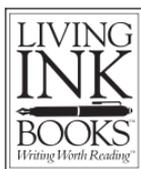


FROM  
JIHAD  
TO  
JESUS  
AN EX-MILITANT'S  
JOURNEY OF FAITH

JERRY RASSAMNI

FROM  
JIHAD  
TO  
JESUS

JERRY RASSAMNI



## *From Jihad to Jesus*

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To Jennifer—my wife, my love,  
and my partner in the journey of life...  
You complete me...

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Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

Amen.

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

# Acknowledgments

**F**irst, I would like to acknowledge the love of God, the grace of His Son, and the fellowship of His Holy Spirit who sustain me daily. How I long to be with you forever in heaven...

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I would like to acknowledge the Muslims of the world. I love you from the inner depths of my spirit. I wrote this book to you because I have some good news for you. You do not have to spend the rest of your lives fearing the Day of Judgment as I used to. Christ has already atoned for your sins. All you have to do is to confess and repent of your sins, invite Christ into your heart, and accept His free gift of eternal life. How I pray that you may know and experience the love, peace, and grace of the God of Abraham through His Son Yasuu' Al Massih (Jesus the Messiah).

Thank you to Ed McMichael for teaching the basic tenets of the faith and for playing a big part in my salvation. Thank

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All of you bless me and lift me up with your love and support. I love you, and I pray God's richest blessings upon you.

# Introduction

*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. . . . And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it (Matt. 10:32, 33, 38, 39).*

## Battle-of-Nashville Attitude

A story is told of a man on a bus tour around landmarks of the antebellum South. The bus driver, who was covering the American Civil War Battle of Nashville, Tennessee, pointed out the sights: “Right over there,” he said, “a small group of Confederate soldiers held off a whole Yankee brigade.”

As they proceeded down the road, the driver said, “Over there, a young Confederate boy, all by himself, fought off a Yankee platoon.”

This account went on for a while until finally, the man taking the tour said, “Didn’t the Yankees win anything in the battle of Nashville?”

The bus driver replied, “Not while I’m driver of this bus, they didn’t.”

It is easy for us to get a Battle-of-Nashville attitude toward life. We change history to suit our prejudices; we promulgate historical inaccuracies to boost our pride. We romanticize the past and sometimes even the present.

“How was the party last night?” someone may ask.

“It was great,” we reply.

The truth may have been that the party was boring, the food was horrible, and the host was rude. To top it off, we may have suffered from a migraine but didn’t leave the party so as not to offend the host. Nevertheless, the fact that we do not always espouse the truth does not negate the truth.

Telling the truth may not be convenient, polite, or the politically correct thing to do, but that does not negate that truth exists, and that it lurks independent of our public relations campaigns, pride, and prejudices.

“‘What is truth?’ said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer,” wrote Francis Bacon.<sup>1</sup>

Pilate stood toe-to-toe with truth, yet he had no desire to pursue it. Similarly, many, or even most people take inherited beliefs at face value and allow them to form who they are. They are not always interested in the truth. Like Pilate, some people have no time for the truth. The truth may be uncomfortable, painful, and embarrassing. Consequently, they proceed willfully blind and deaf on the path of life. They view life in terms of their narrow prejudices and idealism, especially where religion is concerned. However, if they had the courage to question other ideas against the backdrop of the tarmac of their respective roads, they would become either stronger in their beliefs or would see their folly.

In our quest for the truth, we must never be afraid to question—for not to question is slavery of the mind on the altar of ignorance.

It is the greatest irony that men and women live and die enslaved without ever peering beneath the surface, without looking for the truth. I could have lived and died as a slave to ideas I had cherished much of my life, if, like Pilate, I had not taken the time to look beneath the surface of those beliefs. Thankfully, I chose to examine the evidence in search of the truth.

### **My Own “Battle of Nashville”**

In my personal debate in the realm of religion, my own experiences forced me to be both objective and rational. Since I grew up in the turmoil of the civil war in Lebanon, I bore arms to defend my people and our corner of the universe against the infidels (Christians). I saw many of my friends and brothers in arms fall. In my youth, I stared death in the face; I sought the smell of gunpowder, for fighting became a sport to me, a high of sorts. However, in the process, I came to see something that many people never perceive in a lifetime. In my jihad, I came face-to-face with a frightening discovery: the true human heart. I saw it exposed behind the masks of piety, behind the lies of purity, and behind the sham of godliness, and I beheld the heart of darkness. I saw the evil that belies the human heart, and the horror of it made me dig for the truth.

Subsequently, I dared to question my own “Battle of Nashville” in my religious infrastructure. I had the courage to think freely, unencumbered by my tradition and idealism. I looked, and what I saw changed me forever. I now know that I was once deceived into looking within for answers and redemption, but I am now redeemed into looking at Him who formed me and who knew me before He laid the foundations of the world.

This book contains my excavation of the truth and emancipation from the shackles of pride and idealism. This journey is not for the faint of heart, nor the automaton, but it’s for the bold

seeker of truth who cannot be silenced and burns within himself, no matter the price.

## The Framework of This Book

This book opens with my personal testimony of how I came to know Christ as my Savior and presents the evidence that led me to abandon Islam. In the same way that Islam boasts of its five pillars of the faith, my five exposition pillars of Islam are:

**People**—Are people born in fitrah? Do they need a Savior?

**The Qur'an**—Is it the true word of God?

**Muhammad**—Was he a biblical prophet?

**Allah**—Is he the God of the Bible?

**Ahadith** (Muslim customs and beliefs)—Are they from God?

These five pillars personify how Islam self-destructs once exposed to the flames of objective reasoning and critical analysis. It is no surprise that Muslim theologians have snuffed out analytical inquiry of Islam in order to shield it from its deficiencies. It is those whose faith is based on blind emotion rather than deep conviction that resort to barbarity instead of civility and the free exchange of ideas. If Islam is rational, well grounded, and cogent, then the debate will clearly strengthen it.

Although this book exposes the skeletons of Islam, its message, however, is one of love, hope, and redemption. God loves all people with a burning intensity. He wants everyone to experience the salvation that He freely offers through the death and resurrection of His Son, so that all may come before Him and call Him “Abba, Father.”

# How I Came to Know Christ as My Savior

*“I deserved to be damned in hell, but God interfered.”*

—JOHN ALLEN<sup>1</sup>

## A Tale of Hatred

**H**atred brewed in me on that peaceful day at the military front. I heard the church bells signaling worship and was incensed. Why shouldn't I be? Didn't the Christians spark the civil war in Lebanon, bent on the destruction of my people? Didn't they slaughter my kindred? Weren't they after our land? My hatred was not passive; it shook the foundations of my existence and swept over me like a tidal wave. This hatred demanded action. It demanded blood sacrifices on its altar.

From my bunker, I could see a man tolling the bell a few hundred feet away from me. Without hesitation, I took my sniper rifle with a long scope and aimed it at him. I thought, *Allah must be smiling on me.* After a deep breath, with my heart pumping and my adrenaline rushing, I had his head in my crosshairs and fired.

I screeched in horror and disgust! I could snipe a standing AK47 bullet from two hundred feet with my collapsible

assault rifle! However, this time my skilled marksmanship failed me. What luck this man had! I couldn't believe that the bullet missed the man's head and smoked the wall only inches above as he bent down with the pull of the bell, and then ran for his life. I was distraught; I had missed the opportunity of a lifetime.

*This could have been the perfect conversation piece on my CB radio on quiet nights*, I thought to myself. I would have bragged to the Christians on the other side that I was the one who blessed their church service on that peaceful Sunday. I could have warned them that this would be the fate of anyone who dared toll a church bell or enter a church. Now all was lost because of my reckless arrogance and miscalculation. I thought to myself, *If only I had aimed at his body instead of his head, I would have shot him*. Maybe Allah wasn't smiling on me after all.

### **My "Battle-of-Nashville" Attitude**

I was born in Liberia, West Africa, of Lebanese parents who were Druze Muslims. The Druze are a small monotheistic group that was founded out of the Ismaili branch of Shi'a Islam by Al Hakim, the sixth Fatimid caliph (AD 996–1021).<sup>2</sup> Even as a nominal Muslim, I grew up believing that my faith was the only way of salvation and that everyone not believing it was doomed to hell.

When I was a few years old, my parents decided that my mother should move us to Lebanon, our ancestral land, so my siblings and I could attend school there. I grew up in one of the most beautiful, yet the most explosive part of the world—the Middle East.

My father, however, stayed in Liberia to tend his business and visited us occasionally. I loved my father as much as one human being can love another. When he was around, I was his constant shadow. However, when I was eight years old, he died of cancer.

Since I was very young when my father died, my mother didn't allow me to attend the funeral. As a result, I did not have closure at the time of his death. At first, I refused to believe that he was forever gone. I would rush to the door whenever I heard the doorbell ring for the next couple of years hoping that he might be at the door. The pain was so great; it was as if my heart was ripped out of my chest. It was as if I had died a thousand deaths. It was like pure darkness had penetrated my soul and left me chilled. The smallest memory of him would trigger an avalanche of tears. I missed him so much. I wished I could bring him back from death to life. It was pure agony. It was the essence of pain. And for many nights and for many years, I cried myself to sleep. I was angry with God. I asked Him, "Why did You take my father from me?"

### **My Physical Jihad**

By the 1970s, tension was rising in Lebanon due to the failure of the dominant Christians to update the 1932 census—which was the basis for the allocation of power—in favor of faster-growing Muslims. To add to this tension, following its expulsion from Jordan in 1971, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) established itself in Lebanon as a powerful military force. The influx of this large Palestinian community with heavily armed commandos upset the relatively fragile political balance in Lebanon. On April 13, 1975, in response to a drive-by killing of four of their members by suspected Palestinians, Phalange militiamen (radical rightist Christian Party dominated by Maronite/Catholics) pulled over a bus full of twenty-seven Palestinian workers, and slit their throats in what became known as the Bus Massacre or Ayn Rummaneh Massacre.

Furthermore, on Saturday, December 6, 1975, in retaliation for the murder of another four of their members, the Phalange began

an orgy of bloodshed against Muslims. The armed Phalange militias instituted checkpoints on major roads and intercepted passing cars and pedestrians in search of non-Christians. Since Lebanese identification cards showed religious affiliation, captured individuals were forced to show their identification cards. Any Muslims or Palestinians found were executed on the spot. As refugees, Palestinians did not carry Lebanese ID cards, hence, hundreds of victims were slaughtered in the span of a few hours. That day became known as “Black Saturday.” It was the watershed event that kicked off the Lebanese civil war.

Once the leftist Lebanese National Movement (LNM – Muslim and Palestinian) coalition led by the Druze leader, Kamal Jumblatt, attacked Phalangist positions in response to this event. As a result, the Lebanese civil war, which was to last for fifteen years until 1990, was in full swing. Kamal Jumblatt was eventually killed in 1977 at the hands of Syrian agents.

More than 100,000 people were killed in this war and another 100,000 handicapped. Up to one-fifth of the prewar population, or about one million people, were displaced from their homes. Hundreds of thousands emigrated permanently. Most of the hostages taken, numbering in the tens of thousands, disappeared never to be heard from again. Thousands of land mines remain buried in the previously contested areas. Car bombs became a favored weapon of violent groups worldwide, following their frequent use during the Lebanese civil war. It is estimated that in the fifteen years of strife, there were at least 3,641 car bombs that left 4,386 people dead and thousands more injured.<sup>3</sup>

**In 1975, the Lebanese civil war, which was to last for fifteen years (until 1990), was in full swing.**

Our enemies in this war were the Phalange (Catholic militias) whom the Israelis funded, armed, and trained. After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Maronite Christian militias, under the cover of and with the blessings of the Israelis, went into the Palestinian camps of the Sabra and Shateela and slaughtered every man, woman, and child. These same militias invaded the Lebanese mountains where my people lived in order to annihilate us and throw us into the sea.

The civil war in Lebanon was a war of survival for my people, and as it progressed, I became more angry, ruthless, and fearless. I bore arms in my Jihad to defend our people against the infidels. Physical Jihad in Islam is traditionally a holy war or the physical struggle on the battlefield against one's enemies in order to ward off aggression.

My code name was Astro. I thought it was cool. I didn't do drugs. Somehow, I knew that drugs were bad for me—that they killed. I had an addiction of a different kind, however. Frequently, it manifested itself in an AK47 assault rifle, and at other times with a B7 (RBG) antitank, above-shoulder missile or with a B10 mounted artillery. Sometimes it was a grenade and at other times a land mine. At other times, it was a sniper rifle with a long scope or a handgun. Whatever it was, it had gunpowder in it.

In order to know why I had such a vile addiction, you must walk in my shoes. I lost the father I loved at the age of eight. My schooling was constantly interrupted with a loud siren as Israeli airplanes invaded my country's airspace to spy and bomb at will. My childhood came to a halt as a vicious civil war broke out. Tens of thousands were slaughtered. Death was everywhere. Buildings developed loads of cavities. Daily bombings and bomb shelters became an unpleasant fact. Nerves were on the edge. Hearts were racing. My enemy wanted me dead.

When I turned fifteen, I became a man. At least I thought I did. My enemy was still at the gate, and he wanted me dead. I trained to defend our land and existence. I had to kill or be killed. Gunpowder became my outlet, my escape, my addiction. When I was first baptized by fire in the heat of battle, I was gripped by fear for I knew that my life could be snuffed out in an instant. Soon, I gained a taste, a hunger for gunpowder. It was no longer good enough for me to wait for the action, but I had to create and escalate it. I went to fronts when they were quiet to begin skirmishes. I would sit there in wait and snipe at my enemies to feed my addiction. I prided myself on my marksmanship, so when I was bored, I used phosphoric bullets and landed them inside enemy foxholes. I became like a heroine addict waiting for the next fix, the next injection to satisfy my adrenaline rush and animalistic urge.

Sometimes when I would begin a skirmish, I used B7 (RBG) to destroy my enemies' armed vehicles. When I got more firepower back than what I bargained for, I would call for reinforcements and heavy artillery came to my aid. At times, these unprovoked encounters turned into serious battles that I regretted, especially when my company was outgunned. However, somehow I survived.

When it was quiet on the military fronts at night, we gathered around radio CBs to speak to Christians on the other side. We blasphemed each other and everything the other held sacred. The names constantly on my lips during these vulgar exchanges were those of Jesus, Mary, and the priests. At that time, I thought I believed in God and that He sanctioned hatred.

One day, while at central command, we got word that two mounted enemy vehicles had just passed the militarized zone and were coming toward us. When we saw them, we quickly took the drivers out and then concentrated our firepower on the mounted machine gunners. Less than a minute later, all of them had fallen,

but the bullets continued flying. The beasts in us took over. We didn't want this to end. Minutes later, two bodies were burning right in front of me. I heard the crackling of the flesh, smelled the burning tissue, and I was satisfied. The adrenaline was rushing. *Those pigs did not deserve to live*, I thought to myself. I remember the malevolence of the moment as we poked fun at their burning bodies and hurled insults at them.

My humanity later returned from its sabbatical. I realized the fragility of life. God had created those human beings. They had dreams, and they had mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and perhaps siblings, wives, and children.

I came close to death on several occasions in the midst of fighting many battles. One day I was planting mines in a field when I saw a farmer boy approaching. In my haste to warn him of the impending danger, I accidentally stepped on a mine I had just planted. My heart sank! I knew that when I took my weight off that mine, it would blow me into oblivion! I spoke to God that day, and He must have heard me for I miraculously stepped away unharmed and so did the boy. Another narrow escape occurred when my company and I were trapped behind enemy lines. News had gotten to my mother that we were probably dead, but we escaped unharmed at dawn.

Weapons were like toys in my circle of friends. My brother, Sam, once pointed an AK47 assault rifle at my chest, thinking it wasn't loaded. Laughing and joking, he pulled the trigger, but inexplicably, the bullet did not fire!

I stared death in the face during another skirmish when I threw a hand grenade that caught in a tree in front of me. I could

**At that time, I  
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in God and that He  
sanctioned hatred.**

not run since bullets showered around me. I ducked and braced for the explosion, but it never came. Many of my friends were not so fortunate. In fact, I lost two of my closest friends in this war to Christian snipers' bullets, one in a skirmish at a front and the other while innocently playing soccer at an adjacent field.

As I grew up in the turmoil of the civil war in Lebanon, my mother found it increasingly difficult to control my brothers and me. We were the products of our surroundings. Filled with hatred, we became desensitized to violence and death. I saw dead men lying on the streets in pools of their own blood, no better than dogs. I saw the banality of evil that we each are capable of. I saw the dark hearts of humankind. I saw the darkness in my own soul and was changed by the horror of it.

**I saw the banality of evil that we each are capable of. I saw the dark hearts of humankind. I saw the darkness in my own soul and was changed by the horror of it.**

War is not all it is cracked up to be. I saw my friends and brothers in arms fall—sometimes by the enemy and sometimes by friendly fire. I saw death around me and began to ask “why?” Why have we become instruments of darkness? Where did we lose our humanity? Why have we become worse than beasts in the jungle? At least beasts kill to eat, but a human kills to satisfy his hatred and thirst for blood. I began to understand that man is evil at his core, for he is capable of such untold evils that even wild beasts cannot top.

One day, I began thinking like a salmon. I started swimming upstream against the flowing current of hatred that violently pulls downward everything in its way. It's easy to float with the current but difficult to swim against the force of the river. I wanted out. I

wanted out of this hatred, the killing, and the war. I wanted a future, a life. I knew there was more to life than this. I wanted to become educated. I wanted to marry and have children.

I always dreamed of going to America, of sharing in the American dream, but I couldn't leave the country since I was at military drafting age. I wasn't fond of the army since they were the puppets of the Christians, and because I fought against them on occasions. After my brother Sam was injured in the war, my mother was determined to get us out of the country. She was able to procure a doctor's letter stating that I needed to leave the country immediately for Cyprus to have eye surgery. I wasn't in need of eye surgery, but it was an excuse to get me out of the country.

**Evils are not foreign to man. They come from within.**

My heart was pounding as I presented my paperwork to the army at the airport on the day I was trying to leave the country. I thought, *What if they recognized my name? What if they knew that I shot at them not far from the airport?* The army immigration cleared me, and I was free to board the airplane. Instead of heading to Cyprus, I headed to Spain, and later to America in pursuit of a college education. On the day I left my ancestral land, I opened a new page in my life. I came to understand that hatred is a vicious cycle that does not lead to results. Hatred is not an attribute of the Creator, but of the enemy of humanity. I saw the darkness in human beings. I knew the unrestrained evil that humans are capable of and saw that there was nothing redeeming about humanity.

### **A Tale of Love**

While in Houston, Texas, away from exploding artillery and the specter of death, I met Jennifer. It was love at first sight. We were

married six months later. Before she agreed to marry me, she made me promise to go to church with her. I thought that visiting church would be a win-win situation for both of us. I had always believed the Bible to be false, but did not know why. Studying the Bible would enable me to intelligently articulate why the Bible was in error. Therefore, I agreed to visit the church with Jennifer, but I forewarned her that I would never convert to Christianity.

Jennifer and I attended Second Baptist Church in Houston. Not long after we started going there, she learned that we were unequally yoked in marriage, referring to the biblical command that a Christian should not marry a non-Christian (see 2 Cor. 6:14).

After church one Sunday, she confessed to me, “Jerry, I really wish you were a Christian.”

“I was born Druze, and I will die Druze,” I replied with deep-seated anger. “And there is nothing you or anyone else can do to change me.”

That was the end of that conversation. Jennifer and I never discussed it again.

After listening to a series developed by Focus on the Family called “Beloved Unbeliever,” Jennifer knew she could not nag me into the kingdom of God or shove the gospel down my throat. Instead, she began to show me unconditional love while secretly

**I saw the darkness  
in human beings.  
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