



This conversation contains explicit descriptions of warfare and violence that may not be suitable for all audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

MARK LABBERTON:

It's a great joy to welcome Dave Eubank, the director and one of the founders of Free Burma Rangers. This is the 20th year that Free Burma Rangers, which we're going to hear about today, has been in operation. And its work has primarily been in Burma as the title would suggest, although it has more recently reached out in some new directions, and we'll also have an opportunity to hear that. So, Dave, as a person who's admired you from a distance for a long time and occasionally had the privilege of corresponding with you and had many opportunities to talk to people who have been influenced by you, it's a particular joy and honor to welcome you to *Conversing* today.

DAVID EUBANK:

Thank you. I've heard so many good things about you. I've read some of your books. They've helped my soul.

MARK:

I'm glad.

DAVID:

This school was a wonderful place for me. I loved it. I remember when we were first praying about what school to go to, everybody said it was great. And then some people said, "The best school is this school, but if you can't go to that school, go to Fuller." And then a more right-wing person will say, "It was this school, but second best is Fuller," and a left wing. Everything became second, Fuller became second for the people that have other views. I thought, "What? It's a pretty good school." I think it speaks to everybody.

MARK:

We often have heard my predecessor, Rich Mouw, say that the way that people come to Fuller is always over the objection of someone, either the right or the left.

DAVID:

All right, that's good.

MARK:

I want to begin by having you tell us a little bit about the origins of your story, because as I have read about it and heard people describe it, you come from a missionary kid background. You're raised in a strong Christian home with a strong sense of mission, but really how Burma came into the picture was kind of in a way anecdotal, but clearly a work of God—

David Eubank:

Yes.

MARK:

—because you've been there now for 20 years. That is a profound, profound part of your story. So, give us a little background, and then how Burma came into view.



David Eubank:

Well, I grew up in Thailand. My mother and father are still working there, 88 years old and 86. 1,000 miles an hour—

MARK:

Amazing.

DAVID:

—with the power of God. I grew up there, and I came back to university in the States at an Army ROTC scholarship. So, I chose Texas A&M, because my granddad went there, my dad went there. And I went there. Then I was in the military in the infantry in Panama, and then Rangers and Special Forces as an officer. After about 10 years, I was praying, and a lot of things happened. I got out of the army, and I came to Fuller.

In between getting out of the army and coming to Fuller, I met my wife, Karen. She didn't really want to be married to an army person. Later, when she found out I was a missionary, she thought, "Oh, well, you give money to those people and you pray for them, but you don't go there." So, she was a special ed teacher in Seattle. I asked her to marry me, a couple times. It was always no. She wouldn't even date me. I took her climbing, big climbs like double ice axe, Mount Shasta and Rainier, all these peaks. They're difficult. She always does summit. Sometimes some of the guys wouldn't summit, she'd be on it. Who is this girl? Lord, let me marry, I'll do anything.

Well, after my second proposal was a no go, I was visiting her in Washington State. I was going to bring her down for her spring break to meet her family who are in LA. My dad calls me on the phone. He's calling from Thailand. He said, "One of the tribal leaders of Owa"—which is one of the many tribes in Burma—"have come down and asked the US government for help. They haven't got any. So, they came to the missionary community, and they saw a picture of you." That was me in my mom and dad's house with a green beret. They know what that is; it's the Special Forces. They probably thought I was some big guy. "Send that guy. Is he a follower of Jesus?" My dad said, "Yeah, he's in seminary." He says, "Well, we are warrior people, but we need Jesus," because most of Owa are not believers. They're animists, spirit worshipers.

My dad said, "Dave, I think it's the Holy Spirit. What do you think?" I pray, right then. I'm going. Long story short, we drive down the coast. God does a miracle. Actually, there was a vision spoken in a prayer meeting right here at Fuller with a very loud, emotional Hispanic guy. I was saying, "Okay, God's not deaf, you don't have yell out loud." And then he said, "I have a vision." I said, "Oh, great." I had the worst attitude at this prayer meeting. I suddenly said, "Lord, forgive me. I can't believe I'm judging this guy. He's having a vision. It was about me."

He turned around and he said, "You're going to get everything you've been praying to God for. You're on something white." I was like, "Oh, what an idiot I am. I have to apologize." Anyways, I was on the white sands of Carmel at 10:30 at night. I totally forgot the vision. Karen is sitting with me. The full moon—there's a ring around the moon. It's beautiful. I just said, "I'm going to go to Wa State with or without you. Don't marry me unless God leads you, but I'd like you to marry me." She goes, "Okay, let's do that," like a used car salesman. It's not romantic, but it's a romantic place.



So, my dream had come true. She had said, “Yes.” I totally forgot this vision this man at Fuller had said, and then she said, “Dave, don’t you know the whitest sands in California are in Carmel?” On that full moon, I was on white stuff like he’d said in a prayer meeting right here. Wow, God is so great.

Anyhow, so we were married on the beach at Leo Carrillo State Park in Malibu, and went to Thailand, and then into Burma, extralegally because we’re working with the resistance that the dictators want to beat. That’s how we got started. So, that was God’s calling through people who said, “Come and help us.” I love that because I do many foolish things. I’m not always sure of my motives and that, but I can say, “No, God sent me to Burma.” I didn’t make that one up.

MARK:

Right. That is an amazing beginning. Now help us remember what the state of the politics and so forth was in Burma at the time that you were at it. It was a completely closed country.

David Eubank:

Right.

MARK:

Because it has changed.

DAVID:

Right. Well, then, Burma is a country of 50 to 60 million. It’s been run by a series of dictators ever since it got independence after World War II, 1948. It’s been a brutal country. Over a million people have been internally displaced. The army has attacked the ethnic people who comprise almost half the population. That was true then.

We got involved thinking, “Well, God, what do you want us to do?” I think I got involved intellectually, because we want to stand against oppression. We saw it with our own eyes, people running and screaming from their homes. Emotionally, we love these people. Actually, they loved us first, and then I loved them. And once you love somebody, it’s over, man. And then physically, because we like this kind of work as a Special Forces guy and a climber. I like walking in the mountains, so I think God thinks I can use that. But to me, most importantly, spiritually, this is our place just like everybody has a place that God has for them in his kingdom. This is our place in his kingdom, not more or less important than any other place, but it’s our place.

So, I look at it spiritually, we’re supposed to be there. Intellectually, it’s right to stand with the oppressed. Heart: we love them. And then the last should always be the physical. That’s just the tool of how to move it. We try to keep in that order. I fail a lot, but that’s the attempt. So, that’s how we were involved. We started the Free Burma Rangers, which became now 70 relief teams working and fighting. But about three years ago, the dictators stepped down a little bit. They just change their clothes, really. They still control the military. Because there’s so many pressures, they said, “Okay, we’ll have an election.”



They released Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. She wasn't allowed to run in the election, but her party was. So, her party, the National League for Democracy, won the election. She became the state counsellor, which makes her kind of an adjunct to the president. She has certain powers and certain improvements have happened in Burma. One being there's more ceasefires, about half the ethnic groups now have ceasefires. So, that's half less fighting than there was before and less displacement. That's a great thing. The other good thing is there's more freedom of press, more freedom of movement. As a tourist, you could go now and travel probably to 70% of the country. Before, it's like 10.

So, there's a lot of positive things, but very importantly, the army still controls the country. So, America—for right or for wrong, president's good, president's bad—the foundation of the president is the people. He elects them. When the president tells the Pentagon, "We're going there," they got to go. But in Burma, it's like the Pentagon is in charge. The army still is in charge. So, the foundation that's oppressing the people still is the army, and Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy stand on top of that foundation. We pray that roots will be going through and breaking that foundation up and, eventually, it will dissolve. But it's not that case now.

So, the last three years, the Burma army, although they've had ceasefires with some in Burma, they've launched constant attacks. I get daily reports from my teams by satellite in the Kachin State Northern Burma, in the Shan State Northern Burma, against that the Ta'ang in Northern Burma, and then recently in the last few months against the Rohingya who are a Muslim minority group on the Southwest corner of Burma. That's got a lot national attention because over 370,000 people this month have been driven into Bangladesh by the Burma army.

So, you see that there's some positive changes, but they're the top, at the periphery. Burma is still a big mess right now. So, our message—I just came back from speaking in DC to some friends in our government—was keep making friends with the army. Keep supporting Suu Kyi, but stand with people getting beat up, not just with words. Send them relief. Do the fiscal things we used to do and political things we used to do to encourage the regime to change.

MARK:

It's such an interesting and difficult thing to follow from the outside, because as you know, there was a huge amount of Western press opposition to Aung San Suu Kyi when it didn't seem as though she was speaking out against the Rohingya persecution. Then when she did speak out, she really basically defended it, it seemed. [As if] a lot of what was happening on the grounds that the Rohingya themselves were actually the source of the trouble, or at least, they were fighting in a way that was causing her, it seemed, to defend more the military, at least in my reading of it, than the Rohingyas. Now, have I misunderstood her? And secondly, what do you think is actually her relationship? I say this only because she's been such a star character in the West, Nobel Prize winner, etc. So, how do you make sense of all these pieces? Can you just explain a little bit more about that?

DAVID:

Well, first, I'm grateful for the sacrifice she made—



MARK:

Yes, absolutely.

DAVID:

—in trying to turn their country around, years of house arrest, lost her husband, just a lot of personal tragedy.

MARK:

High price.

DAVID:

Yeah, high price, high price. I met her back in 1996. She said, “Dave, pray for us, get the world to pray for us.” We started something called Day of Prayer for Burma. We named our middle daughter Suuzanne with two Us. That’s Suu. That’s named after her and some other people, but that little double extra U there is for Suu Kyi.

When I met her, I loved her. I thought, “This is a humble iron woman.” I gave her my Bible that I got for ordination. I was already ordained here. I gave her my Special Forces cross, which is two crossed arrows. The De Oppresso Liber in Latin is from Luke 4:18, “Free the oppressed.” She said, “Well, aren’t the things of a war often very beautiful?” I gave her the Bible. I said, “I don’t want to shoot the God gun at you, but this is the best thing I’ve got.” She said, “Oh, the Bible, I read it every day. You should know the truth, and truth will set you free.”

So now she’s got some power. I don’t know what’s going on inside. But if she hears this, I want her to know I’m praying for her, and we love her. My encouragement to her would be voice of Jesus, “What would it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?” You can’t hold on to things with a closed hand. These things that God has given you in her place, I believe God has been part of giving her that place, you can’t hold on to it. You’ve got to live like you got nothing to lose.

Where she’s helped bring the country’s a positive direction. It’s not there yet, but it will only keep going positive if she’s as bold and willing to lose her position. Not only that, I would say, a nation can’t be our God. Independence can’t be our God. Democracy can’t be our God. Those are good things that come from God, but we offer all these things back to God, so we don’t have any idols. And then he orders it.

I really appreciate the model of Martin Luther King. He made lots of compromises, but no moral ones that I could see. I mean, probably personal life ones because we’re all sinners, but he never sold out. He got killed doing that but look at the step it took in this country. So, all the truly precious things of life are never eternally lost, never. So, that’s my word for her right now in this difficult situation—the Rohingya.

I understand they’re different culture. Some are recently arrived, many are not. Many have been there for generations. They have a different religion, and they are very insular. So, you cannot trust them for some good reasons, but they are people. They have the line of good and evil in their heart just like all of us. They belong in Burma as much as anyone else. If she asked, God can find a way to lead her country and have a



place for the Rohingya that's the same as everyone else's place. So, that's my encouragement to her.

MARK:

I love the way that you just framed that, because it also leads naturally then into trying to help anyone who's listening to this hear a little bit more about how it is that you framed your own capacity to be able to stand in the face of really difficult circumstances, really challenging politics, economics, religion, really challenging military circumstances, chaos, an incredible amount of personal sacrifice, the potential dangers and fears that are particularly true for the work that you've been doing over all these years.

So what you just gave us, it seems to me is at least, I would bet at the core of what it is that enables you to be able to do the work that you believe God has called you to do. But tell us a little bit more about that. Because not most people who are missionaries don't describe their work as people who do this and that and fighting. Those are not like things that are all said in one common sentence, or if it is, it's usually verbal. In your case, it's many things and it's fundamentally love. I mean, that's the principal thing that you say in any place I've ever heard you speak. It's always been about this deep sense of the love of God that compels you and frees you, but you're also in overwhelming circumstances. So, talk to us how you hold all those things together.

DAVID:

Well, Jesus does. When you're in trouble, I just love this, you just say, "Jesus, help me." He does every time, never has that failed. One time we were arrested, the whole family, in Thailand because the Burma dictators couldn't get us in Burma. So, they talked to the certain Thai leader who was the prime minister, "Get rid of these guys." So, they're going to do it. Long story short, three days later in three different confinement areas, we were released by a different Thai unit. They grabbed hold of us, that's another miracle. But my main story is I was interrogated the whole night, which is like being in court, except you got no advocates and everything you say counts. It just takes all your wit and brain and soul and mind and experience to answer with love and truth and not in a trap. Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit when you're in trial. That's true because Jesus helped me, so he helped me answer. But when I went to sleep that night, I was exhausted. I had no more control over me and my family. We're all prisoners. I felt like a stick going down a river, just going wherever. I lay there in the little place they had us in. It was a bed about maybe 18 inches wide. My wife and I were both on it sideways, sweating. My kids are over here, and I just said, "Jesus, help me." Man, I woke up the next morning like Christmas Day. You remember how it was when you're a kid? I was so happy. Nothing had changed, nothing had changed. I was happy that "Oh, he's with me." That's the supernatural power of Jesus. That's what God sent him to do, one of the things.

So anyhow, that's at the core, I hope, of what I wanted. I drift away from that a lot through temptations and other things, but he always takes me back. He takes us all back. So, I could tell a quick story about some of that. In that the last eight months, we were in Mosul. We saw a lot of death, and it happened right next to me. I lost 30 close Iraqi friends.

The first miracle, Jesus changed my heart to love Iraqis, really love them. I missed them every day here. I didn't know the Iraqis, and we fought two wars against those guys.



Who are they? Well, Jesus broke my heart to love them. It happened when I saw the sacrifice they did for each other, for me, and for their enemy. Watching Iraqi soldiers give their lives, to rescue their Shia, to rescue Sunni kids that belong to ISIS and get shot by ISIS doing it. Wow, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

That love cuts across Islam, Christianity, atheism, everything. It's what it is. So, I saw that. I love the Iraqis, just as a people, and I love a bunch of individuals. So, that happened. That's what Jesus did for me. I never hated ISIS. I always prayed for them. I faced them a few times. That's not our job. Our job is medical care, prayer, sharing the gospel, coordinating, feeding people. The last month, I think we fed 45,000 people in one neighborhood of Mosul. Those are our main jobs. But because ISIS is coming at you all the time, I'd face them in battle.

I remember one time, they had pinned down a group of Kurds, and I'm at the periphery. I'm going, "What am I supposed to do?" Bullets are everywhere. My first thought was, "Don't get involved with this, man. You're a medical guy, you're a missionary. Stay in the back and help them. They do not do anything. They're going to get it. Don't get involved because the church is really going to be mad at you. Your church supporters are not going to like this." That's important because I subordinated myself to Jesus and the church. I don't just run around in my own thing and my team and my family and, and, and, and.

I see it's getting worse, then I think, "Well, before the church." Maybe this is a very selfish thought—my wife and kids. I'll be dead doing this. And then it came to me, everybody else, these are all married people. Everybody else is thinking the same thing. They don't want to die. They go into that trench with ISIS, they're dead. They're probably going to win. You get enough guys, but first guys in, I'm going to get killed. So, I just said, "Oh, no one's going to do anything." Wow.

I'm sure you face this in your life where you're not supposed to be the guy to do it. It's not pride anymore, because one thing someone said, "Dave, you have a hero complex." I said, "I hope so." That's like saying to a mom, "You have a mother complex." Yeah, we should all be heroes. We should all stand up for what's right, but ego will run away when your life's at stake. I promise you. Your self-interest takes a lot more than that. So, there was nothing in there that made me want to do it. I thought, "I'm going to die doing this." It's not my job and people may be angry at me. I had a lot of reasons not to do it. I just finally asked, "God, what do I do?" I just felt the Lord tell me, "Do your best." Do my best? Oh, my goodness, I actually know what to do, it doesn't mean I'll succeed. I'm 56 years old. I can't do kung fu backflips. I run every day and all that, but man, you don't move the same way. It's not a movie, but I knew that was God's voice. I went forward, and I prayed. It suddenly dawned on me as I went forward, I wasn't alone. Whatever we're doing in life when Jesus asked us to do something, you don't go alone. You don't go alone. If you think you're going alone, you better not do it, because he's not with you and you're not doing what he told you.

But I really thought I wasn't going alone, so I took one step. Scriptures started coming in my head, unbidden. I had nothing, no brain space left, and a piece came to me. That's all I can describe that. I know it's a very difficult story to tell. How can you say this?



Because in the end, I stopped those ISIS guys. I prayed for them, and I knew it wasn't me. I mean, I did what I did, but I should have been dead so many times. So, I have engaged with ISIS, but I prayed for them when it was over. I remember praying, closing their eyes, and praying. The Kurds came up. First, they were, "Good job," and then they were start laughing at me because I was giving honor to the bodies. I only started to cry because of the parents. Doesn't matter how terrible your kid is. You don't want ISIS raping women, boiling people alive, which they did. I don't want my kid to die. Is there another way? There was no other way. Actually, I'm telling the short version, I prayed many times or changed their heart. There was no other way. That's what they chose. One guy's been shot seven times and pulls his knife out to come at you. So, that's who they were, but I thought they're wonderful men who've given their lives for Satan.

That's what that would say, but that's what happened. I just interceded. I don't know how this works with Jesus. I got on my knees. "I'm a sinner. Lord, help me meet these guys in heaven. I want to see them in heaven. We'll laugh together going, 'Oh, we're idiots.'" I pray over them. The Kurds were looking at me like, "What the heck?", and then they were all kind of making. . . They don't do that to the bodies.

And then they all talk about later, "Hey, you respected our enemies and the dead." I knew it made an impact. So, I called my wife that night and I said, "Honey. . ." I told her the story. She said, "You know what? You did your best, you had to do it. People are dying. Kurds are already shot." I said, "But it doesn't matter to me, what you say does. You're my loving wife," but really, we can all justify everything. What does Jesus say? So, I said, "Lord, show me the truth of this."

The next morning, I woke up peaceful, free. And then a Norwegian pastor called me, who knew about the whole incident. He said, "Dave, God gave you mercy to do what needed to be done. Don't operate outside of his mercy. You have no license. You have no license." I've never told this story in public in my life. I'm just trusting I was supposed to do today in God. I mean, a lot of people know this story, but I'd never stand in church and tell the story. But that's to say, I did not hate them. I didn't. I felt sorry for them, and I prayed, and back to my normal job.

Well, Mosul, there's fighting every day. We're getting shot at every day. I'm losing friends almost every day, which made me cry. I cried a lot. In fact, the first thing I learned in Fuller Seminary, the first day, stuck with my whole life. "You can live well with sorrow"—this is Chuck Craft telling me this—"You can't live well with shame." So yeah, I cried every day, but I have a good life. I mean, I cried literally every day, because we lost so many people. So, many kids would come alone. The family's dead or the dad would come carrying a dead kid crying. But I still didn't hate ISIS. They shot my translators. They shot all kinds of... I still didn't hate them.

Until one day, we were behind the Iraqis, they were doing the fighting. We weren't. We were helping clear and taking care of casualties and moving civilians. We came to a little community on the edge of Mosul, and the whole family was set free. They're all happy and I told Monkey, my pastor—His name is Monkey, he's from Burma, little bitty guy—that's the best day of our whole time here. We're part of a liberation. I mean, the Iraqis are doing it and not us, but we got to be part of it. I prayed for the whole family, "God bless you, in Jesus' name." They're all like, "American, American. We love you." Three



little girls tugging on my leg, “American, American,” and so happy. They all got an instruction to go away to see their relatives they hadn’t seen for three years because ISIS control the place.

But ISIS was waiting with landmines and blew that tractor up, so we rushed over there. ISIS is long gone. We try to save people. We save I think maybe the father. The mother died later, not sure. They’re pretty badly injured, but we saved everybody there except the little girl. She died, and I remember trying to stop the bleeding. Medic’s trying to stop the bleeding. I was doing CPR, it didn’t work. I was praying. She died and I started crying. I’ve never cried in action in my life. I cry afterwards. I’ve never cried in action. That’s not what you do. It’s will power’s a little. Mostly, it’s not will power power. You’re not thinking of this. It’s like a middle of football game, you just plan. That’s the first time I’ve cried in the middle of something. I just became overwhelmed. Everybody cried. These are Iraqi soldiers three years fighting ISIS, hard guys, all crying. This three-year-old just broke all our hearts.

After we put her dead body in the mom’s arms, her mom is all covered by bandages, and send them out in the ambulance. I turned around at Monkey and I said, “This is why you fight ISIS, man. This is pure evil.” You can’t talk to these guys. I’d love to talk to them. There’s no talking. They just believe in this thing. I said, “Monkey, this why we fight ISIS.” I said, “In between sharing the gospel and doing everything else, every chance I get, I’m going to hunt these guys down. I’ll pay the price to that. My soul can’t live with anything less, not because I’m Superman or anything just because it’s right. It’s just, it’s justice. Monkey, you think this right?” He goes, “Maybe, I don’t know. Let’s pray. I feel the same way as you, Turan—Turan is teacher,” and pray.

That night I said, “Lord Jesus, show me the truth of this day.” I went to sleep like a baby, woke up. I have my Kindle, and I close my eyes. “Lord, what should I read?” This is not the Fuller designated way, but actually kind of is, follow the Holy Spirit. I stuck my finger right on the Kindle and it said, “Vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay.” Wow. Well, I didn’t go into theology right then, I just convicted. I said, “Jesus, forgive me. I reject and give up vengeance.” He took it off me like a weight. That most terrible thing about this sin is I never felt the weight.

Almost every sin in my life, I know exactly what I’m doing. I may wiggle and hide, but I know, I feel the pressure of it. I didn’t feel a thing, because it’s justice. What is the difference between justice and vengeance? I’m not really sure, Mark. You’re in a perfect position to tell us and look it. I think it’s a great topic. I would like to hear about it.

MARK:

It is a great topic.

DAVID:

Yeah. I’m not even sure the answer, but I knew it was vengeance. It was not justice. I don’t actually know the theological reasons because I’m full of sin, where does it end, all that, but I knew what was wrong. I said, “Forgive me.” He took it away for me. I went back into battle behind the Iraqis that day light and free. I don’t have to kill anybody. I don’t have to do anything except be an ambassador for Jesus. I have no policy if I face ISIS, I’m going to listen to him. Maybe I put my hands up and die. Maybe I try to hug



him. Maybe I fight back. I don't even know, but I don't have to know, because I'm his ambassador. I listened to him.

So, two ways Jesus changed my heart. One is to love the Iraqis and not hate the people of ISIS. I pray for them every day, and to not make this. . . To complete the story. This is my story. It's not maybe the right story, but it's my story. It was a month later. We were on a street in Northwest Mosul with this new guy, new lieutenant I was with. They had no medical support left. My medics had all rotated back to Burma. We had four days before new ones came. I was the only guy. I was like, "Great." I'm not even a medic. I'm a Special Forces guy. You know a little bit but I'm not really that good at anything like that, but I'm it.

We go to Tammuz 17 neighborhood which is the place in Mosul ISIS started. The lieutenant with me goes, "You're going with us today?" I said, "Yeah, okay. You got no medics. I'm going." I prayed first—don't go anywhere Jesus doesn't lead you. He goes, "All of us are going to die in this neighborhood. They will never surrender this neighborhood." It's full of Chechens from Russia, Muslim Chechens from Russia. They're not only vicious, they're good at what they do. So, I said, "Well, I'm going as your brother. We're going to take a walk on the wild side, man." He says, "What does it mean walk on wild side?" I said, "It means you don't know what's going to happen, but we're going to walk on the wild side with Jesus. I'll go nowhere without him."

Three days, I'm with these guys fighting every day, house to house, street by street. I prayed what to do and I felt in my spirit, "You don't need to fight. You stay behind them. Treat the wounded and pray." Mark, man, one time, I was in a room, I can imagine, where Lauralee is right back there. I'm a little bit back in the corner. Right around here is ISIS on that side. Our guys are stacked like that, throwing hand grenades through that door and shooting. They're shooting and I'm there.

I pray, "Nope. If everything falls apart, you can do something. You don't need to do anything." But it felt terrible because everybody knows me now. They expect me to do something and I can. I can help. That's not pride. I just actually can, and then the other part was pride. I want to be helpful that way. But I pray, "No, no, just stay in that corner." So, I sit in the corner.

I would look up, and I'd do emails. Because probably like you, I'm doing this all day long. Is that my iPhone? Every time, it'd get extra light, I put my head up, make sure I don't get shot, or ISIS didn't run to the same room. They're right there and I'm right there. This like took 30 minutes or an hour. I did this every day in between treating patients, never fought. I knew it was God. I don't need to do that. The third day, they'd push ISIS out of an area. They try to go to the next block and get hit pretty hard. So, pulled back and they're trying to get Americans—dropped an airstrike or something, and it's kind of a lull. Our left flank we thought was safe, but it wasn't. ISIS came ripping around. I'm sitting shoulder to shoulder with Lt. Hussein, the guy I was talking about Jesus with. They come around and we don't even know that they're in the church shooting. They shoot him five times, once in the arm, three in the chest, once in the leg. He falls back on me and then they shoot me. I fought back then also. I was able to get Hussein off the street, and he's alive to this day. So, I put that in there, so that it's a true story. I still don't hate them. I believe God helped me.



I don't know why good people die, I really don't. I felt there's many better men than me, than women and kids that died. I held in my arms a 19-year-old new mother who looked like Miss America or Miss Iraq 2017, so beautiful and so pure faced, new mother with her new husband and new baby. She dies in my arms, better than me. I don't know why. I just know this, I'm alive, so Jesus, help me live whatever I got left to the max for you. Don't let me get my own sense in the way.

So, all that to say, do I love ISIS? I pray for love for ISIS. I think I would love them as individuals. I don't love ISIS as a name. It's not a good name. I don't have to love that name, but the people that are in ISIS? Yes, I can say I love them. I'm praying for them. That's the power of God, because we're not that different. As Jesus changed the heart of Paul—Saul to become Paul—as he changed Peter, as he changed me. And who ever listens to this show, [they'll say] "This guy's an idiot, man." I'm just reporting what he's done for me. I guess if I say anything else than what I said earlier, anywhere you go if Jesus sent you, he's going with you.

MARK:

Dave, you probably don't know this, but I'm in the process of writing a book on fear. When I think about the circumstances that you face, whether it's in Burma or whether it's in Sudan or whether it's in Iraq, you face fears of so many different kinds. So, just describe how you hold fear because it's got to be a daily discipline spiritually in some way or another. How do you face the reality of fear given all that you believe God's called you to do?

DAVID:

Yeah, I think it's true for all of us. There's all kinds of fear. The fear of what people think of you, the fear of is this product good enough, the fear of failure. I like this thing that—Michael Jordan came back I don't know how many times to playing. A commentator on this is like third time back said, "Michael didn't know when to quit." And the other commentator said, "No, he's not afraid to fail. He loves what he does." I thought, how many times in my life have I not done something because I was just afraid to fail or look bad?

But the way I handle fear is I think the first thing I ask is, "Do you want me to do this, God? Is this of you?" Whether it's confronting somebody or introducing something or speaking or running through enemy fire, whatever it is, that makes us afraid, makes me afraid, do you want me to do this? I'll listen to you. If I feel that's yes and if I have the luxury, which I normally do of having my wife or kids or teammates around, we do it together. I don't trust myself 100% at all. So, Monkey, let's pray about this. This is really dangerous. Should we do it? We'll pray and look. God has always given us the same answer. When we put everything up on his altar, all of our agendas hidden and otherwise, we'll obey you together, Lord.

So, one is if I'm by myself, I put all my agendas up—the ones I'm proud of, the ones I'm ashamed of—and stick them up there. So, the truth is burning out. You want me to do this. Then if it's yes, okay, it's yes. If I'm with other people, I get them to help me. That's a great exercise. My wife and I have never not had God give us a solution when we both put our agendas on his table. When we didn't agree, we pray together. What should we do, God? Sometimes we knew right then when we had to, sometimes it took longer, but



we got the answer. So, now you have the answer. Yes, I'm supposed to do this, then perfect love casts out fear.

Lord Jesus, give me love for that person, for these people, for that guy. Give me love. That's going to drive out fear. And then you were able to do in spite of fear what you're going to do. So, I never say I'm not afraid. Yeah, I'm afraid, but I'm going to do it anyway because God's with me. I'm supposed to do it. So, that's how I handle fear. Even things for fun, like climbing. You start a climb. I remember I was climbing the east face of Whitney a few years ago and started up the first couple pitches. All of a sudden, you're thousands of feet up. I mean, the climb starts at about 12,700. So, you're actually off the first place you'd hit, you're only a few hundred feet up. But you're 12,000 something feet and you're a few hundred feet pretty far in rocks. You're going to get further, because the summit's 14,475 or something. So, you're going at this east face and not a hard climb for great climbers, but I'm not a great climber. I'm starting to get scared. I'm leading it. Right then, I had to make a decision, did I come here to climb or not? Well, yeah. Did you pray about it? Yeah, that's God's gift, then you have to banish it. Do not take counsel of those fears.

You have to put them aside. They're real, and they represent real things. Our fears are all based on things that could happen to us. Push it aside and say, "I'm not going to think about that anymore. I'm not going to think about all the ways I can get hurt or fall. I'm going to think about how I'm going to get up this thing and help my partner get this thing." I think that's what we have to do. When we know we got to do something, but we're afraid, ask God, drive it out in Jesus' name. Ask for love and just focus on what you got to do, not what all the things that could happen.

MARK:

Dave, one of the things I'm sure that many listeners would be struck by is the fact that all the things that you're doing, whether it's in Burma or in Iraq or wherever you might be, have actually been done almost always with your family all together, so your wife and your children. So, tell us about that. How can you imagine being in settings like the ones that you're in and still honor the call to be the kind of parent that you want to be? For many, that would be an impossible thing to put together. So, how do they fit for you?

DAVID:

Well, for Karen and I, our children are our greatest gift from God. Before we had kids, we were already working in Burma in the fighting areas. When Karen got pregnant, we're like, "How're we going to do this?" We went right through what happens if our kid dies. I thought, "I don't think I could handle it. I don't have that kind of faith." I know God can help me, but I have no illusions of my strengths in that area. Would I survive it? Would our marriage survive it? Besides the sin of it if you just did it for the wrong reasons. But we prayed, and the answer came to Karen first. It was this. She said, "I think God's telling me, 'Don't look at what all the bad things that happened. Look at the opportunities.'" God deals in opportunities.

When our baby was born, the first thing our ethnic teammates who are now our best friends said, "Great, you have kids. Bring them and play with our kids in Burma." What are you going to say? "No, mine are White American kids. We can't dare let them. . . ." No, it'd be like saying to your grandparents, "No, we're not bringing our kids over to see



you. You're in a bad part of town." No, man, we're going to come with whatever we got to come with and we're bringing the kids. So, we take the kids everywhere pretty much. One, because they're God's gift to us. Two, this is the best opportunity for them to grow up. I mean, they do everything. They're like Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone. They do everything, and they learn a lot.

Karen says, my wife, says, "They learn compassion, they learn sharing." With the current people of Burma, there's no doors, there's no locks. Nobody steals nothing. Everything is everybody's. My kids will show up in a community. Nobody knows them when they were little babies. Some man or woman will come down and take my kids and take them and bathe them in the river. I don't even worry about it. Nothing happens and they would die for my kids.

So, growing up in that environment is a gift and we have challenges. Usually, we don't try to take our kids in what we call direct fire. If it's like bullets or weapon across the street, I'm not going to bring my kids in here. There's no purpose to it. We have a general idea if there's a family there, our family is there. If there's no families, then unless God tells us clearly, my family's not going to be there. It makes no sense.

One time though, my family was with a bunch of other villagers. The Burma army attacked about three days away. I went with my teams to help the people under attack. While I was gone, the Burma army attacked the village my wife was in, but there were some Karen [KNLA] soldiers holding back the Burma army. All the families fled, except one family. My wife thought, "I can't just leave this family. I've got to wait for that family to leave. Like what's wrong? Leave." The other family there, their village burned three times. They're tough as nails. No, they're funny. They're great people. They're like, "We're not leaving until we have to. God gave us this house. You got to start having bullets hit before I leave." That's what mom says! You're like, "Oh, boy."

So, Karen's down in the house below them on the side of the hill. Shells are not that close to it—really like 500 yards away. No bullets directly hitting our house, but you can hear, *gang, gang, gang*. They could come any minute. She said, "God, stop the fighting. Stop it. What kind of mother am I? What would the world think of me? What do I think of me? My whole instinct is to save these kids and the enemy's closer."

She felt God say to her, "Don't deprive your kids of knowing me and calling on my name and depending on me." She said, "Wow." But that answer gave her peace. She went to sleep in the middle of the shooting, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. She knows, practically, there's a Karen soldier right at her house. They're not going to come sneaking up on us. It's not like crazy, but you're still afraid. But God's word gave her peace.

One time I was in a plane. I was away from my family and planes about the crash, little small plane. I thought, "If I survive this, I need to make sure I'm doing my best to help my kids be in touch with Jesus on their own." Because whether you're driving down I-5, you could be dead tomorrow. Every day people die here. So, what are you doing for your kids then? So, what we can do for our kids is say, "Be close to Jesus," and love them. So, we try to pour everything we can into our kids, but we take them with us, mostly because we love them. Second, it's the best life we can imagine for them.



And then there's a two-way benefit. Like I said in Iraq, it was, wow, you brought your most precious thing, you've got all of us. In Sudan, in the Nuba Mountains, the Nuba leader there—these are huge, tall African men, like all defensive men—looks down at us and goes, "You brought your children. That means you don't want anything from us. That means we are family under God." Wow. I was in Afghanistan with our kids and we were visiting friends. We decided to climb this mountain outside of Kabul, just our family. We got there, *dut, dut, dut, dut*. We run into Taliban, for real. Thank God it wasn't the . . . There's lots of kind of Taliban. These are the nationalistic "Get of my country" kind evidently. They had all their rockets and everything. They've been shooting at the Americans.

We came there, and they looked at us. First, they saw me. I had my two-year-old at my back. He looked at me, and I saw a fear and hate. I'm White American, obviously. I'm American. And then my little daughter poked her head out, and said, "Hello." The guy melted. Next thing, we had tea. He's our enemy, but we have kids. So that could have gone the other way. We could have been dead. My wife and kids are in this with me. Without my wife, I would do so many more bad things and so much fewer good things. My kids, they're all in it.

I remember, we're going in Sudan. This is like years ago, because my daughter is going to be seven. She goes, "Daddy, we're not just the family, we're a team." Sometimes when I've tried to wimp out of something like, "We sure, we put that fleece? God met the fleece, but is that really? Did we just push that God's hand, or we becoming like Christian pagans making up stuff?" They go, "Dad, you said that. We all prayed about it. God did this, then you just got to obey him." That's so cool. We had this thing as a family, don't be led by comfort or fear. If I ever tried to wimp out, like, "Man, they're coming at 2:00 in the morning, who else could pick them up?" My kids will say, "Daddy, don't be led by comfort. Go help them."

So, I thank God that we can do this as a family and that we can be there. It's helped, mostly because I love as you love being with your kids, but it has other benefits, like I brought my kids there. This one Kurdish general said, "You brought your son, your most precious thing? We'll give you our most precious thing, our country. That means you think we're equal." Everybody's precious, and that's a blessing.

(INTERLUDE)

MARK:

Dave, every time I hear you speak or read your writing, I'm always struck by the fact that you seem like a ballistics officer theologically and spiritually, because you blow up somebody's paradigm. You reset so many directions and visions of what the Christian life is meant to be. You know as well as I do that what you've just described that you would consider to be the normative Christian life is not the normative Christian life. I'm not here referring to the fact that everyone needs to be on the frontlines in Mosul and/or with the Rohingya in Burma. I'm meaning people who are as devoted and clearly focused on the things that matter, in particular on what it means to actually be a follower of Jesus in the most important and urgent and compelling circumstances that any one of us are in. Now, you could call that normal, but the normal life of the church is not nearly



as keyed up, high tuned, clarified as your mission and vision and your own personal discipleship has been.

So I don't say that to try to single you out for the sake of pride, but for the sake of really trying to unlock, in a way, what it is that allows you that clarity when so often, the average disciple has such a hard time even believing that God is in the neighborhood, let alone God is speaking in such a clear and compelling and direction giving way. So, how do you put those two things together? You're currently in the US. You speak in many churches. You're a very loving and gracious and generous-hearted person.

So, you come into settings and receive people wherever they are. I understand and respect that deeply, but you've got to be aware of the contrast between the normative Christian life, as it were the neighborhood Christian in America, and the rough and tumble raw reality, whether it's Burma or whether it's Iraq or wherever it may be.

DAVID:

Well, I feel we have a commonality, I do, with many people. That is my own sins and temptations and weaknesses that are everywhere I'm at. Actually, it's easier in the battlefield, much easier. We all become very pure when you're really afraid.

MARK:

I have heard that.

DAVID:

Very pure. But when you're back here, there's so many things that can pull at you. So, I think in that way, we're all the same. We face the same battles. When I talked about vengeance and justice, I think that's something that we can all relate to in one form or the other. I had an experience. I'm not even sure how to talk about this that was just here in America that made me look at something. There's a couple of things about this issue. I was out for a little run around one coastal area here. I got done running, and I came upon a couple people stuck on a little cliff. It wasn't that hard actually, but they were over their heads. And then I saw a guy with a rope. I said, "Hey, give me the rope, man." I'll just go up there and tie it off and wrap down and we'll get him off. It's not Yosemite. It's like 60, 70 feet or something. It's pretty simple.

I look back at this whole thing, I thought, "Did I pray long enough? I don't think I prayed long enough before this." I just said a quick prayer to God and just rushed off. Because I'll tell you what happened. He says, "No, you can't have my rope." I said, "Why not?" He says, "I'll be liable." He said, "I've learned not to mess with baby seals and morons." He sounded very clever. I was like, "These are people. We all get stuck doing stuff. Come on, man. Just help them." "No, what if they slip and they sue me."

I said, "You've got to be kidding me." He wasn't kidding. I couldn't get the rope. He said, "Don't worry. I've called the rescue people." I said, "You called the rescue people? You got to be kidding me, man. This is easy. You and I can do this." He's a better climber than me. I've been climbing my whole life. You don't even need to get a climber, a farmer from Iowa could figure this one. Tie the rope there, lower it down, let him climb down it, done. No.



So, I just prayed a real quick prayer. I don't know what would have happened if I prayed and listened more, maybe nothing, I don't know. But I ran up and just untie this rope anyways. I said, "I'm taking full responsibility for this." But by that time, the rescue people have come. They made a big deal out of something that's pretty small, either because they didn't have the competency or because they wanted to. I couldn't tell which and I prayed right then again. They're saying, "Please stand away." I was like, "Oh my gosh, we can have this done in five minutes and not scold these guys." It's no big deal. Believe me, this is the smallest thing ever. There were so many of them though. They had trucks.

I said, "Okay." I prayed and thought, "No, you don't need to get in a contest here. They're going to have their way. They're already here, whatever, water under the bridge." Okay, so I pray and think, "Okay, I'm out." "You guys, they'll have you guys in like five minutes." I walk away, helicopter comes. I'm not kidding. I was like, "Oh my gosh." Fraud, waste, and abuse. My kids could have figured this. It was so pathetic.

Well, I left that, and I thought what is happening in our country? But here's the point of the story. It was someone that was afraid to help, because you might get blamed. Here, we're people that wanted to blow something up way past what it needed to be for budgetary or fun or whatever. Maybe that's okay. I don't know. But it wasn't really right. None of it really worked out right. When I came into it, I thought later, "Was that just something that I couldn't fix, or did I not pray enough?" I thought later, "If I prayed long enough and listened, maybe I wouldn't have gone for the rope. Maybe it would have gone right up to him, just pulled him down." It's so simple, but whatever. The point of this story is this to me, I prayed about it and I said to let it go. I tell my wife, "I let it go."

So, we all face these things in life that you can't overcome. Also, you try to help, and someone doesn't take your help, cannot be helped this way. "We will not accept this help." And then I have to say, "Okay, I'm not Jesus then." I had a solution that would have worked and been really cheap and quick and we'd all been happy. No one gets yelled at and cost nothing. No one wanted it. I think that's got to be something that happens all over to humans, not just Americans. It's humans. This is a great country. I love America. Go anywhere else and come back, it's awesome. But when I faced that, I just thought, "Wow, you can't just do everything you want to do." I really wanted to help these guys. It could have been simple. Nobody else wanted to do that.

That hurt my heart actually, that hurt my heart, because it was so simple. I felt for the two guys who are stuck, what they're going to have to listen to. It was easy to help them, but the underlying fear of the guy with the rope is afraid to get blamed. I want to say, "I just came from Mosul, dude. I got shot in Mosul. I got a fragment still in my leg from a hand grenade. Come on. You think I'm worried about a lawsuit?" Anyhow, I don't know why I just told you that, but I think those are real struggles we face in our lives.

The only thing I would do differently again was I would have prayed a little more and listened a little bit more. Maybe it's just you lose the battle, but humans lose the battle all the time. The people who we are trying to rescue in Mosul, like against this one wall, maybe you saw the video. There's like 150 dead people around that whole street. This little girl is the only living person in her family. They're all dead. She's only alive because



she's hiding under her dead mom's hijab against the wall, and they can't quite get her. I wanted to say something about faith in that, can I?

MARK:

Please.

DAVID:

Okay, I'm going to kind of skip ahead. So, there's one rescue that has been seen by some people who run behind this tank to save this little girl. That was a big blessing from God and a miracle to me. But the next day after we did all this, the Iraqi soldiers who saw it said, "Inside the ISIS compound," because we did the first rescue running behind the tank—calling in American smoke, Americans coordinating, the Iraqis drops smoke. We're following Iraqi tank. It's getting a lot of fire. We run out behind the tank, grabbed the girl, and that was a miracle. One of my guys, Ephraim, got shot in the leg on that. We lost people [we] tried to rescue, couldn't rescue two men and a girl, lost one guy, rescue one guy. I'm holding the girl, running back, bullets everywhere. We made it, and I call my wife—She's at the cache collection point with my daughter who's driving an ambulance. It's cool, 16. You don't need a permit there—and hand her over. She falls asleep in my wife's arms. We go back. They said, "There's more people inside."

So next morning, we go inside the ISIS compound. How do you do that? I guess I'm trying to answer the question about faith because I just said, "Jesus. . ." Because your faith is really tested when you've got everything to lose. I remember the Iraqis said, "Let's go do it." I said, "With who?" "Me, I'll get a couple volunteers." In ISIS compound, there's 200 of them, man. We were behind a tank yesterday, more important than a tank was the American smoke. They couldn't really see very well. We had no smoke, no tank. You're in their area, dead people everywhere. They're going to kill you.

He said, "Are you a soldier or a doctor?" I said, "I'm an ambassador of Jesus, makes me kind of a soldier here in a way." I prayed and I felt God say, "You came here to be with these people, be with them. Go help. No guarantee you're going to live, just go help. Do your best." Oh, man. I was so scared. It seemed foolish. So, I prayed though. I just thought that undeniably from God, and God will speak to any of us about anything that's important that we got to know. If you don't hear from him, I think, if you've offered it up, then do what you love. Just tell him, "Stop me, God." He will. That's my experience. But if there's crucial times, he speaks.

And then the Iraqi commander says, "No, you guys can't go. The Americans can go, but you Iraqis can't go. You're all going to die. We got to attack ISIS this way anyways." I said right then, "We have no time," so I grabbed Zuhair's hand, the private who wanted us to go and said, "Zuhair, let's pray." Lord Jesus, change the Iraqi commander's heart. In Isa's name, Jesus' name, I pray, Amen." Ask him. Zuhair, the private who wants to do the rescue asked his commander, "Did you change your mind? Can we go?" He goes, "Yes." True story. "Right now, you got eight hours, do whatever you want to do."

So, we get four volunteers from them. I get my guys, four of my guys. We try to cross the road from ISIS. Our vehicle was shot at. The armor bulldozer in front of us gets blown up. We make it. The driver didn't die in the bulldozer, just thank God for that, but the vehicle is gone. We run, and now we're inside ISIS building. This is the important faith



part I want to share. As we're in the building, we can't fight anybody. It's not about fighting. We got to go help people. ISIS is all around us. We have no power. We're being quiet. I'm praying. I'm really scared. To put it in context, this is 8 months of this and 20 something years. So, there's a reason to be scared. It's not the buildup. It's just that I've done a lot of dangerous things. This is like really bad. You're just like—it's your profession. You know this is foolishness except God is with us, and these guys want to do it, and people need help. Those are three hard to defeat combinations.

As I went, scripture started coming to me and an email a guy sent me. The last thing he said is, "Dave, you're there in Jesus' name, be bold." I can't be bold. I didn't want to be bold. My encouragement at the church in America is when you're scared, that's a good time to ask, "Are we doing this because of pride or some foolish reason?" Because fear is not a guide, but it's a context. But if the answer is no, we prayed about this. God has called us to do this, then be bold. We should tell each other, "Be bold, man." If Jesus is in it, be bold, and I'm like, "Be bold. Oh, I don't want to be bold. Okay, be bold."

And then we're quiet, quiet, quiet. We come to a big room, because it's a Pepsi factory that ISIS has, full of empty Pepsi cans. ISIS is on another side of the wall. How can you go through three, four feet high and a basketball court full of empty Pepsi cans? You can't. I thought, "God is the God of the Red Sea or he's not, Jericho or not. Okay, Lord, I choose to believe you are." I'm still scared, and we run across these cans. ISIS then hears. They start shooting over us, over that building to other Iraqi soldiers, which deafens them. They can't hear us.

We get to an open area. I can't believe it, God. Now we have to cross an open air and the ISIS's buildings are above us? They're shooting out of the windows. They can shoot down in the courtyard. We're trying to get to these five people who are supposed to be still alive. That's when I was just stripped of everything. I just asked, "Can I pray this prayer, Jesus?" Because you don't want to pray in vain or use his name in vain. I felt, "Yeah, this is the time. In Jesus' name, Satan and demons, back off, back off. ISIS, you will not see, hear, or stop us. I say that in Jesus' name. If any of you all have a problem with that, talk to him, because it's his authority, and we're behind him."

Mark, I think I had no faith. It was like something. I don't know what it was. It was a cry, a soul cry, for the promise that Jesus gives all of us. Not the battles that we choose. I didn't choose this battle. I think that's very important. I didn't choose to go rescue these people. I didn't choose even to be in Iraq. God open those doors. And then the Iraqis want me to go help these people. So, it wasn't anything beneficial for me or came out of me. It was what God had and what people needed. And then use his name. And they did not see us crossing that open area. I was like, "Wow." I had growing confidence then in Jesus, not me.

We start finding wounded—one, two, three, four people trapped there. And we think we have to quietly get them on our backs and try to get them back out through the rubble. Now, you can hear ISIS talking on the other side of this neck glass wall. You're like, "Oh, man." So, we had to stuff like a cloth in this woman's mouth who's shot. She screams when you move her. We have to be quiet. We look out in the street, and I see an open area directly under ISIS's observation. There's a car, three bodies behind it and a



woman. They're all dead. A guy in a wheelchair next to her, shot, slumped over. His wife evidently was pushing her, flipped upside down, shot. All these dead people.

When I looked at this mass of dead bodies behind the car, I see movement. Oh, no. This woman locks eyes with me. She's about 30 yards away, and she opens her mouth, no sound, just like "Help me" in Arabic, whatever it was, you know what she meant. I was like, "Oh, no, she's alive." I said, "Lord, take her to the heaven now. Take her. Have mercy." I pleaded for her sake and our sake, because if we go on that street, that's the street we'd run down the tank the day before. There's armored vehicles blown up down that street. Then she's dead, we're dead. They'll come running in this building because they know we're here and they kill all the people we're trying to rescue and us. Hopeless, so just take her God.

And then I thought, "Is that the best God can do? It's the best a human can do; it's not the best God can do." So, I grabbed Zuhair's hand, the same private, and I whispered in this prayer, "God, help, in Isa's name." Mark, man, I was terrified and trying to save these people too. So, my heart was torn in every way. When I said that prayer, his eyes lit up afterwards. He goes, "Huh." He looked up at this wire on the wall, quietly, and just like that, wire, wire, like exactly. We cut down 30 yards of it, cut it with my knife, tied it together and coiled it up. Now, how are we getting it out to her? He turns to this one six-year-old girl, different girl than the day we rescued the day before. He says something to her, whispers to her in Arabic. She runs out 15 yards. ISIS shoots, but she's small. The retaining wall is a little above, so they can't get her. She throws the wire. She runs about halfway and throws the wire. The rest of it lands on this woman's chest, and she runs back. And then Zuhair and I drag this woman in quietly, but the angle she's being dragged ISIS cannot shoot. They're not even going to shoot.

As we're pulling in her in—I don't know if you've seen that video—the rope is tied to her arm, a wire like this. She's been dragged through rubble, the whole thing is bouncing off of rocks and all this. She's been shot, three days, dress soaked with blood, no water. I don't know how she's alive, 100 something degrees. We're pulling her into us. I was like, "I can't believe this." She's saying, "God, you are great. I called on your name and you did not forsake me." And then she looked me in the eyes when we got her close. She said, "Brother, thank you. You didn't leave me." In my soul, I said, "You know how close I was leaving you?"

We got them out, took us hours to carry them out. ISIS didn't find us. We got them all. They're all alive. But the main story of this is: the evil is so great; humans couldn't take it on. The humans in this case, me, were so weak. We could not accomplish the mission. But when we ask God to help us, he worked through and overcame our weakness to defeat evil and take something out that was good. That's the whole story, I think in a way of the gospel. So, it breaks my heart all the time to be in those situations, but it's good for my heart, I think, I believe. I think that's the story of my faith.

I know those things sound dramatic, because we were in war and they're shooting and all that, but I think they're absolutely applicable in our daily lives of we're angry at somebody or something that you can't do. I was in Washington, DC, and there was a meeting. There were congressmen and super right-wing politicians and journalists on one side of the table; on the left, super left-wing, literally on the left side; and at the head,



some very rich people. Nobody I knew, just about. I knew one congressman. I don't even know why I was invited. I listened to that discussion of issues that are so over my head, because when you try to help one group of people with sincere heart, you're probably going to hurt someone else. Democracy is not perfect.

I was listening to all the issues. They finally turned to me after two hours of discussion and said, "What do you have to say?" I said, "I've said nothing purposely for the last two hours because I don't know the issues like you do. I'm over my head and I was afraid of you all. If I open my mouth, I'll be exposed for the ignorant person I am." When I prayed about that, I thought that is the fear of man, not the fear of God. Because when I asked God what I should do, I felt in my soul, don't waste this opportunity. So, I said, "This is what I feel God's telling me, for you and me and all of us. God is bigger than all these issues. And he will give from the plumber to the president the answer each needs." From the president of Fuller to the person who cleans this place, to the student, to the politicians, to the policeman, he'll give us all the answer we need for today. He will. He won't give me your answer or vice versa, but he'll give us each the answer because he's bigger than our problems. If we follow his answers, there will be a harmony. They will not sound all the same—like an orchestra is all different instruments. There'll be a harmony, and the compromises will have a moral beauty. That to me is America. That's where we're at. So, if we each listen to the Lord—what do you have for me, God? What do you have for me? He's going to give us an answer.

MARK:

Dave, you mentioned this video that was shown on CNN, a video that was shot of you in some pretty dramatic circumstances in Mosul under siege rescuing a young girl. Tell us about that.

DAVID:

I have two things. I'm going to mention one and go into this just if there's time. So, right after that little girl had been killed and Jesus took vengeance away from my heart and liberated me, so I could love ISIS and pray for them and not be a prisoner of that, my Iraqi driver became a follower of Jesus, Muhammad. "Muhammad, why'd you do that?" "I asked him in my heart. He came in my heart." Great.

One month later, while we're trying to help civilians who have been shot, we're all in our Humvee and our Humvee was shot to pieces. He got shot eight times rescuing my translator who was shot, and my translator later died. Muhammad, I called him. We stay at the frontline. He was back at the hospital in Baghdad. Twelve days later, he's still alive. I said, "Muhammad, how are you, man?" He's out of ICU by then. He goes, "I'm very happy." "Why?" "Jesus is in my heart." Wow. So, I mentioned Muhammad was shot eight times saving my translator, was shot just once in the stomach. All of this was trying to save civilians. ISIS was shooting. ISIS has always been shooting civilians. But in May, it seemed like they ramped up the tempo. More and more civilians, randomly shot. In June, they made a fatwa, a proclamation that it was better and a higher act of love if you killed women and children than let them escape to the Iraqis, the Iraqi army. Wow. They started killing more and more. One day on June the 1st, we got called from where we were saying, "Hey, we need all the medical help we can get." So, my daughter drove one armored ambulance. I took a Humvee, and we had another ambulance. We all congregated at this intersection in Northwest Mosul, where people were flooding,



running. I probably saw about 150 people coming. About 40 people among them are shot. Some died right there. We're treating casualties and we're doing triage and trying to move them out. Where are they coming from? There's so many. They say that ISIS is killing everybody by the hospital and the Pepsi factory at the first bridge. Anybody who tries to escape out of there, the Chechens had that strong point and they're killing everybody. But the whole day, we're treating more and more people. We had no chance to go see that. That night we went, and we saw people crawling across at night who'd fake dead during the day. They crawled at night, and we start treating them. All night long, shootings happening, and we're treating people who escaped ISIS.

The next morning, I look out in the street. It's 150 yards down the street from where I looked to a low retaining wall, and in the hospital and Pepsi factory which I'm describing that the second rescue. ISIS in those buildings, shooting. Every time you poke your head, they shoot, but I looked at the ground, there's dead bodies, one, two, three. Babies. Baby in her mom's arms are both shot in the head. Little girls with lunch pails, shot in the head. I mean, it's horrible, all these dead people. I was like, "Oh, man."

I looked again, I thought, "Against that wall, there's living people." There was a man sitting against the wall, and he waved his hand like this. Oh, there's living, and then I saw three little kids, two little kids playing out from the wall a little bit among the dead bodies, walking around looking for water bottles among the dead. As if they thought they were all asleep or something. And then one little girl hiding under her dead mom's hijab, her scarf. I thought, "Oh, man." So, I prayed and prayed. What can we do? Well, you can't just run out there because even armor vehicles were blowing up on the street. You couldn't move. What can we do? So, we pray. This is what I love about the church. It's just like those scriptures and emails came to me. They didn't come from me. They came from believers who sent those messages. My pastor from Thailand, Paul Bradley, calls me and he goes, "Dave, you're really on my heart. How can I pray?" Oh, man, and I tell him. . . It was like, I got an infusion of faith. I just got an infusion of faith. I can only attribute that to God. I just said, "Okay, I'm going to call the Americans again," because I'd already told them what's happening. The good thing about being 56, which I am now, is I'm old. But my friends, if they're still in, they're generals, and they are some awesome guys.

I said, "Hey, this, this, and this, these are my coordinates. These are the coordinates of ISIS. This is where some living people are. Can we get smoke? Can you coordinate with the Iraqis for smoke?" The Americans coordinate with the Iraqis, and the Americans are dropping smoke. The Iraqis gave us one tank, and they got the tank out in the street. My original plan was a bulldozer, a tank, and a bunch of Humvees. We'd all drive up to the scene. The bulldozer clear the way for the Humvees, the tank would hold back ISIS. We'd rescue these people, stick them in armored Humvees. They have better chance to survive it.

But the Iraqis looked at that road. They said, "Nothing survives in this road. You don't even get one tank now." I'm like, "Oh no, there's just smoke." I just prayed, "Jesus, help. Change this guy's mind." Americans dropped even more smoke. You could not see the hospital or the Pepsi factory, which is why if you look at the video, you see a tank and a low building. But right behind that, windows and everything. I said, "Please look again," to the Iraqi commander. I prayed with him. "Can I pray with you?" "Yeah, of course,"



because this is what I love about Muslims. They believe in God. It's so cool. We pray together all the time.

So, when I pray with them, this is what I say, "Allah, Allah, help us, in Isa's name, in Jesus' name." I said, "Please can I pull them out. Look." Because you can't stick your head out very long. You poked a head out, bang, bang, bang. He goes, "Okay, you get one tank right now, take it or leave it." "I'll take it." The four guys in the tank are like "Waaa!" Iraqis, how brave were they? They're in front of all of us. Our anti-tank weapons systems have been blowing up everything that's moving. That's tremendous courage. Who they're going to save? The children of their enemy. Wow.

So, we ran behind them. It was myself' Monkey who was my pastor, who filmed all this; and a new volunteer named Ephraim, who just got out of the Navy SEALs and wondering what to do with his life and came as a medic because our job is not to fight; and another guy named Sky, who came as a medic, but he'd been a Marine. And then a new refugee named Mahmoud from Syria, who said, "I want a job, translate." He never did one of these again. He's like, "I'll go. What are you guys doing today?" "We're behind a tank." "Oh, that won't be hard." "Oh my gosh, too late."

We're behind a tank and bullets are pinging off the tank and whipping by us, but ISIS can't quite get us. The feeling when we first started down that road, because there's 150 yards of cover, was like imagine if you're on a roller coaster and you're going over that big drop. You know that feeling? I hate it. But imagine if you're right at that big drop and all of a sudden, you had a lever to release the carriage on purpose and detach. Now you're free falling to death. That's the feeling I had when the tank started moving.

I said, "Let's go." Total terror. We ran behind this tank, got up next to the wall. The tank is blasting. ISIS is blasting. Americans are dropping more smoke. I remember just praying and thinking, "If I die trying to save that girl, my wife and kids will understand," because I think there's no way you can make it. There's so many bullets here. There's dead people for a reason. I just said, "Jesus, help me." I ran behind the tank. From the tank, ran out to the rubble, got the girl. She held onto her dead mother for two days. I had to pull off her mother, and I fell down, got up again, ran back.

The two Americans who have been medics just lay down fire on ISIS. About a minute later, one of the Americans, Ephraim was shot through the leg. I put the girl down with Mahmoud, ran back again with both the Americans, grab two more men. They only had 3 survivors out of 150 on that street. Got both men back behind the tank. We lost one of the men. He's shot by ISIS. And then so we only rescued one guy. And we got the girl. And we got them out. That's what happened. We ran back behind the tank. Ephraim was shot as we were running behind the tank, but we got them out. And on the way out, once we're out of the line of fire, I had my daughter get in the Humvee with me because we finally got to Humvee. And then I called my wife and said, "We got this girl, she needs a mom. She's got no mom, got nothing." She's the only one not shot, but totally traumatized. So, we gave her six bottles of water, IV. I put her on Karen's arm. And then the one guy we saved who's wounded, put him in the cache collection point. That night, went back to this little house we're staying out with the Iraqi army. The Iraqi general came in, and that little girl is huddling with my wife. When the little girl saw me, even though I'm the one that rescued her, she's always afraid of me. But when she saw the



general, and he came and picked her up and put his arms, she melted. The gentleman started crying, an Iraqi Muslim general crying. He said, "A little baby, a little baby. If we can't find any family, I'm now your father."

MARK:

Amazing story. **1:02 13**

DAVID:

The love of these people, the love of the Iraqis for other people and for us, their enemy. American army, we're their enemy. It breaks my heart now, and I think we need to help them. I love [when] in the Bible Cain is asked by God, "Where's your brother?" "Am I my brother's keeper?" The whole rest of the Bible is yeah, you're not your brother's controller. You're not your brother's enforcer. But we're here to help each other. I believe we need to help the Iraqis. None of us are in this world alone.

That general told me the day I left Mosul, he said, "David, I know you don't want to leave us." He walked in our prayer meeting, because we're praying about leaving or not. I was the sole dissenter, I said that we should stay. "I know you want to leave us, but you go. Go to America and tell the Americans we love you. Please love us. Thank you for showing us what it means to follow Jesus." He said that in front of all his command, and then his brigade major, medical officer, comes and hugs me. In English he says, "You pray for us every day. I want to pray for you." He prays. He says, "I pray this in Jesus' name." I said, "You prayed in Jesus' name?" He goes, "Yes, I like the sound of the name."

So that was after that rescue. So, Muhammad's alive. He's a believer. He's joined our team. We're a very small, fragile team. I have no idea what's going to happen. We go back in three weeks. I just was worried about it yesterday. I thought, "Wait a minute, this is God's business." Well, good friend of mine, Todd Pierce, big super cowboy, said, "Dave, don't get mission focused, be Kingdom focused." So, we're going back. Okay, God.

I'll just share with you my little fears. Nat Geo wants to come and do like a 20-minute show on us. I'm like, "Great, we will look like idiots because we are kind of like idiots." But second, what's going to happen? I thought, "Wait a minute, God's in it. Don't worry about it." It's easy. I don't want them there, but we prayed a lot about them. We thought, "Nope, this is a way to speak another message out. Through our best of our ability, we're supposed to."

But it kind of scared me yesterday because I thought, "I may not look very good," or "I don't know what's going to happen." It doesn't matter, because you were Jesus ambassadors. What we hope they see is Jesus. What we hope they see is love between the Iraqis and Americans, and the Iraqis and Kurds, and Americans and Kurds. That's what we can do. So, that's how God helped me just yesterday.

MARK:

Dave, every time again, I hear these kinds of stories. . . Over the years, there's been other versions of similar dramas in Burma mostly, but also in other places that you've been. I just continue to feel like there's probably no one else in all of Fuller's alumni



pools that I could imagine interviewing today or on any other day and having these exact stories. But I think what is common, as you're saying, is really the same God who's trying to meet all of us in our own particular circumstances, called to faithfulness, called to deep sensitivity to hearing God's voice, called to a clarity about what matters and what doesn't matter, called to the sacrificial love, called to an ability to lay our lives on the line for someone else's life. I find that I hope a commonality that ties us together, even though your circumstances are unparalleled for me and my knowledge of any other Fuller alums. It's an amazing expression really of the faithfulness of God in and through you.

Though your story raises so many questions. I mean, there are people as you know and not just in Fuller's network but in the Christian church, who see pacifism as the only way that anybody could ever live in the world. As a person who's not myself a pacifist, I understand those arguments. But I'm also moved and helped and terrified by the stories that you tell because it's both a story of extraordinary generosity of life and spirit in the middle of what is obviously necessarily, by the definitions of the circumstances, violent places and violent settings. So, I just want to say thank you for confusing my life. Thank you for putting before, I think all of us, a vivid example of a risk-taking faithful life that is on the line for Jesus Christ and on the line for the sake of other people. So, thank you very much, and thank you for this conversation.

DAVID:

Thank you, and you're one of my heroes. So, it's an honor. I know very well I'm a little bit different in some ways to most Fuller alumni who I admire and respect. So, to be invited to do this, I got, "Really?" I'm like the little country mouse that came in this room. I feel very honored. I thank God. I'm too weak, I think, just to follow God alone, but I don't follow him alone. I follow him, Mark, with you when I read your books, when I see about Fuller, when churches pray for me, when my wife and kids are with me, when my team helps me. We're not alone. We're not alone in this world. So, thank you.

MARK:

Amen.