

3 Holy Spirit-Inspired Ways We Can Stand Up for the Persecuted Church Right Now

My heart has been heavy these past few days. When I heard the news and saw the images of the 30 Christian Ethiopians who were executed at the hands of ISIS I wept. I know I am not alone in my grief.

If you're like me, you feel powerless in the face of such atrocity. I wonder what, if anything, can be done. I have spent the past few days praying and seeking the face of the Lord about that very thing.

This latest act by ISIS certainly has me conflicted. Shock, anger, fear, horror and grief are the exact emotions they hoped to provoke with this brutal act. In many ways they got exactly what they wanted. They wanted us to feel this way—and we do. At the same time, how can we not express such emotion when we see our Christian brothers and sisters so callously slain?

Friends, there is a Christian holocaust taking place at this very moment. Hundreds of thousands of Christians are facing a modern-day genocide. Our generation must not repeat the mistakes of the past by turning a blind eye to the suffering of so many.

We must take a hard look at the realities of the evil we face and act accordingly. So far ISIS has been underestimated. Trust me on this, our failure to recognize their evil has extreme consequence.

ISIS is not the “JV squad.” They’ve proven such by conquering large portions of Syria and Iraq. Their network is rapidly expanding throughout the world. Some reports even have an ISIS

camp right off our southern border in Mexico. It's very likely they have cells inside the U.S. already.

The latest video from ISIS makes two things very clear. First, they want a war. Peace and prosperity is not their aim—they want prophetic fulfillment. They believe they are called by Allah to avenge the blood of Muslims who died at the hands of “Christian crusaders” and establish a united Arab state.

ISIS' videos are created to provoke us. They know exactly what they are doing. Their propaganda isn't created by a bunch of amateurs. They put a tremendous amount of thought and planning into their message. They are making that message clear: “Come fight us.”

They know we will be disgusted by their brutality. They hope we will demand vengeance. For ISIS, war is inevitable. Such ideology cannot be negotiated with nor contained. It can only be destroyed. ISIS is leaving no other choice.

ISIS has declared their war on Christianity. You will not hear this reported in the mainstream media, but the latest video by ISIS is entitled “Until There Came to Them Clear Evidence.” This strange title is actually a reference from the Quran, which states:

“Those who disbelieve from among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and Al-Mushrikun (believers in the Trinity), were not going to leave [their disbelief] until there came to them clear evidence” (verse 98:6).

According to the Quran, Jews and Christians are the “worst of creatures” whom deserve the “fire of Hell.”

Christians are vile to ISIS because we believe God has a Son. They see this as blasphemy towards Allah—one that must be purged from the world. In the video ISIS offers Christians three choices: Convert to Islam; submit to the Islamic State; or lose your head.

ISIS purposely recorded this portion of their video in English and directed the message to “the nation of the cross.” They state this is a battle between “faith and blasphemy; truth and falsehood. Until there is no more polytheism (belief in the trinity).”

Our government is reluctant to call this what it is. ISIS is not just political extremism; they see it as a war between Islam and Christianity. The beheading of our Ethiopian brothers is a warning to Christians in the Middle East and the West: “Oppose us, you’ll suffer the same fate.”

Today they spill Christian blood in desert sands of the Middle East. Soon they may do it in our city streets. They hope doing so will provoke us to war just as the attacks on 911 did before. They are not running from it. They want it. They are convinced their coming victory over the “Nation of the Cross” is the “clear evidence” that will convince Jews and Christians to convert to Islam.

So what must we do?

First, we must stand with the persecuted!

The most vital thing we can and must do is to pray for our Christian brothers and sisters who are literally giving their lives for the sake of Christ. Have you prayed for the persecuted believers in the Middle East and around the world today? How about in this past week? Don’t look the other way, and don’t discount your prayers. I encourage you tonight as your family gathers for a meal stop and pray for the persecuted.

It was the prayers of the believers that opened the prison doors for Peter when he faced execution (Acts 12:16). The answer to their prayers came so suddenly and supernaturally that the interceding disciples didn’t even believe Peter was standing at their door! They didn’t realize the power of their own prayers. I dare say neither do we.

Another way we can stand with the believers is to lift up our voice. We live in a world where a video filmed by ISIS can travel around the world and strike outrage in the West. The Internet works both ways. A post or video made by you can travel back to the Middle East and bring encouragement to a people who wonder if anyone even notices their plight.

Your voice also raises awareness. Our nation will remain indifferent as long as we remain silent. God gave us a voice to encourage and edify one another. May we strengthen each other here and abroad.

Second, we must radically live our lives for Christ.

I reached out to a friend of ours who works intelligence in the Middle East. He shared that as ISIS continues its reign of terror and defends itself as pure Islam, many Muslims are being forced to question their faith. They are saying, "If this is Islam, then I want nothing to do with it."

There is an opening for a great harvest in the Middle East. Scripture tells us that had the enemies of Christ known the outcome of their actions, they would never have crucified our Savior. Likewise, ISIS doesn't realize pushing people from Christ is actually opening the door for millions to find Christ.

ISIS has exposed to the world what true Islam looks like. Let us expose to the world what true Christianity looks like. We must fully embody the faith, hope and love that Christ calls us to. This lost and dying world needs us to embrace a radical faith.

Radical Christianity is very different from radical Islam. They rely in the power of force; we rely on the power of prayer. They speak a message of hate; we speak a message of love. They offer death; we offer life. We honor the lives of those who gave their life for Christ by living our lives for Christ. Pray for a great end-time harvest amongst the muslims

of the Middle East!

Last we must support the underground church in the Middle East.

Churches in the Middle East are in distress. They need our prayers and they need our financial support. These communities of believers are working hard every day to strengthen and encourage one another and make a difference in hostile environments that are unfathomable to most of us.

Every church in the U.S. should seek out churches in the Middle East, especially in the most dangerous African and Arab nations, that they can support with their missions giving. If your network of churches doesn't have any contacts in the region, contact me and I'll put you in touch with several.

Honestly, each of these action steps will not mean much if just a few of believers act upon them. However, if we all collectively will embrace them, the impact will be felt.

Recently I walked through the Holocaust museum in Israel. I've been to several of these memorials around the world. Each one is built with the same purpose in mind. To remind us of the past mistakes and warn us not to repeat them in the future.

At every monument and memorial I've found this statement by Edmund Burke engraved or expressed in some way.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Are we not good men and women? If so then we cannot sit back and do nothing. The times we live in are calling upon us. We must do something!

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