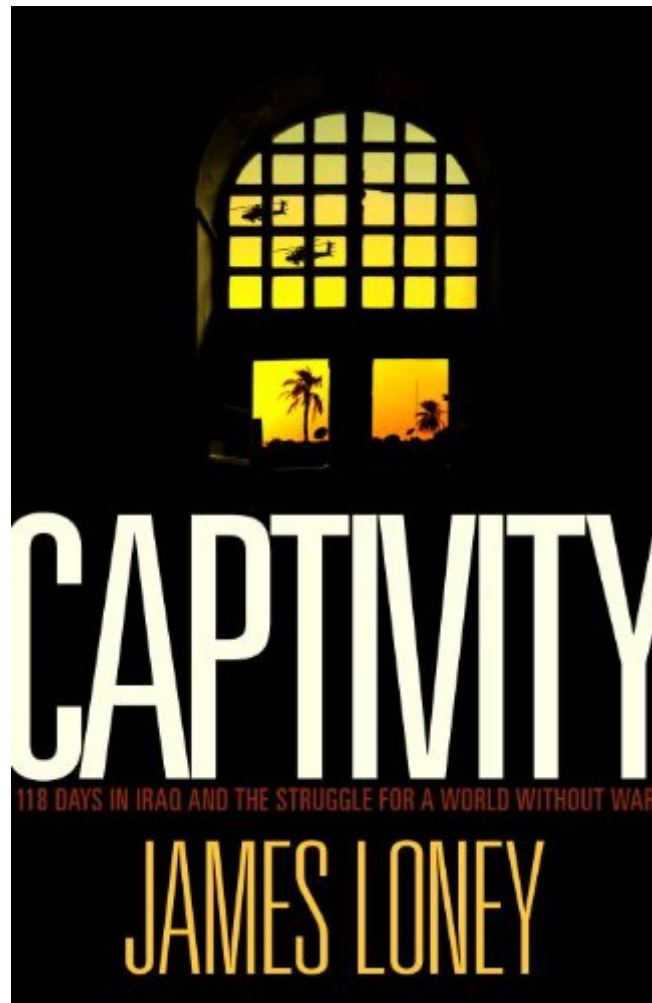




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Captivity: 118 Days In Iraq And The Struggle For A World Without War



Synopsis

The powerful account of the remarkable peace activist kidnapped while leading a peace delegation and held for ransom by Iraqi insurgents until his paradoxical release by a crack unit of special forces commandos. In November 2005, James Loney and three other men – Canadian Harmeet Singh Sooden, British citizen Norman Kember and American Tom Fox – were taken hostage at gunpoint. The men were with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), an organization that places teams trained in non-violent intervention into lethal conflict zones. The then unknown Swords of Righteousness Brigade released videos of the men, resulting in what is likely the most publicized kidnapping of the Iraq War. Tom Fox was murdered and dumped on a Baghdad street. The surviving men were held for 118 days before being rescued by Task Force Black, an elite counter-kidnap unit led by the British SAS. *Captivity* is the story of what Jim described upon his return to Toronto and reunion with his partner Dan Hunt as "a terrifying, profound, transformative and excruciatingly boring experience." It presents an affecting portrait of how Jim came to be a pacifist and chronicles his work in Iraq before the kidnapping. It brings the reader immediately into the terror and banality, the frictions, the moral dilemmas of their captivity, their search to find their captors' humanity, and the imperative need to conceal Jim's sexual identity. It examines the paradoxes we face when our most cherished principles are tested in extraordinary circumstances and explores the universal truths contained in every captivity experience. At its heart, the book is a hope-filled plea for peace, human solidarity and forgiveness. From James Loney: Why I Wrote This Book I often wondered, during those excruciating days of handcuffs and chains, fear and boredom without end, would I ever get to tell anyone about the strange and bizarre things that happened during our captivity? Being transported in the trunk of a car. Sleeping with my left and right hands handcuffed to the person beside me. Explaining to the captors how to use "men's gel." Picking open our handcuffs after watching a Hollywood movie. It is a paradox. I went to Iraq as a pacifist on a mission of peace and was kidnapped, threatened with death and held hostage with three other men until we were rescued in a military operation. It is an extraordinary privilege to be able to tell the story of this paradox, to explain why I remain committed to the principles of nonviolence despite the fact a member of our group was murdered and our freedom was secured by armed force. The crucible of captivity was a kind of school in which I was able to see the innermost workings of the universe, how we are all connected, how our liberation is inextricably tied together. I want to share this story in the hope of contributing to the emergence of a world without war, the single greatest challenge of the 21st century. Everything depends on this, for without peace nothing else is possible. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Captivity made me realize that in some ways, we are all captive--captive by what we need, by what holds us captive, whether it be material goods or ideology. It also, and this was surprising to me, made me see the world with brighter, more hopeful eyes. I had expected the opposite--that learning more of the incredible suffering of both captives and the Iraqi captors would reaffirm my general hopelessness about the state of the world and the Middle East in particular. But in the end it didn't. So that you, too, might perhaps experience this change of heart first hand as a reader, I won't tell you why I ending my reading with this conclusion but say simply that reading the acknowledgements after I finished the narrative made me realize the complex and beautiful web of peace people that surrounded James Loney, Norman Kember, Harmeet Singh Sooden, and Tom Fox, the American who didn't survive. Throughout my reading, I was haunted by the paradox that Jim mentions in the "Introduction," that the three who weren't murdered were rescued by the very institutions of war they work to abolish. From that paradox I realized anew the inescapable truth of

the oneness of all humanity. I've known Jim for years as a Catholic Worker colleague and I remember driving through dark and snowy Chicago streets to pray with the Christian Peace Team on that first awful night when the four were kidnapped. I followed the news stories, vigiled for their release, and read the sanitized versions of their ordeal, but didn't let myself think in particulars about what they might be going through. But Jim's honest rendering made me know with a hard knowing what it means to be a captive. Yes, there were the physical constraints of being chained and hungry and rarely able to bathe. Even more compelling to me were the wrenching days of living with guards who didn't speak English and could never be believed and the even harder task of living with the other captives. All four had been schooled in nonviolence and techniques for community living, but they still found it incredibly difficult to survive the strain of handcuffed and unrelenting togetherness. When I read the details--the weeks without toothbrushes and the filth of their prison--and the different ways each had of dealing with such a complete loss of freedom, I couldn't help asking how I would have coped. Would I have been able, as Jim did, to be angry and impatient but yet turn to God in faith? To massage my captor's sore muscles? Or would I have subsided into the deadfally prison fog I know from Shoa literature and from my oral histories of peacemakers who serve time in US and European prisons? Reading Jim's remarkable recall of the changes his spirit endured throughout the ordeal, the wrenching decisions he made, the grace that carried him through, was a life-changing experience. Thank you, Jim, for your candor in showing us the soul of a survivor.

The book is beautiful and moving - I read it very slowly over many days and weeks. I am still wrestling with its truth - it is profound and challenging. 'Junior' (the most abusive of Jim's captors) mimes being a suicide bomber and wiping out American soldiers - they had killed his family in the bombing of Fallujah. Jim is mortified, and finally finds a way to give Junior hope and a desire to go on living - back massages. Junior whispers in tears on his prayer mat - his 17 year-old sister is dying. Jim, who is sick himself, and his fellow captives promise to pray for her. Junior is deeply grateful, and promises medicine, and eventual freedom. Jim writes to the soldiers who 'rescued' him, "I am unspeakably grateful... But the gun is still in charge and nothing has really changed. I have begun to see that there is no such thing as 'American freedom' - there is only human freedom. The gun will never make us free (- it can only make us) a slave of fear, going around and around in a spiral of death, becoming more and more like the thing that we hate." It is audacious to say to the one who has harmed you, no matter how seriously, "I forgive. I no longer hold you. You may go; your destiny is your own. You are free. Go without expectation, obligation or libation. Go with my blessing: May you be healed of your violence. May you be reborn in the knowledge of your

forgiveness. May you start a joyous new life of giving life." "When we forgave our captors, something extraordinary happened: the captivity suddenly made sense. It had a purpose. It had become a seed of healing, a seed of forgiveness."

James Loney was one of four members of a Christian Peacemaker team held in captivity in Iraq for over three months. James Loney wrote notes during captivity and observed carefully - feelings, events, captor/captive relationships. His painful conflicts around what is the right thing to do to respect the humanity of the captors without being subservient to them are especially interesting. He does not spare himself. It is an introspective work as well as one rich with detail. Read it and talk about it with friends.

I learned a lot about the Iraqi point of view and about the kidnapping I knew very little of. It contained history as well as a heart filled account of the 118 days. Was well written.

Normally I steer entirely away from the topics of history, politics, and war. However, in the writing style and spiritual context of this book, I found all of these suddenly accessible. In Loney's experience as an active pacifist/violence reducer held hostage for four months, I was immediately blown away at the writing itself, the history behind the events, the concepts of active pacifism, and so on. I found all of that incredibly inspiring and close to my heart, with such activism the kind of activity I'd be considering if I weren't parenting. But reading Loney's experience of being hostage with three companions, and learning the stories and characters of his captors, was profound for me. I love his honesty, too, about the paradoxes involved.

Captivity is a Masterpiece! It is beautifully written. It literally took my breath away at times for the insight, as well as the suspense. Illuminating and profoundly compelling, Jim Loney lays himself bare. He tells the raw personal truth in this most grueling and excruciating of circumstances. From the darkest of places in the human heart to the very light of grace, he gives voice to all of humanity. It is difficult to express the astounding depth and breadth of this true story. I had followed the captivity of Jim Loney and his colleagues closely, praying in earnest for them. I am so very grateful to now know what happened. It is a must read!

Deeply honest, inspiring and thought-provoking journal of one man's quest to live with integrity. Some passages are wrenching to read, yet fill me with hopefulness that all of us can live in

peace.

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