

THE BOY WHO WOULD NOT DIE

THE REMARKABLE TESTIMONY OF ONE LOST BOY



GARY AND LOUISE SHORT

Gary and Louise Short have a passion for people in crisis. She worked with the African Children's Choir for over 20 years. Her last years with them she oversaw their ministry in South Sudan. Gary has pastored in the States for years and worked with African leaders in West and East Africa for many years. Louise co-leads with her husband Gary, Hope and Grace International in the new Republic of South Sudan, and has seen over 130,000 come to Christ since the Peace Accords. Starting to help war-torn Sudan since 1993 with various relief and development projects, their ministry now also involves evangelism and church planting. For more info go to www.hopeandgrace.org

DAVID'S EARLY JOURNEY

With gunfire cracking around him, David ran as fast as his nine-year-old legs would carry him. He was sure a soldier was right behind him, about to grab his shoulder, but was afraid to look back. He just kept running until his legs would no longer move. Hiding in the bushes, his heart pounded so loudly he feared a soldier would hear it and shoot him like he had seen them do to others. The raid had happened so quickly it seemed that no one else in his family had made it out of the village alive. David was all alone.

He soon banded together with several other "lost boys" and began an epic odyssey. They left their war-ravaged village, Bor, and walked all the way to Ethiopia. Wild animals followed along picking off the ones who fell behind. Officials promptly turned the boys out of Ethiopia and they ended up in Kenya. From there David was transferred to a refugee camp in southern Sudan near the Ugandan border. Though over 100 miles south of his village, the camp was filled with people from his home area.

David's tribe, the Dinka, suffered so much during the war. Traditionally nomadic cattle herders, many lost their entire herds to the war. Hundreds of thousands were displaced from their home areas or killed. It is fair to say that they were probably the backbone of the fighting force during the war and lost the most. Counting Dinkas and all others, it is estimated that four million Sudanese became displaced refugees and two million perished.

The Internally Displaced Persons camp in which David ended up had over 28,000 residents and was one of four in that area.

While at this camp, David was sent to a nearby training base for the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (the rebel army of the largely Christian southern part of Sudan, now the country of South Sudan). He became one of thousands of boy soldiers helping to fight the war against the radical Islamic government of the North.

THE ROAD TAKES A TURN TOWARD HOPE

We first saw David in 1998 when we initially visited Southern Sudan to conduct an "encouragement conference" for church leaders from all denominations. The civil war continued to rage, the rebel forces, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army, were not doing well, and things looked bleak. Evidence of war surrounded us: from residue of recent battle, to vehicles destroyed by land mines, to our need at one point to quickly hide our Land Cruiser under a mango tree to evade the bomber flying overhead looking for targets of opportunity to terrorize the civilian population.

As different members of our group spoke, we kept noticing this tall young Dinka man sitting in the back, looking very bored and completely disinterested. Unfortunately, no

one seemed to get the opportunity to engage him. However, when we returned less than a year later, the young man had a completely different attitude. He was enthusiastic and involved. He even wanted to interpret for us. We agreed, “We have to find out why this young guy is so different now.”

It turns out when we first saw David, he wasn't bored. He was extremely ill with a parasite that would kill him if he didn't get medical treatment. However no medicine was available in Sudan. Someone suggested he go to Uganda to obtain the needed care but, in his mind, they might as well have told him to go to America or the moon. David decided his only hope was to turn to God. So during that first conference he asked someone to pray for his sickness, and was healed! At the same meeting David also realized his need for salvation and surrendered his life to Christ. Like most Dinka, David stands extremely tall and lean. He had gained the harsh appearance of a military man, but now his smile was radiant as he expressed his newfound joy.

David was the first to follow Jesus through the influence of our ministry at his Internally Displaced People camp. God connected our hearts and he became a spiritual son to us.

When we met David he was around 20 years old and had already lived a full life! We excitedly watched and built into his spiritual and emotional growth for the next few years. David enrolled in a special program at the Kajo Keji Teachers Training College for those learning English. David

also attended special discipleship and ministry intensives we held three times a year during school breaks. Following this, we helped David complete a two-year Bible college in Uganda. After Bible college, he gained practical experience serving as part of our ministry team, helping in the crusade ministry, preaching, interpreting, and visiting other tribes testifying of the transforming power of the Gospel. He preached in evangelistic outreaches, school assemblies and the new local church plants.

After the signing of the Peace Accords in 2005, David, like many other Sudanese, felt drawn back to his home area. As he contemplated plans, David received word that some of his family actually survived the raid on his village so many years before. He needed no more motivation to go home. He returned to Bor to discover his mother, father and sister had survived the attack. He was not an orphan after all! God gave him back his parents and soon gave him a beautiful young wife. They are now the parents of a lovely baby daughter.

David continues to represent our ministry in Bor. Now a headmaster at a local school, he has the freedom to travel from school to school presenting the gospel. In the last couple of years, he led over 1,500 students to Christ. David has served as a peace representative from his state to national conferences, quite a change from the hostile young man he used to be. His fearlessness has allowed him to minister to soldiers, students, and many different tribes. He now has a vision to plant churches in his city of Bor. 

Five Things Evangelicals Need to Know About American Muslims

by Bob Roberts, Senior Pastor at Northwoods Church, north of Dallas/Ft. Worth. He blogs at www.glocal.net/

Sometimes we don't love some people because of our erroneous beliefs. Let me tell you some things about most Muslims that most Christians don't know.

1. You can't be a good Muslim without believing in Jesus. Muslims believe in Jesus's virgin birth—but not from the Father of God. They believe in his miracles. They believe in his perfection. They believe in his unique place. They do not believe as I do that he was God in flesh and part of the Trinity. The Muslims I know love to talk about Jesus, if you open up the conversation.

2. Most Muslims in the US are here because they want the freedoms we have. If they wanted Islamic law and culture, they would be in Islamic nations globally. If you ask them, they'll tell you that. Most Muslims I know would fear the US becoming an Islamic nation. Money was not the only reason or even primary reason many came.

3. Most Muslims fear Islamic terrorists as much as Anglo Christians do. That's why some are here. The majority of violence perpetrated in the name of God

in the world is Muslim on Muslim. Yes, some Muslims commit terrorist acts against non-Muslims, but they by far kill their own people more than others.

4. Most Muslims want a relationship with Christians and others, but they are afraid to reach out. They are the minority. It's up to the majority to reach out and build relationships. Our church practices many ways of reaching out to others of different faiths. Many who come to America value relationship and friendship far more than Americans do. Those friendships have the potential of going very deeply for those who are not afraid.

5. God has a special plan for Muslims. How can I say that? There are 1.5 billion of them in the world. He loves them. They matter to God. God always moves in the masses. You cannot ignore that many people. God created all people. He has a plan for them just as he has for other nations and peoples. I pray daily that God be glorified and Jesus exalted among all peoples and nations, Muslims included.