



# Seasons In Time

ENCOUNTERING GOD FACE TO FACE...  
IN OUR BRIEF JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE

## Life Season II – My World As a Teenager (Continued)

### Gangs and Terrorists – My Substitute Family!

**R**adicalized! *That's what some call a point of no return.* I was caught between two worlds: America and my Sunni heritage. I never knew my father. They said he was killed fighting for Allah in the Middle East. My mother worked two jobs to support the family. *That left my brother and me alone most of our childhood with no purpose or path to follow in life.* I'll never forget the day I saw a website that brought me alive. It was a professionally produced video of an ISIS fighter asking me to join their cause. As songs of Islam played in the background, my heart yearned to have a family like this. *"The Chosen Few from Different Lands" flashed across the screen as he spoke of the light of Allah guiding him to Syria. With ISIS flags waving and sons of Islam gathering to fight and support the war against the American aggressors, I purposed in my heart to become one of Allah's chosen few in the Land of Shem. And if I die for Allah, he will be pleased and will reward me in Jannah!*

**A**ll I had to do was rob a store. That was my initiation rite into the "Blades." Then I would become one of their "brothers" and belong to a REAL Family. Not like my father and mother who divorced and left me and my brothers alone to fend for ourselves. *I wanted to belong to a family who understood me, gave me purpose and showed me they cared by making me accountable to their rules.* Then I could wear their colors and cash in on the loot, girls and drugs. Sure, there were dangers, but the guys I hung with had my back...no matter what! Could I get killed? It didn't matter. At least I'd die for my new family. So I strapped on a gun and made my way to the local convenience store. *This was my chance to be a real man, whatever the cost!*



*In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve with all they would ever need: IDENTITY (Gen. 1:27), APPROVAL (Gen. 1:28); PURPOSE (Gen. 1:28; 2:15); PROVISIONS (Gen. 1:29; 2:12); AUTHORITY (Gen. 1:28; 2:16-17, 19); FAMILY (Gen. 2:18, 20-25); DESTINY (Gen. 2:9 the Tree of Life); and ACCOUNTABILITY (Gen. 2:16-17). *That's the way it was in the beginning...before sin entered the human race.* But afterwards, people exchanged life for death and forfeited their true Identity in God. They sought human acceptance instead of God's caring approval and exchanged His Purposes for evil (even religious) causes. Accountability was given to violent leaders rather than to a loving God. Parents violated their marriage vows and failed to raise their children with love, respect, purpose and accountability. *The end result is teenagers filling their empty lives with Substitute Families...like Gangs or Terrorists. But read what happened to these two teenagers when they came face to face with God.**

**T**he turning point in my life came on the day I watched our "Executioner" behead a woman and her son because they were Christians. I thought I was prepared for this, but I wasn't. I was ready to die for Islam, but this just didn't make any sense. As the hostages knelt on their knees, all I could think of was my own mother and brother. We had started attending a Christian church before I left for Syria, but the forgiving "Jesus" they worshipped wasn't like this vengeful "Allah" I followed. Suddenly I was gripped with deep remorse...yet a strange sense of love reaching to me. *As I stared at their bloody remains, I asked my mother's God to help me return home. "If you do," I prayed, "I'll learn about this Jesus. Perhaps His love is greater than hate and terror."*

**E**verything went terribly wrong when I walked into the convenience store and pulled out my gun. The clerk pressed the alarm button, and before I knew it, I shot him pointblank in the head. As he fell to the floor, I felt sick to my stomach. What had I just done!? This man was probably a husband and a father...and now I did to his family what had happened to me. Because of me, his children would be without a dad. That was 15 years ago. I was eventually caught and convicted of robbery and "attempted" murder. My gun had miraculously misfired, and the bullet lodged in his skull without killing him! *While I was in prison, the Lord mercifully saved me through a Christian prison ministry. And the person who led me to the Lord was the very man I had shot!*

Next: More Stories from My Teen Years - *How My Dad Became My Hero*

