



## **Prisoners of Hope: The Story of Our Captivity and Freedom in Afghanistan**

*Dayna Curry, Heather Mercer, Stacy Mattingly*

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When Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer arrived in Afghanistan, they had come to help bring a better life and a little hope to some of the poorest and most oppressed people in the world. Within a few months, their lives were thrown into chaos as they became pawns in historic international events. They were arrested by the ruling Taliban government for teaching about Christianity to the people with whom they worked. In the middle of their trial, the events of September 11, 2001, led to the international war on terrorism, with the Taliban a primary target. While many feared Curry and Mercer could not survive in the midst of war, Americans nonetheless prayed for their safe return, and in November their prayers were answered.

In *Prisoners of Hope*, Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer tell the story of their work in Afghanistan, their love for the people they served, their arrest, trial, and imprisonment by the Taliban, and their rescue by U.S. Special Forces. The heart of the book will discuss how two middle-class American women decided to leave the comforts of home in exchange for the opportunity to serve the disadvantaged, and how their faith motivated them and sustained them through the events that followed. Their story is a magnificent narrative of ordinary women caught in extraordinary circumstances as a result of their commitment to serve the poorest and most oppressed women and children in the world. This book will be inspiring to those who seek a purpose greater than themselves.

## **Prisoners of Hope: The Story of Our Captivity and Freedom in Afghanistan Details**

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## **From Reader Review Prisoners of Hope: The Story of Our Captivity and Freedom in Afghanistan for online ebook**

### **Courtenay Simmons says**

This was an amazing account of two young aid workers in Afghanistan who were taken by the Taliban and held as prisoners for over 100 days. Dayna and Heather describe their fear and distress, but also God's goodness and sometimes even the humanity of their Talib guards. Worth a read!!

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### **Patricia says**

This book took me on a journey with the prisoners. All through this book I was impressed with the way that they thought about and the way they treated the people of Afghanistan; even while they were in captivity they worried about the people of Afghanistan that they had befriended, they never failed to show love to fellow prisoners. They put others before themselves. Most of us would have worried about getting ourselves out of prison these remarkable women worried about how to help others. One scene that stays with me is when they are allowed to go to their homes to get their personal items they thought not only about what they needed but what they could bring to the Afghanistan women they were imprisoned with. This is a great book and shows the courage, strength and faith these women had. These women are a good example of what a Christian is and what a Christian should stand for. Is a must read.

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### **Tim Chavel says**

This is a story of Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer. These two ladies traveled from the US to minister in Afghanistan. The first part of the book tells of their lives before salvation and how the Lord led them to travel overseas. The middle part of the book details their service and ministry in Afghanistan. The later part of the book tells of their imprisonment in Afghanistan because of their willingness to share their faith with the people of that nation. These two ladies were in Afghanistan during the "911" crisis in the United States. These two ladies endured much but were rescued by the Navy SEALs. I really enjoyed reading about how these two allowed God's love to flow through their lives. If you like to read about courage or if you have interest in Afghanistan you will enjoy this book. The following quote from the book speaks for itself:

I came to see that God did not need someone with extraordinary gifts and achievements. He just needed someone who could love, share her life, and feel for others as He did. God was looking for compassion, not commendations. He was looking for faithfulness, not fame. God assured me that if I would be committed to loving and serving with a soft heart, then even if my life seemed small in the eyes of the world, before God it would be great. ~Heather Mercer

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### **Sue says**

The incredible sequence of events from their capture by the Taliban to their rescue over 100 days later. Dayna and Heather were living in Afghanistan working with an NGO serving the local people. They shared

about Jesus and it was this which led to their arrest. They share of the harrowing experiences in prison. A U.S. special ops team ultimately got them out.

This book is such an encourager and faith builder. The women are honest about the struggles and fears but also about how they turned to the Lord and the ways He sustained them answered their prayers.

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### **Amber says**

This book is inspiring to me. These women went through so much and came out stronger because of it. These two women served in Afghanistan during a time of unrest between this country and the United States. These women were imprisoned for sharing materials and beliefs that were focused on Christianity. They also helped families and children who were in poverty and tried to create schooling for them. In particular, they held an underground school for girls. Great read for educators who want to learn more about education restraints outside the U.S. May be interesting for children to learn about during a lesson on the Middle East.

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### **HannahBeth says**

I randomly picked this up at the library...I'd heard a little about their story, so I thought it'd be a really good book. I have to admit I was a bit disappointed.

Don't get me wrong, it was a good book! It just felt like there was something lacking in the story (I know it was a real life story, but something in their way of telling it left a bit to be desired), and I felt a little like they were a bit apologetic about some of their beliefs in one part. I was glad, though, to see how they both struggled through their captivity (I felt like I could relate to them better...like I saw the realities that come along with being imprisoned for Christ, even as much as I love reading stories of extremely strong Christians who never lost hope while they were in prison), yet still praised God daily and gave Him all the glory for their rescue. I was also impressed with their compassion for the Afghani people, and their eagerness to go to help people in a country that is extremely hostile towards believers! Their bravery inspired me! :) They truly took to heart Jesus' command to preach the Gospel to ALL nations!

The information about the Afghan/Islamic culture was very neat to read, and also very sobering. This is the kind of battle we Christians (and the world, really) are up against these days, and we need to know how to fight, how to pray, but more importantly, how to reach the muslims for Christ! :)

I was also glad to see that they shared the Gospel at the end of their book.

Overall their story is inspiring, but the book, the telling of it leaves me doubtful that I'd pick it up again anytime in the near future. ;)

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### **Gabrielle says**

What a load of self indulgent shite! I was expecting something totally different, but what I got was 2 incredibly annoying women patting themselves on the back for some kind of achievement and preaching like there's no tomorrow.

Apart from being extremely over the top with the evangelising, the book highlights mundane details (like the contents of their 10th care package or the furniture in their house, or the millionth time they prayed) and glosses over things which would have been really interesting like human stories and better descriptions of Afghanistan.

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### **Diane says**

Good read! An honest, heartfelt, warm, forthright and a wonderful story....(paperback!)

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### **Jennifer says**

This book was riveting. I read this 300 page-turner in 2 sittings! I couldn't put it down. Wow. I recently met Heather & Dayna and have known of their story, but wanted to learn more about what they went through. I am so glad they expounded on their relationships there, their testimonies, the plight of the Afghans, and poured out their hearts in this book. The most exciting thing of all is the miraculous stories of God's divine intervention and protection and the spirit that covered them as they were in the hands of the Taliban. The story of their escape out of Afghanistan was amazing. I am blown away at the timing of the events. They were captured just a few days before 9/11, they were shaken in prison by the blasts of missiles and gunfire overhead of the Northern Alliance & Taliban at war. America was most likely to soon come into play to retaliate for the attacks on the US, and all as they were held in Kabul, the primary target and capital city of Afghanistan.

They were able to see, just in time before their escape, the answer to their prayers and a world turned upside down before their eyes for the Afghani people. The Northern Alliance had moved in to overtake the Taliban regime.

Here is a beautiful chapter where Heather recounts that moment: "We wended our way into the bazaar area and saw people emerging from their houses. Women stood uncovered in the doorways. Children came out to the street. Men, still holding their weapons, shouted, 'The Taliban just left! We're free! We're free! Drivers in cars honked their horns. We began to hear MUSIC playing. People clapped, waved, and laughed. We waved back at the women SHOWING THEIR FACES. We acknowledged the men- something we could NEVER do under the Taliban.

As we walked down the road, I felt as if we were participants in a parade. I looked around with awe at the scene and wondered if I was seeing the first generation of children in a new Afghanistan to grow up free from the atrocities of war. My heart was moved. We were marching through history. Walking through Ghanzi was like walking in a world turned upside down."

Side note; one of my favorites was when Dayna & Heather were being moved by the Taliban and got in the car and stepped on something. She asked what it was, "a rocket launcher". Never a dull moment.

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### **Rachel says**

Their story in itself I found very interesting, but on top of that pleasure the writing didn't suck! I've usually found anyone re-telling their own real life experience can be quite poorly done, thankfully this was not one of those.

The insight into the culture was an added bonus and all their stories/flashbacks/anecdotes and such I found to be well laid out and presented with a lovely mixture of colorful details and good solid facts. Other than the obvious fact that they survived and returned to the U.S. they did not at any point give the ending away or spoil surprises which I truly appreciated!

The narration switches between both of the women, so there was a gain in perspective without their respective personalities blurring together.

It does tend to get a little slow at points, but it soon passes and the story resumes. That's to be expected though, I mean this isn't exactly a perfectly plotted narration, it's an actual account from real life, as such it's bound to have it's slow moments.

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### **Ray says**

The vicious attacks by some of these reviewers is truly frightening. No matter what someone may think of the particular beliefs of these two young woman, who can doubt that they are especially virtuous people? They are attractive, educated, talented women who freely chose to live in a hostile and poor country to minister to the people's phsyical and spiritual needs.

The writing is fair. Their story is pretty interesting. They give us a decent window into a world that all Americans need to better understand. But the best part of the book to me is their deep love and respect for the Afghani people. These are pretty rough people that very few Westerners would dare visit, never mind live among. But these two women clearly fell in love with the Afghanis. Really interesting to see how this happens.

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### **Abby says**

This story is about two women who volunteered with a Christian international aid organization in Afghanistan. They were arrested by the Taliban for talking to Afghanis about Jesus shortly before September 11th. They were in prison awaiting their trial (which they were pretty nervous about) when the the terrorist attacks on the twin towers happened, after which they were stuck in Kabul while the city was being bombed by American forces. They were moved around by their captors, and finally released when the Taliban was overthrown - then rescued by special forces (including Navy SEALS, my FAVORITE DUDES IN THE WHOLE WORLD) and helicoptered out to Pakistan in the middle of the night. Tuh dud. I spoiled it. They lived to tell their story. (But did I really spoil it? It would be pretty hard to read their book right now if they were dead.)

I don't know why, but the story was not nearly as gripping or exciting as the paragraph I just wrote would lead you to believe. Maybe I should have written the book for them, but maybe it wouldn't have sounded as Christ like as they made it. It's written from these two women's perspectives, but they sounded exactly the same the first half, and I couldn't ever remember who was talking. By the end I could tell they were very different women (who got on each other's nerves at times), but I still couldn't ever remember who was talking. Seriously, the way they talked and wrote was way too similar, and it all sort of blanded the story up for me. You know how some authors can make the most boring stories totally gripping? I think these gals can sort of do the opposite - take the most exciting story and make it sort of a yawn. (Only sort of a yawn - it wasn't like I couldn't finish it, I just took a looong time to get through it.)

Also, I'm torn. You know, I think they were doing amazing things, leaving their homes and going to serve in a foreign, poverty stricken country. Good for them, right? And I have no idea what I would have done in their situation, but I really don't think I would be talking about Jesus (even secretly) when the Taliban said people would be severely punished for listening to me. Maybe that's because I'm Mormon and the LDS church makes a big deal about NOT talking religion in countries where it's against the law, even if the government is corrupt and nobody likes them. These gals weren't openly preaching, but they'd always go and ask people if they could pray for them in the name of Jesus, and when people approached them and

questioned them about their beliefs, they told them everything. They gave them materials, and showed movies of Christ's life. When they were caught and arrested (along with 6 other aid workers in connection to them, and I don't remember - maybe 15-20 Afghanis who worked for the organization or were being helped by them), all the other aid organizations were kicked out of the country (or evacuated). Some other Afghani people were beaten and imprisoned for listening to what they were teaching them. Really? They had a lot of faith in God and Jesus - shouldn't they have just helped the people with their physical needs and prayed a lot that someday they'd be able to also teach the people what they believed? I don't know. I'm sure they had the same thoughts after they were arrested. They were really selfless people, so who am I to judge them? I know. I'll stop judging. I wish them good luck with the rest of their lives, because they are good people and I'm glad they wrote the book so that I could read it. I am glad I read it, even though it dragged a little now and then.

On another topic, reading about the women in Afghanistan and the awful oppression they live through made me think a lot about how free I am. I already think (all the time) about how great it is to live now, in America, in freedom and prosperity. This made me add being a woman here and now (as opposed to any other time, and any other place) in the history of the world. Living in other places and times could really suck for anyone, but it all gets worse when you're a woman. Except for here and now, where it's all **WONDERFUL**. I was outside running in a tank top and shorts next to the road the other morning and actually teared up when I thought about the women in Afghanistan who were forced to wear burqas, and who would be arrested for going in public without a male relative. I could get up at midnight and go outside in a bikini all by myself, and no one would bother me. 99.9% of the time, I will be perfectly safe, even in the dead of night with no protection. If a man drove by and saw me, he'd be much more likely to stop and offer me a ride home than to beat and rape me. On a daily basis I have almost zero fear of someone hurting me or my family. I'm much more concerned that I'll get in a car accident or become obese and die of heart disease. It seems so normal and is so easy to take for granted, but our lives would be **AMAZING** for 99% of the women in the history of earth. So the next time you wear shorts in public, or go swimming, or take your kids on a walk through some trees - remember you're more blessed than anybody else in the world. (And say thanks to the soldiers who are going to places like Afghanistan to free the people so that their women can wear bikinis at midnight someday too.)

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### **Kindra says**

A wonderful read

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### **Sally Lindsay-briggs says**

This was given to me by my Second Mom for my birthday, recently. I would give it six stars if I could. It was written by two young missionaries to Afghanistan in 2001. The living conditions, the people who lived there, were so deprived of basic things we take for granted: electricity, running water, enough food, clothing, proper medical care, enough medicine, and adequate housing. The authors and others worked very hard to help these people and make them self-sufficient. They witnessed to them from their sincere love of Jesus, which was a problem because the Taliban forbade that teaching and also, residents could have been killed for converting. We learned much about the changeable rules that restricted the Afghani. Mostly, it was a story of faith, of a multitude of events that did seem like an action movie, fitting around the devastating deaths of nine/eleven in the United States, and what happened to Dayna and Heather and their associates as a

result. You will not want to put this book down for long. It captivates, stuns and sticks with you for a long time.

I read this a second time, which I hardly ever do but I did it for my spoken book review. I thoroughly enjoyed it again. The first time I entirely missed the back cover comment from President Bush. Wonderful!

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### **Natalie Vellacott says**

I have just read this book for the third time. It is a remarkably honest account written by two American women who were captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan over a decade ago. The women were working for a Christian aid organisation and had showed the Jesus film in several houses prior to their arrest. Unfortunately for them 9/11 happened whilst they were under investigation and they became pawns in a political battle.

It is a relatively well written account with lots of descriptive detail. I especially like the way the account is split between the two women as it makes for easy reading albeit with some duplication. The women's hearts for the people are clear and their desire to share the Gospel. Both women have checkered pasts which may account somewhat for their zeal.

I felt there was a bit too much detail from both of the women about their lives before they were saved, it wasn't really relevant to the story and I wonder whether they will regret revealing some very personal details later down the line. The story could also have been condensed. There were a lot of details about everyday events--what they ate for dinner, who said what to whom. It felt a bit slow in places.

Both women returned to mission work after their ordeal. I am encouraged by their perseverance and dedication to the mission. Interesting story, recommended.

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