

The Shocking Truth About Angels and You

Question: There seem to be a lot of articles and stories about people seeing angels lately. I know you teach that we should look for vision and see Jesus with us. Do you believe we should also be seeing angels?

Answer: That's a great question. I am generally comfortable looking to see whatever the Bible says to be true. So yes, because the Bible clearly teaches angels are with us, then that is something I would be open to seeing when I look for vision.

My daughter has received some outstanding revelation from the Lord on this, so I've also asked her to share her understanding of the place of angels in our lives. —Mark Virkler

Reflections from My Daughter, Charity Kayembe

You're right, Dad--I'm definitely into my angels! But you know, that wasn't always the case. I started well, got derailed for a minute, but now hang out with them again. I mean, remember when I was a little girl and always talked about my invisible playmates?

While some parents may have wanted their kids to "grow up" and stop telling stories about imaginary friends--you and mom encouraged it. Mom always believed I was seeing my guardian angels, and you always taught me to **look at the things that are unseen**, cause that's the most real, eternal stuff anyway (2 Cor. 4:18).

Adventures in Smuggling

So yeah, I remember seeing my angels, Pojes and Shobis, with me over the years as I was growing up. For example, when **I was on a mission trip** and we were carrying Bibles into a closed country, they were right there with me. I had a backpack full of “bread”, not to mention pockets bulging with tracts, and I wandered my way right past the security checkpoint and x-ray machines with no detection by the guards at all. And I knew why too. **My angels ran interference** and stood between me and the soldiers, and blocked me from their view. The border patrol never stopped me, because I don't believe they ever even saw me!

Weird Theology

Funny though, I never really appreciated what they did. Like, even though I've always seen my angels around, I never talked with them much. Well, OK, **I'd talk at them**--I'd give them orders and tell them what to do, because they're ministering servants sent to help me out, right? While that is true, being bossy and one-sided is just so not the Spirit of Christ, so that was definitely a bit messed up.

The thing was, somewhere along the line, my beliefs about angels got seriously off track. I somehow got two ideas, which totally kept me from interacting with them even though they were right there.

Number one, I decided it might be **disrespectful to Jesus** to hang out with my angels. I mean, since He's right there with me too, I should focus on Him. He's God; they're not! And I don't want to ignore Him or dishonor Him in any way.

Since I didn't want to overemphasize angels, my great solution was to **marginalize them** and basically ignore completely the very assistants He'd sent to bless and help me.

Trick of the Enemy?

The other hang-up I had, and I don't know if I got this from a teaching somewhere or if it was just a sneaky little thought from the enemy trying to trip me up, but... I totally got it in my head that now that we were in the New Covenant and had the Holy Spirit in us and access to God's strength and gifts, now we totally didn't need angels. I mean, **what can angels do that God can't**, right? Nothing! Somehow I thought I was giving God more credit by not seeing any need for angels, and I believed I was doing Him a favor by overlooking their work in my life.

Allow Me to Introduce You

While I thought at least in a certain way my ideas kind of made sense, God was not impressed with any of it and lovingly made that abundantly clear the day He re-introduced me to my angels. He's like, *"OK guys, you're friends. Partners and co-laborers for and with Me. We're all on the same team! Hang out, chat. **Be friendly, and be friends.**"*

Now, I'm all for obedience. But I still felt it necessary to explain to God how I was actually trying to *be nice to Him* by ignoring my angels. I was giving my quiet times exclusively to Him, and, wasn't that so awesome and spiritually thoughtful of me? While He did appreciate the heart motive, He gently enlightened me to where He was coming from on the matter, and why **I really didn't need to worry** that He would feel hurt or discounted in any way.

Truth That Set Me Free

Jesus: *"...Because remember: **I'm the One who created family. I'm the One who made Eve for Adam because it wasn't good for him to be alone. And I'm the One who put you in a***

family with a mom and dad and brother and gave you a husband and friends and... So, I'm the One who created relationship, and put you into them. Lots of them! Interconnected. Family. Members of a body. All of all that.

*"So, the point is, **I'm not threatened by your having other relationships and friendships outside of your fellowship with Me.** Why would I be? I'm not selfish like that. That is the way love is not jealous (1 Cor. 13:4)."*

Of course. I knew that! God's not insecure. Why did I think He would be so petty? I seriously needed to get myself renewed to His mind. What He said made way more sense than what I'd been thinking all this time!

(It's funny too, a total side thought, my thinking I should not talk to angels to not focus on them too much. Satan is an angel, and we talk to him and his demons—resisting, rebuking, casting out. Why not talk with the good, non-fallen ones at least as much?)

Scriptural Precedents?

BUT, I still had my other huge concern. What about the Holy Spirit? Why would I need angels if my spirit is connected to God's Spirit? It sure doesn't seem like there should be anything missing or lacking that needs to be taken care of. there?

The only way to really know anything for sure is to find out what the Bible says, right? Turns out it said a whole lot more about angels than I ever noticed before. There are literally **hundreds of verses** on angels in the Bible. The **majority of books** at least mention them, and some places—whole chapters are made up of angelic encounter (like Daniel). Half of Zechariah is an **extended conversation with "the angel who was speaking to him,"** not to mention the entire book of Revelation. Amazingly, angels are actually

mentioned *more in the New Testament* than the Old (even though the New Testament is way shorter).

I mean, basically everyone who did anything pointful in the Old Testament met with angels. **Abraham, Jacob, Moses** and **David**. Of course **Elijah** and **Elisha**. And **Ezekiel** and **Isaiah**, just to name a few.

But what I found to be even more incredible were all of the New Testament accounts. Everyone from **Joseph** to **Mary** to **Zacharias** to **Cornelius** to...

All the Cool Kids Are Doing It

But still, my hang-up about the Holy Spirit... were there believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit, connected to God and His wisdom and power, who still needed help from angels?

How about **Peter** (Acts 5:19 and again in Acts 12:7-11), **John** (Rev. 1:1), **Philip** (Acts 8:26) and **Paul** (Acts 27:23,24).

I mean, Father God could certainly have set Peter free from the jail cell all by Himself. The Holy Spirit could have told Paul not to worry about the storm, that all the crew was gonna be safe. And Jesus could have easily given John all his revelations of heaven all by Himself, as He was standing right there and obviously a part of the vision too (Rev. 22:16).

But instead, **God chose to use angels**.

Jesus and Angels

And if that's not enough, of course we'd always say our ultimate example is Jesus. He IS God. Surely He doesn't require angelic assistance. Yeah well, turns out He does

actually. Or at least, He wants it. It's the way Father set it up. For *angelic ministering spirits to minister to us* (Heb. 1:13,14).

I mean, of course angels were there when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. And they surrounded His resurrection and later ascension. But what really amazed me was the fact that **angels ministered to Jesus** in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11), and **strengthened Him** in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43).

If angels are such a huge thing in the Bible, in the lives of the disciples, and in the life of Jesus Himself, why haven't they been a bigger part of my life? I mean, where was I on that?

What Are They Good For?

So I'd finally gotten used to the fact that angels can be around, but, I still had some pretty specific and limited tasks I understood to be in their repertoire of usefulness. I mean, **they can protect me**, since that's a definite theme for them in Psalms. That's great.

I guess they could even explain things to me too, since there's tons of that happening all throughout the Prophets, etc. But, yeah--turns out they actually do all kinds of other things too, from **making dinner** (my angels should take a hint! 1 Kings 19:5-8) or even **playing a role in healing** (John 5:4).

This seemed kind of a stretch for me, but, yeah. I don't believe they have healing power themselves. I think they're like me. I can receive a gift of healing from God and give it to another person. It flows through my hands, but obviously isn't me. Same with angels, I think.

Angels Can't Do *THAT!*

Anyway, what really drove the point home about angels being able to do anything because that's what God wants and He set it up this way... I mean, if there is **one thing** I think we *all* could agree on that no angel should or could ever have anything to do with—it would be cleansing us from sin. Right? That's Jesus' job! And angels have nothing to do with it.

Yeah well, not according to God. Isaiah 6:1-7 really kind of sealed the deal with me on this whole angels are awesome thing. So the setting is Isaiah and he's having his great vision and he sees the Lord. God is right there on His throne, and sure yeah, there are some angels around. All well and good. BUT, when Isaiah freaks out over his sin in the presence of a holy God, what happens next? **You've gotta be kidding**. Let me quote it *exactly*...

*Then **one of the seraphim** flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and **your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven**" (Is. 6:6,7).*

What? God, You were *right* there! You were *with* Isaiah. You totally could have done this Yourself. I mean, I know it's Jesus' Blood and sacrifice that saves us—so, why let some angel give him the burning coal? See, **if I had manufactured this vision**, I totally would have had You get up from Your throne and just bring that coal over to Isaiah Yourself. You didn't need an angel to do that for You...

Father's Point of View

God: *Yeah well, of course I didn't need an angel to do it... You're right in that I don't "need" anyone to do anything. But, **I'm God, and I like it this way**. I'm the King. I'm on a*

throne. Why wouldn't I want My servants to serve on My behalf? Why wouldn't I want to commission those under My authority to do the work I want accomplished?

While you're totally right about My ability, I choose for it to be this way. **I designed for angels to be part of the spiritual landscape.** I like them! They like serving Me. It's really a win-win situation. ☐

Here you'd been thinking that by having others do My work for Me, that somehow detracts from My power or awesomeness in some way. Actually, it does the opposite. Kings and presidents and prime ministers—they don't do everything for themselves. I mean, they don't usually go out to war themselves personally, do they? They send armies out on their behalf, with their full authority and backing and strength behind them.

Play Well Together

It doesn't diminish Me to have angelic servants that I work through; it glorifies Me. And so when you realize you guys are all on the same team, partnering together to obey Me and serve Me, that thrills Me. **That's the vision!** That's how it's supposed to work.

So don't feel the need to question anymore. You've got the biblical basis, you've got My personal invitation and instruction—run with it. We can accomplish so much more through unity, of everyone on the same team aware of each other and **cooperating together with their team** members. You're not alone and never have been. I will never leave you nor forsake you, and neither do they. Because they live in perfect obedience to My will, and My will for them is watching over you (Ps. 91:11).

So What Are They Like?

OK, I think I might finally be getting it. And now that I've gotten over my hang-ups... what are my angels actually like? Well, in a word, they're really *cool*. Super relaxed and laid back. **Unexpectedly fun and funny**. Almost like stand-up comedian, buddy-comedy-flick funny.

I'm like, *"Are you guys for real?"*

Their response: *"Fun? I know, not the first thing you probably think of when you consider angelic guardians. We get that a lot."*

Ha! Now that's pretty funny. Another morning Shobi was kind of like complimenting me on my appearance and said: *"If I may say so, Milady, you are a vision..."*

Haha! I just laughed at him and said, *"Thanks, and I could certainly say the same thing about YOU"* (considering he actually IS an invisible spirit from another dimension). He totally said that just to make me laugh, I know. They do that a lot. They say they are **"guardians of my laughter"** and **"protectors of my peace."**

One day, I tried to turn the tables on them and tease them back. I'm like, *"So, about your names. I mean, Pojes and Shobis? Really? No offense, but they're just really not that cool..."*

Their response: *"Yeah, actually—we're not from around here."*

LOL! Well, I certainly couldn't argue with that.

What About You?

I guess I'd encourage everyone to just **have a chat with God** about all this. Ask Him what He'd like to share with you about His angels—in His kingdom in general, and in your life

specifically. Find out if He wants to shed light on any Scriptures for you, or if He'd like to make any angelic introductions.

If you're new to engaging the supernatural, we can help. Practicing the art of biblical meditation and visionary prayer are keys to unlocking the spirit realm. [Find out more here.](#)

Doctors Gave Up on Her Son, But She Prayed in a Miracle

A Texas mother and son are giving all the glory to God for the young man's miraculous recovery.

In May, 17-year-old Cory Almanza was critically injured in a car accident that would have killed most people. His mother, Ruby Flores, remembers getting the call that every parent dreads.

"Just love your kids as much as you can, while you can, because you never know what tomorrow brings," she said.

She even recalls realizing she might be saying goodbye to her beloved son.

"When we arrived at the hospital he wasn't responding," she said. "And they took me straight back to the room to see him because they didn't know what was going to happen next."

Almanza prayed for God to spare her son's life. As it turned out, Cory did survive. But he was in a coma; he could not communicate at all.

"We were in the hospital for, like, a month and a half, and he was in a coma the whole time. He didn't respond," Flores said. "No parent wants to see their children hurt, especially in that situation."

Finally the doctors said there was nothing more they could do for Cory, so they sent him home, still in a coma. Flores never stopped praying for her son's recovery.

Then came the miracle. Cory finally came out of his coma.

"We were just sitting there talking to him. We always do. And he just kept following our voices, looking at me and his sister talking." He was just following us, and it was amazing. And I was just, 'Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!' That's all I could say," his mother recalled.

Since that time, Cory has improved dramatically. His mother said Cory can be used by God to encourage others.

"He can talk and express himself, let everybody know what he's been through and how the Lord has blessed him," she said. "He can be an inspiration to others that are in his situation, not to give up, but just keep fighting."

Cory is still at home recovering. He's not the same young man he was before the accident, but he's getting stronger every day.

He especially wishes he could rejoin his high school football team as they prepare for the upcoming season. His mother recalled a visit from a few of his teammates.

"His friend told him two-a-days [practices] were starting," she said. "And he said, 'I want to go! I want to go!' And [the friend] said 'No you don't; it's hot!'"

Exploiting Medicine for the Politics of Hate

How credible are accusations about military tactics made by medical professionals who double as political activists? Not very credible, as recent outrage directed at *The Lancet* suggests.

The British medical journal has misused its prestige as a scientific publication to condemn Israel and its defensive actions in Gaza by publishing “An open letter for the people in Gaza” this past July.

The letter—written by Drs. Mads Gilbert, Paola Manduca, and Swee Ang, all of whom are associated with highly politicized non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—accuses Israel of carrying out a propaganda campaign that “justifies the creation of an emergency to masquerade a massacre.” It makes unfounded allegations that Israel deliberately massacred civilians and uses illegal weaponry. No mention is made of Hamas or its use of human shields. Israel’s right and obligation to defend its citizens against indiscriminate targeting by rocket fire is absent.

The article’s authors have no expertise in military law or tactics. Any sort of political, legal, or military analysis, such as an accusation of war crimes, is outside their competence. They have no evidentiary basis on which to allege that Israel is motivated by a desire to massacre civilians.

It is a wonder how anyone, let alone a highly regarded medical journal, could take these doctors as credible sources on the conflict. What we are witnessing is the “halo effect”—where NGOs perceived to promote good principles are shielded from

scrutiny. Providers of medical assistance and relief enjoy an added degree of credibility, a “double halo effect,” and are rarely challenged on their biases or questioned on their statements’ accuracy.

This “double halo effect” was in full force for the letter writers, all of whom have extensive histories of acting as anti-Israel campaigners.

Gilbert, a Norwegian anesthesiologist, is a representative of the Norwegian Aid Committee (NORWAC), an NGO that has purportedly worked with Hezbollah-affiliated groups. He politicizes his humanitarian work to the point of legitimizing terror attacks, including a defense of the terrorist action on 9/11. In regard to the 2009 operation in Gaza, Gilbert erroneously stated there was “clear evidence” that the IDF was using Dense Inert Metal Explosives (DIME) munitions, admitting in a subsequent interview that he had no proof for this allegation.

Gilbert has made accusations about weaponry he admits he has no proof for, falsely accuses Israel of targeting civilians, and denies Israel its right to defend itself.

Manduca is a geneticist with the New Weapons Committee (NWC), an organization that aims to examine weapons used in warfare. NWC has made multiple unfounded claims about Israeli weaponry.

NWC accused Israel of “experimenting new non-conventional weapons on civilian populations” in Gaza. Manduca also accused the IDF of using “white phosphorus, DIME, thermobaric bombs, cluster bombs and uranium ammunitions” in Gaza and in Lebanon in 2006. None of these accusations has any factual basis.

Swee Ang is a surgeon and founding member of Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP,) an NGO that claims to be independent and non-political, but which repeatedly accuses Israel of “indiscriminate attacks” and “collective punishment.”

Given that these authors are hardly unbiased observers in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it should be a given that a reputable medical journal would print never such an article. However, *The Lancet* partners with a number of anti-Israel NGOs to maintain the Lancet-Palestinian Health Alliance (LPHA), “a loose network of health researchers committed to illuminating the conditions under which Palestinians live today.” Through its partnerships, *The Lancet* publishes reports and articles, holds annual conferences, and solicits research papers and studies that specifically focus on Palestinian issues, often in an overtly political context.

The Lancet has published numerous additional articles unrelated to medicine about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Most egregious was its publication of Swee Ang’s introduction to her book, “The Wounds of Gaza,” on *The Lancet*’s Global Health Network website. Among many unfounded accusations and statements, she claimed that the IDF illegally used phosphorus shells and bombs in the 2009 Gaza war with the intent of harming civilians. Published without sources, the piece was taken down a month later because of “factual inaccuracies.”

Under the editorship of Richard Horton, *The Lancet* has become a platform for intense political propaganda, particularly targeting Israel. Publishing factually inaccurate articles unrelated to medicine, it provides a scientific veneer to politicized NGO claims, promoting legal distortions unconnected to medicine and science.

Eliana Trink is a research intern with the Jerusalem-based research institution NGO Monitor ([link](#)).

For the original article, visit [link](#).

Supreme Court Puts Hold on Gay Marriage in Virginia

The U.S. Supreme Court stopped **gay marriage** in Virginia from going ahead on Wednesday, staying an appeals court ruling that had struck down a state ban.

The court granted a stay application filed by opponents of gay marriage. The action was not a ruling on the merits of gay marriage, but means a July 28 pro-gay marriage ruling by the Richmond, Virginia-based 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will not be implemented while litigation continues.

The high court issued its brief order less than 24 hours before gay and lesbian couples in Virginia could have begun applying to be married.

The **Supreme Court** issued a similar order in January blocking gay marriage from going ahead in Utah. So the court's order on the Virginia law was not wholly unexpected.

The Supreme Court is expected to take up at least one case on gay marriage in its coming term, which starts in October and ends in June. There are already three cases the justices can choose from pending at the court. They involve fights over the bans in Virginia, Utah and Oklahoma.

Michele McQuigg, Prince William County clerk of court, had filed the Virginia stay application last week seeking to prevent the appeals court ruling from going into effect.

"The Supreme Court acted wisely in restraining the lower court from implementing a ruling of this magnitude before the high court has a chance to decide the issue," Byron Babione, a lawyer for McQuigg, said in a statement.

The state's Democratic attorney general, Mark Herring, who

backs gay marriage, and opponents of **same-sex marriage** have already said they would like the Supreme Court to have the ultimate say in the case. Herring had backed the call for the delay of the lower court ruling.

Since a June 2013 ruling in the *United States v. Windsor* case struck down a federal law defining marriage as between one man and one woman, nearly 30 federal and state courts have ruled against bans on same-sex marriage at the state level. Only one court in the past 14 months has ruled in favor of a state ban.

Nineteen of the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia allow same-sex marriage.

Reporting by Lawrence Hurley; editing by Kevin Drawbaugh, Chizu Nomiya and Frances Kerry

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‘Pastor Choco’ Calls for Pentecostals to Stand in the Gap

Pastor Wilfredo De Jesús, named to *Time* magazine’s 2013 list of the 100 most influential people in the world, carries a burden for the poor and disenfranchised. Now he has written a book that explains the biblical case for social activism, *In the Gap: What Happens When God’s People Stand Strong*.

Widely known as “Pastor Choco,” De Jesús is the senior pastor of New Life Covenant Church in Chicago, the largest church in

the U.S. Assemblies of God Fellowship with 17,000 attendees. The church has more than 130 ministries that reach the broken-hearted, poor and homeless, including prostitutes, drug addicts and gang members.

In the Gap, which is available in English and Spanish, draws its title from Ezekiel 22:30, where God laments the lack of someone to stand “in the gap” for His people. De Jesús writes that “a gap represents a place of weakness, vulnerability and danger” and could be a social problem such as illiteracy, racism or human trafficking, or something more personal, such as a prodigal child, an unfaithful spouse or an abusive family member.

After years of standing in the gap, De Jesús has come to understand what makes a “gap person”—the champion who protects or supports someone in need, a man or woman who finds the courage to sacrifice everything to represent God and block evil from destroying those He loves.

De Jesús gives nine examples of courageous people in the Scriptures—men and women who recognized desperate needs and trusted God to use them to make a difference: Nehemiah, Esther, Noah, David, Barnabas, John the Baptist, Gideon, Deborah and Caleb.

De Jesús believes that little has changed in the more than 2,000 years since the last of these biblical characters lived.

“People are still in distress, and God is still looking for men and women to stand in the gap in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our cities and towns, in our nation, and in every corner of the world,” he writes.

Teacher Omits God From Pledge of Allegiance

Jessica Andrews could not believe her eyes.

“It was like an ‘Oh my gosh’ type of feeling,” the mother of six from Aiken, South Carolina, told me.

The item that caused her angst came from her daughter’s school. It was a copy of the Pledge of Allegiance. But the school’s version of the pledge was just a few words short—two to be exact.

“It didn’t have ‘under God,’” she said.

Jessica’s daughter is a fourth-grader at Chukker Creek Elementary School. She said Aiken is a very religious community, and they are a religious family. So you can imagine her surprise when she realized the school’s version of the pledge did not include a shout-out to the Almighty.

“It’s outrageous, to be honest,” she told me. “It seems like the government is doing everything they can to take God out of everything.”

Jessica pointed out that our forefathers believed in God, so why can’t the youngsters acknowledge we are a nation under God?

“We are so quick to change our religion to accommodate everyone else,” she said. “It seems like Christianity is getting taken out of everything.”

So how did the Almighty end up getting cut from the pledge?

I alerted the school early Tuesday morning, and by midday Principal Amy Gregory determined Jessica had a legitimate beef.

In this particular case, the omission was not the nefarious work of a godless educator. The principal said it was an honest-to-goodness mistake.

“This was a single mistake by a very embarrassed and apologetic teacher,” the principal told me in written correspondence.

“In order to assist her new students with our morning announcements, a teacher made copies of the pledge and national anthem for her class,” she told me. “She cut and pasted these from a website and in doing so, this line was omitted.”

Ah yes—the old “cut and paste” will get you every time.

“The teacher failed to proof the paper,” the principal wrote.

As we all know, the most important part of the editorial process is the proof-reading. That’s why God made copy editors. Before I go off chasing another squirrel, let’s get back to the issue at hand—the pledge.

The principal said as soon as the teacher learned her mistake, she sent a corrected version to parents—along with an apology.

“I do apologize,” the teacher wrote. “Please forgive me. I respect our country and what it was founded on.”

Principal Gregory said the boys and girls at Chukker Creek recite the pledge every day. And in case you’re wondering, she said the words “under God” are included.

Jessica told me she used the incident as a life lesson for her little girl.

“I told her the government and a lot of people don’t like God,” she said. “Some people are offended by Christianity. I try to be as real with my kids about their faith as I can be. I don’t want to sugarcoat everything.”

We need more moms like Jessica Andrews. Thanks to her eagle eye she was able to facilitate change at Chukker Creek Elementary School.

We also need more educators like Principal Gregory. She acknowledged the mistake, took swift action and righted a glaring wrong.

Gold stars for everyone!

Todd Starnes is host of Fox News & Commentary, heard on hundreds of radio stations. Sign up for his American Dispatch newsletter, be sure to join his Facebook page, and follow him on Twitter. His latest book is God Less America.

After Journalist's Beheading, Obama Vows 'Relentless' Fight Against ISIS

President Obama on Wednesday vowed that the United States will not be swayed from airstrikes against Islamic State after the group beheaded an American journalist, an act he said is proof that the militants stand for no religion.

Obama's response to the execution of James Foley marked his strongest condemnation yet of Islamic State militants, and he gave no sign of a pause in U.S. targeting of militant positions in Iraq.

"The United States of America will continue to do what we must do to protect our people. We will be vigilant and we will be relentless. When people harm Americans, anywhere, we do what's necessary to see that justice is done," he said.

Obama's remarks, to reporters covering his vacation on the island of Martha's Vineyard, came shortly after the White House announced that a video showing the beheading of Foley had been authenticated by the U.S. intelligence community.

The beheading appeared to mark a turning point in the growing U.S. focus on Islamic State as a potential threat to American interests, but whether it will lead to an intensified bombing campaign was not yet clear.

The United States has launched dozens of airstrikes against Islamic State targets in order to protect the religious minority Yazidis in Iraq and prevent the takeover of the Mosul Dam out of concern that a breach in the structure could end up flooding Baghdad, where the U.S. embassy is situated.

Obama's remarks carried a tough message about the Islamic State's harsh penalties against anyone who does not agree to accept its brand of Islam.

He said militants have rampaged across cities and villages, abducted women and children and subjected them to torture and rape and killed Muslims, both Sunni and Shia, by the thousands.

"No just God would stand for what they did yesterday and what they do every single day," he said.

"Their ideology is bankrupt. They may claim, out of expediency, that they are at war with the United States or the West, but the fact is, they terrorize their neighbors and offer them nothing but an endless slavery to their empty vision and the collapse of any definition of civilized behavior," Obama said.

Obama also said he called Foley's family to express his condolences.

Additional reporting by Bill Trott in Washington; editing by Susan Heavey

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WATCH: Iraqi Muslim Weeps Over ISIS Driving Out Country's Christians

Nahi Mahdi covered his face as he wept over Iraqi Christians being driven out of the country. And that was before the ISIS started its most aggressive tactics.

“They are our own flesh and blood,” Nahi Mahdi said on Asia TV in late July, covering his face as he wept. “Some of them have left for Sweden or Germany ... Who does [ISIS] think it is to drive out our fellow countrymen?!”

Another panelist on Asia TV went on to say: “The Christians have done nothing wrong. They haven’t hurt a soul. On the contrary, they are peaceful people, who love all sects. They are honorable people, with high moral values.”

Jill Duggar Expecting 1st Baby (of How Many?)

Jill Duggar, now officially known as Jill Dillard, is happily married—and expecting her first baby. Dillard, of course, is best known for her role on the TLC reality TV show *19 Kids and Counting*.

“We’re having a baby!” she told *People* magazine. “We’re so excited.”

Jill Dillard is 23, and her husband, Derick, is 25. They got married on June 21, *People* reports, sharing their first kiss in front of more than 1,000 family and friends.

TLC plans to feature the wedding on *19 Kids and Counting* during the season debut on Sept. 2, *People* reports.

“About 30 days after Jill and Derick got married they gathered everyone in the living room and shared the news,” Jim Bob Duggar, 49, told *People*. “Everyone was clapping and cheering, and we were in shock, too.”

Earlier this week Charisma News reported that Jill’s sister, Jessa, is getting married. She is engaged to marry Ben Seewald. Seewald and Duggar have been courting for 11 months.

“We are so blessed to be engaged!” the couple said in a statement. “God has written an amazing story through our courtship, and another chapter has just begun! We are thrilled to see what the future holds—especially the wedding bells!”

When You See No Relief For Your Pain

I was just on Facebook and a friend had posted that people should have to pass drug tests in order to receive welfare.

Then I sat down on the floor to fold underwear and was thinking about people doing drugs. (Us girls, we do tend to think on a round-about.)

My thoughts went back a few months to April and May, when I would wake up in the night with intense grief and stress. (You could read more here about my goings on this last year.)

And how all of a sudden I had compassion for people who turn to alcohol when life gets hard.

Because sometimes your heart hurts so much it makes you feel wild and desperate for relief.

In those heart-pressing moments of grief I longed for anesthesia. But in reasoning through this, I concluded that **followers of Christ do not anesthetize themselves.**

We don't mask the pain.

When our hearts are at a level 10 on the pain scale, we scream out for comfort. We run to arms –to Someone.

How do you know God is real? many people ask.

I will answer –because on the blackest nights of my life I have had someone with me. I have found comfort in the tenderness, strength, and hope of the living God.

I've tried different treatments to escape pain in the past –like eating chocolate or going shopping. (“Retail therapy” my sister-in-law calls it.) I've tried putting in a chick flick

to watch love and happiness. That's just the truth. But the chocolate gets swallowed. I shrink the new shirt I just bought in the dryer. The movie ends. All of these anesthetics wear off quickly, and then there is the stab of pain again.

But God's presence in suffering does not wear off. In fact, I am convinced that **the Lord is a gifted artist in the way he comforts his people** –surprising us individually with a balm of encouragement so intimate and well-timed that it feels like chocolate and a new shirt and a chick flick all at once.

It feels like being loved and cared for.

This is what waits for the raw heart that seeks God.

So I ask you –what pain are you experiencing today, and are you trying to soothe it with anything inferior to the comfort God offers?

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