

American Missionary Hunted by ISIS: 'Jesus Himself Is Appearing to Many Muslims'

"Sir, do you want to cut my head off?"

Stunned and aghast, the interpreter stares back at Victor Marx.

"I don't think he would appreciate—" the interpreter says.

"Just ask," Marx says. "I feel like that's my opening line."

After a moment of hesitation, the interpreter relays Marx's question to the high-ranking imam code-named "the Professor." This infamous imam served as a cleric under Saddam Hussein before eventually mentoring and training Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi—the leader of the Islamic State (ISIS).

So it was a surprise to Marx, a Marine-turned-missionary, when the Professor invited him to a meeting—but as a "high-risk" humanitarian serving in the most war-torn regions on earth, Marx has always been drawn to danger. He knew he had, at most, 72 hours to get in and out of the region before ISIS tracked him down. He had to be flown in under the cover of night. But Marx was following the Holy Spirit—and he believes it's the Holy Spirit who gave him his opening question.

For a moment, the interpreted question hangs uncomfortably in the air. Then the imam leans back and bursts into laughter.

"Victor, why would I cut your head off?" the Professor asks.

"Because you're Muslim!" Marx responds. "And you teach that I'm an infidel. Aren't you supposed to cut my head off?"

The Professor shakes his head, saying, "That's the problem

with clerks and imams who have come under the sway of evil and have turned to ISIS.”

He reveals to Marx that Al-Baghdadi invited him to become the spiritual head of ISIS. The Professor considered it—on one condition: “I will [accept your offer] if you come and repent for everything you’ve done.”

Al-Baghdadi did not like that answer. Shortly thereafter, the Professor received word that ISIS operatives had murdered his brother. Several of the Professor’s colleagues were murdered while praying in the mosque. The imam knows all too well the savagery of ISIS.

Max knows it too. He has served in the Middle East for nearly five years as a humanitarian missionary. His ministry, All Things Possible Ministries, goes where no one else wants to. Marx travels covertly through the Middle East, meeting with high-ranking Muslim leaders and the families of the Islamic State militants. In that time, he’s seen men, women and children placed in impossible situations, where they need the love of Christ expressed to them in practical ways.

“I want Christians to understand that we don’t have to agree with Islam at all, because I don’t,” Marx tells *Charisma*. “My way of salvation to God is a relationship through Jesus Christ. ... [But] our first goal is to show people in need—specifically women and children who have been affected by terrorism and ISIS—the love of the Lord.”

Love Your Enemies

Marx grew up in a chaotic and abusive household. As a result, he had a lot of unresolved anger and bitterness in his heart.

“I come from a background where my mother was married six times,” Marx says. “I’ve gone to 14 schools and grew up in 16 or 17 houses. I was abused as a kid, and I was very disillusioned by some aspects of Christianity and the church.”

Everything changed for Marx in 1983, when terrorists drove two trucks into service-member barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. The attack killed 241 U.S. service personnel, including 220 Marines. And Marx found a cause to channel his anger into.

"I joined the Marine Corps, which directed my anger toward Arabs," Marx says. "I trained and wanted to fight. I wanted to kill bad people. But the reality is that God had His hand on me."

Ultimately, the love of God changed Marx's heart, and his hatred for the Arab people turned into passionate love.

"The reality is that I went from hating the Arabs and Muslims to having a love for them," Marx says. "Once you hold one of their children, you realize God's love for them, and that's what we're trying to do."

God's love transformed Marx from a hardened Marine into a devoted missionary. His military background equipped him with the discipline, training, structure and leadership skills necessary to lead teams into some of the most dangerous places on the planet—right into the heart of ISIS's territory.

Three weeks before Marx spoke with *Charisma*, he and his wife, Eileen, visited a highly guarded camp in Syria that wives and children of ISIS members call home.

"The men are taken prisoners, and the wives and children can't be released," Marx says. "Many of the wives are definitely radicalized, so they're in this camp. And we had to use tactical wisdom, prayer and relationships with leaders and decision makers in Iraq and Syria to get in. [Americans] don't have any clue, because the media really keeps Americans in the dark, but some figures say there are over 64,000 ISIS wives and children in one camp."

At the Syrian camp he visited, Marx says 85% of the occupants were younger than 18. He and his associate team go into camps

like this to meet the physical needs—not necessarily to evangelize.

When asked why, Marx says, “We are not there to convert Muslims. That’s the job of the Holy Spirit alone.”

Some Christians may interpret that as cowardice or a misguided effort to appease. Marx says he often encounters flak from other believers who think he should be more vocal about preaching when working in camps.

“I call them ‘super saints,’” Marx says. “They ask me why I’m not over here preaching and [suggest] maybe I’m just not that good at it. But then I invite them to fly over themselves. I tell them I’ll take them to a very rich environment with many Muslims, and they can show me how it’s done. I’ve yet to have anyone take me up on that, though.”

Instead, Marx says, it’s about using the gifts God has given him. And this attitude has granted him favor in the eyes of Islamic leaders and the chance to bring the kingdom of God in places that were previously untouchable. He’s positioned himself as a safe, loving figure—and that means he’s ready to respond when Muslims begin to ask supernatural questions.

“The Lord Jesus Himself is appearing to many, many Muslims,” Marx says. “They have a respect for Jesus as a prophet, and we know that that’s something we can agree on. [Christians] just take it to the next level because He is the Son of God who offers us eternal life through His death and resurrection.”

Miracles in the Middle East

Marx isn’t the only one ministering in the area. Bethel worship artist Sean Feucht agrees that the spread of the Islamic State has allowed his ministry, Light a Candle, to evangelize to people who have never heard the gospel.

“Satan has overplayed his hand,” Feucht says. “The massive

amounts of oppression, darkness and wickedness that these beautiful people have experienced? The Lord is using it.”

Feucht’s approach is to use music to shift the spiritual atmosphere and usher the Holy Spirit into even the darkest places.

“Songs go to places where sermons can never go,” Feucht says. “We’ve taken songs into palaces, into war zones, into places where you just can’t preach. Our songs carry the message [of Jesus]. They carry the heart, the DNA [of who God is].”

On one of his trips to Iraq, Feucht brought his guitar into a refugee camp built near a compound previously run by ISIS. The compound had been destroyed after allied forces reportedly dropped a bomb on it.

“We went literally in that destroyed house and released the song of redemption and of hope,” Feucht says. “I felt like that was an important thing for us to do, to be prophets of hope and sing over the nation and release salvation.”

Feucht’s team recently filmed one of its trips into an Iraqi refugee camp for the documentary *Heart and Hands: Iraq*. The film tells the incredible testimonies of the Christian men and women in the camp and how their faith endured through horrific persecution.

During filming, Feucht’s team encountered one man who said Jesus appeared to him twice in a dream.

“They were hitting me with big blocks on my body,” the man told Feucht of his persecutors. “But the stones were not affecting me. And the last time, they drenched me with 20 liters of gasoline, and they burned me. But I didn’t burn.”

Feucht says the refugee’s story, while profound, is not unique.

“The amazing thing is, once we start talking about Jesus, we

realize how many people have had encounters with Him,” Feucht says. “So many people have actually had dreams and visions, and it gives us a really great foundation to begin to speak to them.”

Feucht says Muslims need the encounters to embrace Christianity.

“Arguing doesn’t work,” Feucht says. “Apologetics don’t really work, but really talking about Jesus [works]. I really believe that one of the most powerful ways for Muslims to encounter Jesus is through divine encounters.”

These divine encounters often manifest in supernatural miracles. Feucht recalls meeting with one family who had recently escaped the Islamic State, many of them bearing battle wounds. The experience was filmed for the documentary.

“You watch as one by one, every single person in the tent gets healed,” Feucht says. “The coolest part about that is there was a little girl who was just 2 years old, and she had some really bad injuries to her arms and had never been able to raise them above her head. We prayed that the Lord would just straighten her arms. She raised them above her head and she started clapping, and her parents basically started crying because they couldn’t believe what was happening.”

Evangelist Robby Dawkins has also witnessed the Holy Spirit at work in the Middle East. Earlier this year, Dawkins was in Pakistan when the Holy Spirit began to move with healing power.

“I brought 13 Muslims on stage with severe back pain,” Dawkins recalls. Instead of praying himself, though, he had 12-year-old girls, also Muslim, lay their hands on the group. Healing flowed, and so did salvation. Dawkins reports they all came to Christ, along with 15,000 others.

“The organizer of the event shouted at me, telling me that I

would get everyone killed, and stormed off the stage,” Dawkins said. “He sent another translator to come up and finish the night, but when he saw the thousands of Muslims accept Jesus, he had a bit of a change of heart.”

Anwar Fazal has seen miracles among his people as well. Fazal is the senior pastor of Eternal Life Church in Pakistan, founder of Isaac TV and operator of a 24/7 prayer house. He says that as he surrendered to the Holy Spirit, he began to see miracles break out among his countrymen.

“Many people are receiving the power of Holy Spirit baptism and being filled with the fire of Jesus Christ,” Fazal says. “Many people are receiving healing signs and wonders. The blind can see. The paralyzed are healed. We also see many miracles through dreams.”

Fazal reports that one man came into the prayer room ready to die. Doctors had just released him from a cancer hospital with no hope. The man suffered from horrid bedsores and bled profusely from his backside.

“The man asked me to please be in prayer for him so he could receive new life,” Fazal says. “He just wanted to die. Everything was broken in his body.”

After the prayer, Fazal says he ran outside to gargle water and breathe fresh air. When he turned around, he was shocked.

“The bleeding stopped,” Fazal says. “He was walking, and he has no cancer. Glory to Jesus!”

It’s stories like these that prove God’s goodness is still at work among Muslims, provided Christians operate from a place of love. That’s why Marx says it’s important to remember that love is always the first priority. It’s God’s love that sets believers apart.

“What is infectious in the region is love and care, and that

speaks volumes,” Marx says.

Marx says he was in Washington, D.C., attending a lecture with a Nobel Peace Prize journalist, and the discussion moved to the Islamic State. The journalist—an alleged expert on ISIS—was asked, “What do we do about ISIS?”

He admitted, “I don’t know.”

That’s when Marx laid out his work and what he’s seeing on the ground. And he laid out an unconventional strategy first proposed years ago by Jesus: Love your enemies.

“Politically, we’re limited,” Marx told them. “Militarily, we can’t kill an ideology. And some people need to be killed. It’s a reality in the work of iniquity, because these people won’t change. They kill and burn babies. They have to reap the consequences of their actions. If they’re not stopped, they’ll continue what we call a manifestation of evil. But what will work is love.” {eo}

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