

RADICAL ISLAM

HOW WOULD
JESUS RESPOND?



GARY MILLER

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CHAPTER ONE



Radical Islam

The Internet is full of violence, but even hardened news junkies were unprepared for such a barbaric sight. The video immediately went viral as viewers around the globe tried to wrap their minds around the horrific scene.

It was August 19, 2014, and a stunned world watched in astonishment.

“This is James Wright Foley, an American citizen of your country,” said a voice with a thick accent. “As a government, you have been at the forefront of the aggression towards the Islamic State.”

Foley, a forty-year-old journalist from Rochester, New Hampshire, is on his knees with a wide expanse of desert behind him. A masked Islamic militant dressed in black stands at his side, brandishing

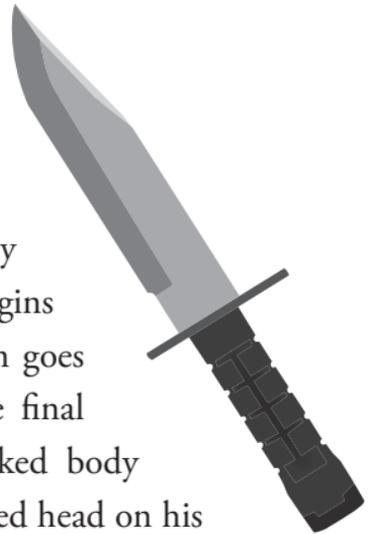
a long knife.

“You have plotted against us and have gone far out of your way to find reasons to interfere in our affairs. Today, your military air force is attacking us daily in Iraq. Your strikes have caused casualties among Muslims.”

The clip continues with James Foley asking President Obama to stop the bombing of innocent people in Islamic countries. He reads a message, presumably carefully scripted by his captors, stating that his “real killer” is America.

“I wish I had more time. I wish I could have the hope for freedom to see my family once again,”¹ he says in a monotone, the camera recording the chilling scene.

The man dressed in black then warns America that more people will die just like this if the bombing doesn't stop. Casually he takes his knife, firmly grasps James Foley's chin, and begins sawing off his head. The screen goes black for a moment; then the final scene shows Foley's blood-soaked body lying on the sand, his decapitated head on his



chest facing the camera.

The video raced around the world as newscasters picked up the story, discussing the ramifications of this horrendous act. Experts were called in and questioned. Why would someone do this? What kind of people could kill in such a cold-hearted way?

And then, just two weeks later, another chilling video. This time it was American journalist Steven Sotloff and the same masked killer. “I’m back, Obama, and I’m back because of your arrogant foreign policy towards the Islamic State.”²

Again the masked executioner warns President Obama to stop bombing the Islamic State, and again he decapitates his victim. Once more the final scene is the victim’s body lying on the sand with his severed head resting on his body.

The immediate outcry against these deplorable acts was overwhelming. News anchors condemned the appalling actions, the public called for retaliation, and politicians took to the airwaves, crying out for revenge. Some called for carpet bombing—just killing anything that moved. Others applied pressure on the government to find the black-hooded Mohammed Emwazi, better known as “Jihadi John,” and hold him accountable for his actions.

American Islamic Exposure

Increasingly Westerners are surrounded by people trying to faithfully follow their prophet, Muhammad. Many Americans are asking questions and making strong, polarizing statements. Some declare that all Muslims are the same. They say that the Quran teaches warfare, Islam is a religion of violence, and all Muslims should be viewed as potential threats. They say the religion was built and spread with violence, and radicals are simply taking the Quran to its logical conclusion.

Other Americans disagree. They know Muslims who are friendly, law-abiding citizens. They know them as co-workers or neighbors, hospitable and enjoyable to interact with socially. Consequently, it is easy for this group to distinguish between peaceful Muslims and radical extremist groups. They tend to think of Muslims as nonviolent and are disappointed when people connect the Islamic faith to violence. They know that many Muslims abhor bloodshed and denounce the actions of the radical extremists.

The Unseen Enemy

In addition to those engaging in war in places like

Iraq and Syria, there is another group even more alarming to the West. These would-be jihadists share the goals of radical Muslims in the East, but they dream of conducting jihad in their own Western communities. They live right in the middle of American or European cities, going to work each day, but secretly they desire to launch their own surprise attacks.

Americans listen to newscasters describe Islamic terrorist attacks in the United States, like the 2015 San Bernardino shooting, and they are alarmed. Maybe these attacks are not just isolated events carried out by a few disgruntled people, but are part of a larger organized global effort. A poll taken in 2014 showed that 70 percent of Americans believe ISIS^a is already in the United States and has the resources to launch a major attack within the country.³ These Americans are fearful that the wide-scale violence occurring in other countries will soon erupt here, and when they see a Muslim on the street, they feel uneasy.

^a ISIS is an acronym for Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham or (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). It is a Sunni Muslim organization whose aim is to restore an Islamic caliphate in the geographical area of Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and Southeastern Turkey, and ultimately appears to have its sight on global domination.

Perhaps Americans do have reason for trepidation. Most likely they have people in their own backyards who secretly desire to bring the fight against the West to American soil. The alarming news articles give evidence that this is true. Some of these infiltrators are disgruntled, unfulfilled, and angry at the imbalance of global power and resources. Others are angry at the moral impact the West—primarily America—is having on their home countries and communities. To better understand why many radical Muslims carry such animosity toward America, let's follow the life of a typical young man growing up in Iraq.

CHAPTER TWO



Understanding the Animosity

The open desert stretched out on each side of the dusty road as Bashir walked back toward his village, perplexed and deep in thought. Kicking at one of the larger stones along the road, the young man seemed oblivious to the honking buses, shouts of playing children, and trucks revving their engines in the rush to get home before dark. In fact, Bashir was almost halfway to his village before he even realized that the Iraqi sky was darkening and a dust storm was approaching.

Reaching down, he picked up a stone and tossed it from hand to hand as he reflected on his life. He had been born into a good Muslim family, and his role models had been faithful followers of the prophet Muhammad. From his earliest days, he had observed

these men in his community, and he knew firsthand their deep desire to please Allah. Daily he saw them faithfully set aside the pressing duties of their occupations to pray. As long as he could remember, he had been wakened by the call to prayer. Beginning the day with prayer was as natural as breathing.

First Impressions

As a young lad of six, Bashir had been enrolled in the local madrasa. There he had studied math, science, and reading. He also had memorized large portions of the Quran, learned the basics of Islam, and heard about the prophet Muhammad and his vision from the angel Gabriel in A.D. 610. Now as he walked home, Bashir remembered his history lessons and pondered how they might pertain to today's debate and the choice he must make.

At the madrasa, his teachers had taught him that the religious world of Muhammad's day was corrupt and Allah had commanded the prophet to bring the people back to the true faith. The Islamic faith had quickly spread across the known world. Shortly after Muhammad's death, Muslim armies had miraculously captured all the major urban areas of early Christianity, beginning with Jerusalem in A.D. 636.

Bashir's class had sat spellbound as the teacher recounted those glorious years when Muslims had ruled the world. His heart had thrilled with anticipation as the teacher promised, "Someday Allah will again be worshiped around the world. Someday men will obey him in every country. And it might be soon!" Bashir smiled as he thought back to his childish optimism. It had all seemed so simple then.

Bashir and his friends had also faithfully attended the mosque each week, where their fiery imam would remind them how followers of Jesus had distorted history. Although the prophet Jesus had been sinless, the imam acknowledged, He hadn't actually been crucified. Allah would never have allowed this to happen to one of his prophets! Instead, Jesus had gone back to heaven after being rejected by the Jews he had come to help. The imam explained how Jesus had prophesied that the prophet Muhammad was still to come, saying, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."^a

Oblivious to the coming storm, Bashir stopped along the road for a moment and thought back to the

^a John 16:7

passion in his imam's voice as he had explained how Muhammad had been this promised helper. What a tremendous fulfillment of prophecy! There had never been a doubt in Bashir's young mind: Jesus was a true Muslim sent by Allah, and Muhammad had come to bring a later and more complete revelation.

The Infidels

Hunching his shoulders against the rising wind, Bashir walked on, his face clouding as he remembered how the imam and his teacher had spoken with disgust about the people called Christians. These infidels polluted Allah's teachings.

"These Christians from America are spreading false teachings, and we must do something to stop them! Their women degrade themselves on public television, dressing immodestly and behaving shamefully! They are a violent and depraved people. Look at any American television program and you will see brazen debauchery!" Bashir could still see his teacher pacing before the class as he explained how this Christian nation, America, spread violence and wickedness all around the world. Halting mid-step, he had whirled about, his intense gaze piercing Bashir's soul.

Understanding the Animosity



“Not content to promote violence at home, they bring their bombs, destruction, and evil ways to our country! We could be living in peace, but they are killing us and destroying our cities simply because they want our oil!

“Allah must be our only focus! All things are controlled by him, he decides our path, and he is the wellspring of success and prosperity.” Pointing to the west, he continued, “But in America, the people mock Allah! They think they can create their own destiny through personal independence. This is a terrible affront to the power of Allah!” Though he was only ten years old at the time, Bashir could

clearly remember how his teacher had predicted the spiritual degeneration that would follow if they allowed themselves to be influenced by this dangerous Western culture.

He stopped, gazing into the distance. "Always remember: while we must work hard, our fate and fortune are in the hands of Allah. To believe as the Americans do is blasphemous! They are trying to destroy our culture, our religion, our way of life!"

That was ten years ago, yet to Bashir it seemed like yesterday. That same year his father had left to join the Iraqi resistance, and they had never heard from him again. The years since had brought economic instability, frustration among his peers, and continual political upheaval.

Bashir's brow furrowed as he thought of how his family had struggled to survive without his father and of the many innocent lives lost in the civil war since the American invasion. His teacher's warning that Western influence from Christian nations like America would destroy his country's moral values had proven true. Iraqis who returned after spending time in America or Europe had different standards. They were more independent and showed less respect for the elderly and local religious authorities.

The young women tended to dress immodestly and sneer at those upholding conservative values.

The Answer

As Bashir neared his home, his thoughts turned to that day's discussion in the neighboring village. Several of the young men had met near the center of town, and the debate had become quite lively.

“We are letting these Westerners destroy our culture! The only way to stop them is to join forces with other faithful believers. ISIS needs our help! Are we going to just sit by and let unbelievers rule?”

Some were not so sure. Was more bloodshed really the answer? Bashir had been shocked when one of his close friends suddenly stood and exclaimed, “I believe this is a call from Allah! The world would be better if everyone followed the true and pure Islamic faith. If we allow Western influence to change our culture, what kind of country will our children live in?”

Others agreed, and another of Bashir's friends denounced the evil in the West.

“Over half of Christian marriages end in divorce. Their women have lost their dignity! Unlike our wives, they ignore their role as mothers, leave their children, and work away from home. What is more,

they dress and live like harlots!”

Another added, “American Christianity is the chief exporter of immorality, and if we don’t fight back, our own children will succumb!”

“At least ISIS will provide food and some income if I join,” grumbled another young man who had been trying unsuccessfully to find work. “I am tired of being unemployed.”

The dust storm began to blow into the village as Bashir entered his home, the day’s conversation continuing to replay in his mind. Several of his friends seemed determined to join the fight and were excited about the possibilities of establishing an Islamic caliphate. They saw ISIS as the answer to their problems and wanted Bashir to join them.

Bashir sat down and stared out the window at the swirling cloud of sand. He longed for peace, yet peace seemed so far away. His father was gone, and last week two of his cousins had been killed in another American airstrike. The glorious Islamic State his teacher used to describe seemed further away than ever. Should he just stay home and let his friends attack the enemy? Should he let others go and die gloriously as martyrs for the cause? Or might joining ISIS be Allah’s will for him?