

*A hard book to put down.*

**Phil Parshall, SIM missionary to the Sons of Ishmael**

*This book can help build our faith and give us a spirit of expectation for the future.*

**Dr George Verwer, Founder and former International Director, Operation Mobilisation**

*Through the life and example of Greg and his wife Sally, we get a real opportunity to see how to face these challenges head on, trusting that no Godly obedience will fail to bring about Godly results.*

*And so, I highly commend this book to you. It's an incredible story...*

*As you read this book, rejoice with us that God is at work through his people in the Muslim world. And may you be open to how the Lord is calling you to respond.*

**Tim Lewis, International Director, Frontiers**

*Greg Livingstone's life is a demonstration of what God will do with a person who revels in His word, His love, believes His promises and is surrendered to anything God wants regardless of the price to be paid. He is a giant in the field of missions... This autobiography is a treasure trove of God at work and should be required reading for any prospective missionary. It's an honor to stand up and call him blessed and my beloved friend in Christ.*

**Nate Mirza, International Student Ministry Senior Staff, The Navigators**

*God has a sense of humor. He used Greg Livingstone against all odds to impact the world for Christ. Read this book and you'll get a sense of how God can use you too.*

**Bob Sjogren, President, Unveil in GLORY, Virginia, USA**

*I've "blurb'd" hundreds of books over the years, but I don't think I've enjoyed any of them as much as this one. I just couldn't put it down... What an adventure God led Greg and Sally through! Here it is superbly written... This book... made me praise God for the great evidences of His working today.*

**Dr John Frame, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Florida, USA**

*The indomitable journey from disadvantaged, but radical, young follower of Jesus to his rightful place as an iconic pioneer in global missions... one of missions' most challenging and engaging life stories.*

**Paul McKaughan, Ambassador at Large, Missio Nexus**

*Greg Livingstone, as a mission recruiter without parallel, recruited two of our children to missions. My wife and I are ever grateful that God used this man of God to open great doors of ministry to them – ministries that are still evolving.*

**Dr Don McCurry, Founder and Former Director, Zwemer Institute of Muslim Studies and Author of *Healing the Broken Family of Abraham: New Life for Muslims***

*Greg Livingstone is a modern-day, globetrotting apostle... His passion for unreached and unengaged peoples is infectious... Read his story and let God expand your heart and fill you with fresh gospel courage.*

**Jay Childs, Senior Pastor, The Evangelical Free Church, Crystal Lake, Illinois, USA**

*Greg Livingstone lets us see his hopes and choices – even his prayers – evoking shock and incredulity from certain peers. Frankly, Greg invites us all to risk that same gamut of emotion. The end result is a bracing encounter with an utterly real, high-impact, sham-free life story that a mere book can barely contain!*

**Don Richardson, Missiologist and Author of *Peace Child, Eternity in Their Hearts, Heaven Wins*, and other books**

*With deep humility and honest transparency Dr Livingstone takes us on a journey covering over seven decades of his life. It is a record of God's faithfulness to him... This book is hard to put down for its captivating style and highly informative content. It is a must-read for everyone engaged in Muslim work.*

**Georges Houssney, President, Horizons International**

*Greg's telling of his life story is transparent, humorous, and always focused on the remarkable favour of the God who picked him up and chose to use him. I found the story so absorbing that I had to read it from cover to cover without stopping – and I hope that you will do the same.*

**Gordon Dalzell, Trainer, Living Leadership UK and Former Senior Pastor at Rock Baptist Church, Cambridge, UK**

*In his famously irrepressible and slightly irreverent way, Greg reveals the heart of a mission leader sold out to God's purposes.*

**David Lundy, Development Director, Dalit Freedom Network Canada**

*You've Got Libya is a witty, funny, challenging, and inspiring read... I couldn't put it down. I encourage you to pick it up.*

**Steve Moore, President, Missio Nexus**

*This compelling account reminds us that God takes broken lives and uses them in extraordinary ways for his purposes... May his story inspire many more to give up small ambitions, and cause faith to rise for the task yet to complete.*

**Phil Goodchild, British Director, Frontiers**

*You've Got Libya is a must-read for anyone following the way of Jesus into the Muslim world. Greg is my friend and in many ways my mentor – I recommend him as much as the book!*

**Carl Medearis, Author of *Muslims, Christians and Jesus* and *Speaking of Jesus***

*You've Got Libya is a riveting read. Mission biographies are often challenging but Greg and Sally Livingstone's story is irresistible. The superb writing sparkles with warmth and humour... despite setbacks and disappointments, you get the feeling here that it would have been fun to be on the Livingstone team. These deeply personal pages reveal Greg's pioneering passion for sharing God's heartbeat in today's complex Muslim world... biography at its very best!*

**Peter Conlan, OM World Partner**

*There is something awe-inspiring about the way God selects and anoints his servants for world-changing assignments... Greg's personal story and the ripple effect of his radical faith continue to challenge and stir the global church.*

**Steve Richardson, President, Pioneers-USA**

*From a castaway child from birth living in five foster homes until becoming a Christian at age sixteen, this account is an "open book" into the life of Greg Livingstone, who became the founder and leader of Frontiers... Greg's autobiography reveals his humility and dependence on Jesus Christ, and it is laced with humor.*

**John E. Kyle, Wycliffe Bible Translators**

*This is the story of a man with true grit. The dire obstacles Greg endured while growing up brought me to tears. Was ever success less likely, was ever a jar more earthen, or the power of God more displayed than in Greg Livingstone's life? Was ever a man assigned a more far-fetched dream – "You've got Libya!" – than Greg at the age of 20? Did ever a romantic fall more in love with a young woman than when Greg met Sally? And did ever a band of nobodies believe so daringly that nothing is impossible with God?*

**Bob Blincoe, PhD, US Director, Frontiers**

*Living up to his missionary namesake, Livingstone reveals what it means to be sold out to Jesus and His mandate to "go where the church isn't." Read this book to see what God has done with Greg and Sally, who risked it all for the kingdom.*

**George Carey, Director of Evangelical Presbyterian Church/World Outreach, USA**

*Writing in a conversational style, in You've Got Libya Greg is open and honest about his strengths and especially his weaknesses. This is an enjoyable, challenging, and inspiring read.*

**Jeffrey Jeremiah, Stated Clerk, Evangelical Presbyterian Church**

*The story of a leader and inspirer... Greg's story will continue to inspire and produce new leaders who will see the success of the gospel for which Greg longs. This book is fast-moving, funny, challenging and a great read.*

**Bryan Knell, Founding Leader, Christian Responses to Islam in Britain**

*Greg Livingstone is a born writer with a wealth of vital life experience worth writing about. This book is a racy read that grabs you by the throat and pulls you along on an exhilarating ride into the missionary heart of God.*

**Steve Bell, Author, Trainer, and National Director of Interserve in England & Wales**

*A wonderfully inspiring read of God's grace unfolding through the years.*

**David Milligan, Regional Leader, Pioneers**

*It was not a promising start – a Jewish father (Greg never met) and a bar-room girl for a mother – followed by many foster homes... The accounts include a Who's Who of mission leaders, and what was happening behind the scenes – warts and all – told in a way that leaves the reader switching between bending over in laughter and bending over in prayer.*

**J. Dudley Woodberry, Dean Emeritus and Senior Professor of Islamic Studies, School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, USA**

*This is a down-to-earth book of disarmingly honest (warts and all), funny, and riveting stories of a radical, single-minded couple, following Jesus, with a passion for the Muslim world.*

**Jim Green, Senior Associate Production and Strategy, Executive Director Emeritus, The JESUS Film Project**

*This deeply inspiring narrative of Greg's lifelong call to Muslim peoples will challenge you, beckon you, and make you laugh. With wry wit, he points us toward his Holy Spirit-inspired heartbeat: Go to Muslim peoples who have never heard the story of Jesus.*

**Dr Mark Hausfeld, International Director, Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples, Assemblies of God World Missions**

*Written in a highly readable style, with plenty of humour and devastating honesty about mistakes and failures, You've Got Libya is an inside story told by someone who was involved first in the birthing of Operation Mobilisation, then in the leadership of the North Africa Mission and later in the formation of Frontiers... It provides a unique insight into the ways that evangelical approaches to mission among Muslims have developed in the last forty years... And this account of his life in his own words is sure to be an inspiration and a wake-up call to many.*

**Colin Chapman, Formerly Lecturer in Islamic Studies, Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon; Author of Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenges of Islam and Whose Promised Land?**

# You've Got Libya

*A life serving the Muslim world*

Greg Livingstone

MONARCH  
BOOKS

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*Although it may be assumed that dedicating a book to one's wife is simply the thing to do, there is, in fact, no human on earth or in heaven who has meant more to me. She kept me from drifting to the left or to the right. She hung in with me when others would have quit.*

*She patiently set up home twenty-seven times!... from Pasadena to Kuala Lumpur, Beirut to Toronto, Uttar Pradesh to Brussels, Philadelphia to Buckinghamshire... and more. My feminine pioneer never stopped believing in me.*

*I'll be thanking you, Sally, through all eternity!*





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# Foreword

by Phil Parshall

*SIM missionary to the Sons of Ishmael*

One of my early remembrances of Greg is in the 1970s when we were at a conference on Islam together. We were standing apart from the crowd and I was holding forth, criticizing one of the leaders of the consultation. Suddenly Greg looked over my shoulder, saw the person who was the object of my slander, and said, “Oh, Bob, come join us. Phil has something he wants to share with you.” Needless to say, I was greatly embarrassed.

That was vintage Greg. Transparency and forthrightness are his hallmark. How does a missionary statesman get away with such a lifestyle of calling it like he sees it? Firstly, he is harder on himself than on others; secondly, he surrounds his criticism with a warm, concerned, caring personality; and thirdly, he does it with a smile.

I was one of Greg’s detractors in the early 1980s. In reality, why did Greg want to start a *new* mission? Did I see evidence of pride in his insistence that mission to Muslims be done the Livingstonian way? Did evangelicalism need another

group competing for the small pool of candidates willing to enter one of the most dangerous, difficult, and least rewarding ministries on the planet? And then there was the issue of stick-to-itiveness. Greg seemed to be a high-powered man always on the move. I observed no real gift of administration in him.

Fortunately for the Muslim world, Greg recognized his limitations and from the start sought to surround himself with Aarons who could cover for his deficiencies. In this he has been eminently successful. Thus Greg was the ever-moving *force* that swept over the landscape challenging, cajoling, and shaming people into giving their body and soul for the cause of seeing Muslims enter the kingdom. Following closely behind was the army of consolidators, the people without whom Greg would have been an abysmal failure in pioneering a new Frontier for Christ.

For me, godly character is the all-important issue for Christian leadership. Too often executives are seduced by power, sex, and financial gain. In Greg and Sally I have observed models of absolute commitment to engage in the battle to overcome temptations in these three areas.

Their journey has been long and arduous – always a new mountain to climb or another dark valley to traverse. For decades the battle of Sally's depression has sought to bring total defeat into the lives of this wonderful, yet vulnerable, couple. I could only stand amazed at how Greg would travel two and a half hours a day on California freeways to visit and comfort his beloved in the hospital. And that, after hours of struggling with the hassles of launching and shepherding a newborn mission.

## Foreword

Greg and Sally... I salute you both as humble, gracious, God-seeking servants of the Lamb. All who read this memoir will definitely concur! In places you will read with moistened eyes; in other paragraphs your heart will swell with praise and thanksgiving at all God has accomplished through his two obedient children. It's a hard book to put down.

# Foreword

by **Dr George Verwer**

*Founder and former International Director,  
Operation Mobilisation*

As I write this foreword, I am in the midst of a conference near Atlanta where the whole focus is the Muslim world. Of course Greg has been mentioned. With Sally, his name is a household term among those who have this vision and passion. Before he helped found Frontiers (and what a fantastic ministry that is), he worked with us in OM – and that amazing bit of history will be found in this book.

The Muslim world and places like Libya represent by far the largest bloc of peoples unreached with the gospel message. Everyone who believes the Bible should be involved in doing something about this. Compared with when I first got involved with Muslims with Greg in India in 1964, we have seen some major breakthroughs in the Muslim world. There are now dozens of people groups like the Berbers of Algeria where Muslims in good numbers are turning to Jesus. This is because of people like Greg and Sally. They helped set the pace and began to change the

## Foreword

course of history, but it's our prayer that this book will help get more people involved.

That is one of the reasons I would urge you to read this book with an open heart and mind. I would urge you to get more than one copy so that you can pass it on to someone else. I am planning to buy many hundreds to give to friends and Christian leaders.

This book can help build our faith and give us a spirit of expectation for the future. Today, people like Greg are often aborted before birth, which must be one of the greatest crimes in the history of humanity. I pray this book will be used to turn people away from abortion and to look for other alternatives like adoption. Then we might get a few more Greg Livingstones coming our way.

In their senior years, Greg and Sally seem as committed and active as ever – an example for all of us. God bless them and God bless this book.

# Foreword

by **Tim Lewis**

*International Director, Frontiers*

Greg and I have served alongside one another over the last three decades. We've faced many challenges together, some of which you'll read about in this book. Through it all, Greg has consistently loved me, challenged me, inspired me, prayed for me, and pointed me toward Jesus. He's also often made me laugh. I hope that in turn I've been able to do that for him.

One thing we have regularly discussed is how humbling it has been for us to see many hundreds of "ordinary" men and women – from many nations and many organizations – sacrificing their all for the call of God in some of the hardest places on earth. In so many ways, this is their story too. Not all of this makes for easy reading. But then, God never said obedience would be easy. In fact he tells us to expect challenges. Through the life and example of Greg and his wife Sally, we get a real opportunity to see how to face these challenges head on, trusting that no Godly obedience will fail to bring about Godly results.



## Foreword

And so, I highly commend this book to you. It's an incredible story, even though it's not a story that Greg was eager to write. What motivates Greg is not having people know about him, or look up to him. Rather what motivates him is the Great Commission. At an age when many have already retired, Greg is still giving his all to see the church of Jesus love Muslims the way Jesus does.

More Muslims have come to faith in Jesus during our lifetime than in the rest of history combined. Greg's story is a significant part of that bigger picture. As you read this book, rejoice with us that God is at work through his people in the Muslim world. And may you be open to how the Lord is calling you to respond.

# Preface

“Butterflies” in my stomach hardly describes the way I felt as I was about to go on stage in front of 17,000 university students at the mission conference in Urbana in 1984. I was the youngest of four speakers on a panel – and the most scared. My fellow panelists – Ralph Winter, Sam Wilson, and Warren Webster – were all mission icons.

What could I say that wouldn't turn off the students? Hoping that my handshake with Billy Graham a few minutes earlier had transferred some anointing, all I could say was what I've told countless other audiences since then: “I was once a normal person.”

Well, I was normal in the sense that my world was comprised of whatever was on my own agenda. I did what I had to do to stay out of trouble. Like many, I was focused on how to make friends and influence people in the direction of accomplishing whatever was on my plate at the time. Not a bad chap, really. Just, well... normal.

I assumed that the thing to do was to get the educational badges, meet the right people, pursue a career, have a wife and children, and live in a pleasant suburb in America with friendly neighbors.

Some people desire to travel and see the world. That hadn't occurred to me. For one thing, spicy food isn't a friend of my palate.

Generally, I didn't like people very much. My mother had taught me: "Get them before they get you." "Haughty" would have described me well. I had no experience of the kind of friends the Bible alludes to – people who were devoted, lay-down-their-lives-for-others, band-of-brothers types. I could hardly imagine that such persons existed outside of novels.

Having never lived with a father, uncle, or brothers, I wasn't very practical. I knew I needed to find a career that utilized my talking, not my hands. To be like Perry Mason, the television lawyer of my childhood, was my dream. The plan was to manipulate my way into Princeton University and then into an equally prestigious law school.

My driving force was to be Somebody, to gain respect from significant others – maybe even to get my face on the cover of *Time* magazine. Even years later, after I switched my allegiance from my own will to God's (at least as much as I knew how), my quest for recognition didn't lessen all that much. I simply switched my aspiration from being on the cover of *Time* to the cover of *Christianity Today*.

But that comes later in the story...

It's embarrassing to admit the more idiotic aspects of my pilgrimage. Over the years, our gracious Father revealed some of the hidden faults that unknowingly ruled over me (as described in Psalm 19:7–14). I've tried not to hide those faults in the pages that follow. I hope that my story offers hope that, in spite of our massive immaturity, God uses weak, self-absorbed people who strive to please him.

No one knew my off-putting, inconsistent manners more clearly than my fifth foster mother, Ruth Ringle. After hearing

me speak to 2,500 people, she blurted out, "My, oh my! If the Lord can use Greg, he can use anybody." A more true word was never spoken.

Today, I feel so privileged. My heavenly Father is so hugely magnificent that he could even use me, a kid from a terribly dysfunctional non-family, with all the unenviable accompanying idiosyncrasies and emotional damage.

In case I was ever tempted to think I am a big deal, the Lord once sent me a humbling dream. I was on a stage in heaven, standing shoulder to shoulder with many others. We were looking out at the multitude that no man could number. I realized the Lord himself was speaking about me! He was talking about some of the things described in this book. I was feeling great!

Then I turned to a man next to me, who was a head shorter than me and evidently from another era. I asked him, "What happened to you, brother?"

"Oh," he replied, rather nonchalantly, "I was burned at the stake."

### **Three truths**

I'm convinced of three truths:

- Roughly 90 percent of God's people settle for less than what he wants to do through their lives.
- God is looking for availability and perseverance as Elisabeth Elliot (quoting Nietzsche) called "a long obedience in the same direction."

## Preface

- It surely puts a smile on God's face when we take his promises at face value and act on them. Sooner or later, we realize that he uses weak people who hunger and thirst to be used by him – usually when we keep ourselves accountable to wise, godly overseers. No matter where you come from, no matter how damaged and scarred you are, he will use you – if you want to be used and if you don't take your hand off the plow.

## Disclaimer

Between my lost memory and my lost journals, I've lost a few pieces of my story. The chronology is far from exact. (Is it true that at my age, ten thousand brain cells die daily?) Besides, how long can a guy prattle on about himself? I'd prefer to write more about the people God has engineered into my life, but the names of many who have been a very significant part of my story are omitted. That's partly because of my failing memory, and it's partly because some of them don't want to be identified. Many of our closest colleagues are still proclaiming the message of Jesus in places where they would prefer to be expelled because of their *own* mistakes (or no one's) – not for being named in a book. Still, I regret I can't honor them by name. If you're one of those colleagues, or if you are one of our Father's servants who was an instrument of healing in my life, may you be greatly honored in heaven.

**Greg Livingstone**

You've Got Libya

*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

**Philippians 3:10–11**

## CHAPTER 1

---

# Inauspicious Beginning

Perhaps my father, Forrest Theodore Foss, was feeling rebellious toward his over-controlling Jewish mother in Boston, back in September 1939. A year out of Harvard, he might have found that his job as a social researcher for the city didn't hold any excitement. It had been fun organizing Harvard students into various social clubs, but now what?

I'm guessing that my grandfather Foss had come to America with the thousands of other *Fiddler on the Roof*-type Jewish peasants escaping the tsar. Our family name might have originally been Fostoyevsky. It wouldn't be unlikely that their name got the typical abbreviation, chopped at Ellis Island to a good old 'merican length: Foss.

In 1939, Forrest heard stories escaping from Hitler's Germany that his fellow Jews were being persecuted once again. Should he join the Army? President Roosevelt insisted it wasn't America's war. It wasn't as if Forrest was a save-the-world type anyway.

Still, a Harvard graduate was supposed to *be* somebody, not simply go to an office every day and come home to his mother in the evenings. Okay, she wouldn't approve of his

nightclubbing, especially since he had no siblings to keep an eye out for him in those dens of iniquity. Yet I suppose there was enough man in Foss to find an acceptable excuse to meet some sexy girls.

He was fascinated with Laura. How could this tiny, pretty, four-foot-ten-inch thing be so witty? She was confident, fun-loving, and seductive, not to mention the fact that her clothes revealed a good deal of her legs and well-endowed bosom. She never let it come up in their banter that she had barely gotten through high school. Her idea of study was reading the horoscope and the entertainment section of the *Boston Herald*.

Of course, there was no doubt that his mother, Natalie, would choose an appropriate Jewish girl for Forrest. Naomi Stevenson seemed suitable; after all, her brother was a professor at Boston University. So when Forrest meekly revealed to his mother that Laura, the Gentile showgirl, was pregnant, the conversation was over! Never mind that she was the daughter of a Swedish engineer who worked for the inventor Thomas Edison and his son Charles. To Natalie Foss, Laura Berge was nothing but a slut.

No one wanted the baby. Not the mother. Not the father. Not either set of grandparents. Well, actually, there was One who wanted the baby. That One declared: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

Abortions were not easily accessible in 1939, especially in Catholic-dominated Boston. In any case, Laura was not



going to risk one of those back-alley operations. There was no choice but to have the baby.

Not one to easily let an adversary off the hook, Laura let Forrest know in no uncertain terms that if he didn't arrange for her to deliver at the Richardson House in Brookline (where the Roosevelt babies were born), she would be most happy to let the world know whose baby she was carrying.

The extortion technique worked. Not only did Laura get the best hospital with all the bills paid, she likely got some extra money to help her leave town.

The baby – Gregory Martindale Foss – was born on 3 May 1940, just a few days before Hitler unleashed his blitz on Europe. (There is no connection as far as I'm aware!)

Why my mother named me Gregory, I'll never know. It was too early to be after Gregory Peck, and she certainly wouldn't have honored any of the sixteen popes named Gregory, even if she had known church history. But I've looked it up in the Greek: Gregory means either "warrior" or "watchman." I'd like to think that Jeremiah 1:5 ("before you were born I set you apart") refers even to our naming.

Martindale was my mother's middle name as well as the maiden name of her mother. It was passed on to me. Laura liked to claim that her mother was a "Daughter of the American Revolution." She was perfectly convinced of the truth of the statement, but that claim was as fictitious as the story that her mother's mother was the Scarlett O'Hara-like wife of a wealthy Southern plantation owner. She also claimed that I was a descendant of "Lighthorse" Harry Lee, an early American patriot, and thus related to Robert E.

Lee. Disappointingly, our Harry Lee was probably only a blacksmith.

Never a slave to truth, my mother managed to convince the hospital that she was married and that I was the legitimate son of Forrest Foss from Harvard. She even signed his name to the application for my birth certificate, thereby giving me his last name!

Probably at his mother's insistence, Forrest married Naomi Stevenson. I wonder why he quickly joined the Army. As a "ninety-day wonder" trained in the get-them-to-the-war-in-a-hurry Officer Candidate School, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 349th Regiment of the 88th Infantry Division. Four years later, in June 1944, he was killed in Italy and posthumously awarded the Purple Heart medal.

In 1969, at the American cemetery in Florence, I stood at his grave. Here was the father I never knew and who never saw me. It has always puzzled me that his Star of David grave marker was engraved with the same rank he started with four years before he died – Second Lieutenant. Most officers rose in rank quickly during wartime. I wonder if he got busted, was denied promotion because he was Jewish, or simply (like me) didn't fit well in a hierarchical organization.

Doesn't everyone want to know what his father was like? What was a man who graduated from Harvard with academic honors doing in the infantry anyway? Was he the nerd of his Harvard records who merely organized social events, or was he the party boy himself?

In God's providence, it would seem that I was bequeathed Foss's critical faculties. I like to imagine my

heavenly Father and Creator looking down on earth in 1939, musing, “The missionaries are getting a bit bland and stereotypical. I think I’ll combine a Jewish scholar with a feisty chorus-girl comedienne.”

Many years later, I got introduced to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a personality inventory. It helped me realize that many of the things we do and the ways we do them are neither meritorious nor sinful. Each of us is an original whom our Father God, the ultimate artist, put together. I laughed with embarrassment when I read that my personality type (ENTP) was the least likely to be in church – unless he was on the platform!

Since I had no training to be practical with my hands, I thank God that I could entertain like my mother, but I could do it with some depth of thought because of some critical faculties donated by my biological father.