that Dan Terry is dead. We know that he was murdered in Afghanistan. He CHOSE not to "stay out."

His friend, Jonathan Larson, embarked on his own journey there, to follow his paths and record for the world more details of this peace and friendship-seeking man.

Dan Terry headed out in 1969, when hippies were everywhere, peace could be oh-so-simple and love and idealism were possible.

The book was not focused on the Taliban, (to my relief!) but about the friends he and his wife made in Afghanistan. Everyone seemed to remember Dan Terry with a personal recollection of his aide, his help, his concern, friendship and joy. He seemed to have an innate ability to unearth the commonalities among all he met.

I learned a lot about the land and the people of Afghanistan from this little book.

It is, above all, a tribute to Dan Terry.

Thanks, Mr. L.,for the telling.

Kate Hearn says

I WON THIS BOOK IN A GOODREADS GIVEAWAY

I honestly wasn't sure if I would enjoy this book. I have a negative view of the Taliban (as I am sure many North Americans have), and was questioning how anyone could want to help them, much less become friends with them. I started the book this morning, and finished it this evening. And I really enjoyed it.

Dan Terry was born to Methodist missionaries, and was raised in India while his father 'crisscrossed the subcontinent as an auditor of mission schools and hospitals'. In 1971 he began his love affair with Afghanistan. In August 2010, Dan and nine other aid workers were killed in a roadside attack.

The different stories throughout the book show Dan as a very selfless person, going out of his way to promote peace (like saving the man being beaten on the bus by pulling out his camera and then hugging the gunmen). But the stories also showed a side to the Taliban, that we never see. I must admit I was rather ignorant going into this book. I am still finding it hard to digest the positive stories.

Overall I would recommend this book to anyone who is feeling like the human race has no hope. Dan Terry is proof that things can change. I found it to be a quick and very interesting read.

Samantha says

A well written and researched tribute to the author's friend, Dan Terry. Through his friend's eyes, I admire Dan for his courage and persistence through his life while also seeing his faults that could have made it hard to work with him at times.

This book also reminds me that people are people everywhere. Some we know how to work with already and others we don't. How successful we are in working with people from other cultures will depend on how

willing we are to learn and talk with them, whether they are Afghans or the annoying teenagers down the street.

I can only hope that we learn quicker.

Howard says

Disclaimer: I received the book as a Goodreads give-away. The brief (100 page, not counting the table of contents, acknowledgements, forward and notes on the author) book serves as an epitaph for Dan Terry, a Christian missionary living amongst the Afghanistans, and who was killed, along with nine others, in August 2010. The book consists of a number of short stories gleaned from the author's conversations with eyewitnesses and interviews with friends, and is eye-opening. As the author notes in his YouTube blurb promoting the book, the use of the words "Taliban" and "friends" in a single sentence is a highly improbable proposition. The book, however, does serve to bridge that improbable gap, and brings home the plight of the Afghan peoples, and helps to humanize a war-ravaged people that, due to terrorism and the analogy that most people draw between the words Taliban and extremism, are frequently misunderstood and vilified. The book is a well-written homage to a friend, well-written, informative and helped me, for one, to dispel some preconceived notions about a very foreign and mysterious culture. The book also notes on its cover a companion on-line video, Weaving Life, (www.Mennomedia.org/WeavingLife), which amplifies on some of the concepts raised in the book. The book also inspired me (not a particularly political person) to do some further reading, starting with <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban>. The book is definitely a thought-provoking tribute to the author's late friend, as well as an entire population of a country, and worth reading.

Lyle Appleyard says

I got a copy of this book as part of the Goodread Giveaway promotion.

Every once in awhile, you come across a story that restores your faith in humanity. Such is the story of Dan Terry, who dedicated his life to helping the people of Afghanistan. Then have his life taken away in a mysteriuos attack.

The book is a collection of stories that show his nature and character. There is overriding plat to the book. Some stories were amusing, some were sad, all were real. I am not sure if the stories were chronological order. This may not be a piece of literature that will be studied in university. That was not its purpose. This was a celebration of Dan's life.

I enjoyed this book. It was short book, only about 126 pages. Not a hard read.

Brent Soderstrum says

I won this book through GoodReads First Read program.

This short little book is a testimonial to Dan Terry who was executed doing mission work in Afghanistan in 2010. I was expecting this to be a Christian book discussing Jesus shining through Dan Terry on to the

Taliban people. And that might have been the case but that certainly wasn't talked about in this book. Besides mentioning Dan was a Christian there is nothing talked about in the book regarding his evangelistic actions with the people of the area. It is true that faith is often demonstrated by actions not words but none of this was even hinted at. I was disappointed. Don't get me wrong. I think what Dan Terry did with his mission work was outstanding. I just expected something different from this book I guess.

Miranda says

I won a copy of this book in a goodreads.com first-reads giveaway.

This book taught me a little bit about Afghanistan from a perspective that I hadn't previously been exposed to. It really made me think, especially about everything I had been told and led to believe about members of the Taliban. Larson describes how Dan Terry would approach each person he met as a friend he just hadn't met yet-an individual whose disposition is not defined by the political associations they may have-and how this came so naturally to him. Reading this I began to forget, even if momentarily, the sentiments that the word 'Taliban' routinely bring to mind, so much so that I was slightly confused by the questioning look I received from a co-worker in regards to the title.

Above all else, this book is an excellent commemoration of Dan Terry's life, the countless friendships he made along the way, and the lasting impact he left in every life he touched.

Katie says

I won this book as a goodreads first reads, and I was extremely, extremely excited to read it. However... I was rather let down with the book... for a number of reasons...

(1) I don't really like biographical books - and that's exactly what this book was. Too many biographies are so biased you never ever hear ANYTHING bad about the person it was written about. It's almost as if the person or individual is immortalized, which Dan Terry, definitely was not.

(2) I like Muslims and I believe that they are good people and have a strong ethical core. However, the author made out the Taliban to be on the same level in many instances in the book. The Taliban's negative influence and bad that they have done was very widely downplayed and that bothered me.

The only good part about this book was the ending and how dramatic it was. It was as if the author really wanted to capture the drama of Dan's murder and he did that nicely on paper.

I passed this book on to a friend of mine who is from Afghanistan and I can't wait to hear her reponse or feedback once she finishes the book.

Overall, it was okay... but didn't bring out any strong emotions or statements that I was really hoping for.

Elizabeth White says

This book arrived in the mail yesterday afternoon after I won it in a Goodreads giveaway. I started reading it around 4 p.m. and couldn't put it down. One of the questions that I have asked myself on more than one occasion, is "How can I remain true to my own Christian faith and still respect other faiths and cultures"? Dan Terry's life makes the answer clear. You love them. You help them. You become a "Christ" in their midst. And you do this without being judgmental, condescending, or blabbing like a preacher all the time. Making Friends Among the Taliban opened my eyes to the fact that there is good and evil among all peoples. One simply cannot hate ANYONE!

Sojourner says

On August 8, 2010, my blog post was headlined "Missionaries killed for preaching Christianity." It was a shocking event which made headlines worldwide - <http://khamneithang.blogspot.in/2010/...>

Ten members of a medical team, including six Americans, were shot and killed by the Islamic terrorists as they were returning from providing eye treatment and other health care in remote villages of northern Afghanistan. The team also consisted of one German, one Briton and two Afghans. They were a part of the team that made a two-week trip to Nuristan province. They drove to the province, left their vehicles and hiked for hours over mountainous terrain to reach the Parun valley in the province's northwest. They had decided to travel through Badakhshan province to return to the capital because they thought that would be the safest route.

Two years down the line, Jonathan P. Larson pays a glowing tribute to his childhood friend and one member of that fateful team, Dan Terry, in Making Friends Among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan, published by Herald Press.

Though a small book of just 130 pages, it is a compelling read as the author's intimate knowledge of the region comes to the fore. Raised in northern India, Dan Terry, like the author, was a man who was familiar with the Hindukush mountain range between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He had seen the Soviet invasion, the Talibanization of Afghanistan, and the eventual invasion by the NATO forces, a period that span over four decades.

Through interviews and eye witness accounts, Larson retraces Terry's footsteps in the rugged highlands of Afghanistan "making friends" and working overtime to build a more peaceable country. He faced famine, poverty, prison, and rifle muzzles as also kings, the Red Army, warlords, the Taliban, and the American-led coalition forces. In the midst of the raging conflict and strife, Dan, as a peacemaker, forged improbable friendships and inspired small Afghan communities to find a better way of life.

Making Friends Among the Taliban is a powerful tribute to a man whose unquenchable thirst for peace couldn't be decimated at the point of gun. Dan Terry's life offers a model for authentic living wherever we are!
