



Rescue the Captors: True Hostage Situation Involving Colombian Marxist Guerrillas and a Missionary Simply Using the Experience to Share the Gospel

Russell Stendal

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American bush pilot Russell Stendal, on routine business, landed his plane in a remote Colombian village. Gunfire exploded throughout the town and within minutes Russell's 142 day ordeal had begun. The Colombian cartel explained that this was a kidnapping for ransom and that he would be held until payment was made. Held at gunpoint deep in the jungle and with little else to occupy his time, Russell got ahold of some paper and began to write. He told the story of his life and kept a record of his experience in the guerrilla camp. His "book" became a bridge to the men who held him hostage and now serves as the basis for this incredible true story of how God's love penetrated a physical and ideological jungle. How did this incredible true story affect Russell? "At first my mind went wild with thoughts of revenge and violence. Then, after a while, I was able to see through their attempt to break me down and brainwash me. I started making a determined effort to throw all their stories and dramas out of my mind and not to let my thoughts dwell on them at all. I would trust God that He would take care of my wife and I would close my mind to my captors' input. I decided to think about positive values instead." "I told them that they had two choices, either kill me, or let me go for whatever small amount my family could afford. One of the guerrillas turned and asked me if I was afraid to die. I replied that dying is obviously uncomfortable, but yes, I was prepared to die." "My captors tied me up and left the rope on day and night. They were seriously trying to completely break me psychologically and then brainwash me. Every day new things were done to alter me and work towards that goal. My captors started telling me scare stories. Some of these stories were about wild animals. They told me some of the wildest, hair-raising tales about lions and tigers that I have ever heard. These stories were designed both to intimidate me, reducing my ability to sleep, and to cause me to think twice before I decided to try to escape into the jungle again." "God used my hostage situation to show me that I had been guilty of resisting God's hand on my life and had therefore been unwittingly spending an unnecessary amount of time in that spiritual birth canal being squeezed all out of shape instead of coming out into the light and being born again. I decided that I was going to forget my own big missionary plans and projects, and instead I would concentrate on discerning where God was moving and then try to jump on His bandwagon – God taught me how to be a true missionary for Him. I began to react towards problems and adversity as opportunities to learn important things and as opportunities for God to use me to bring glory to Himself. My life changed to one of victory in Jesus Christ. I still have problems, difficulties, and even an occasional defeat; but now I can clearly see the design and purpose that God has for my life. If I have the right attitude, God can reign over everything that happens in my life and teach me something useful from even the most difficult experiences."

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