

# Jamil's Story

Lighting my fourth cigarette, I was just standing guard at the intersection. We had special training to deal with friends, enemies, or the average person. In my uniform with my AK47 by my side, people came to regard us as terrorists, but most simply tried to avoid eye contact.

But I was hardly ready for the passengers of a car who drove by and smiled at me. You don't know what it means when foreigners smile. Is this a trap or are they just being friendly? But for me, that day, a smile was so welcome. I really wanted someone to smile at me, and I wanted to smile back.

These smiling foreigners handed me a small green booklet. I took it and thanked them. In decorated religious looking script it said "JOHN", in Arabic, "Yohanna". Who was John? I had read the Qur'an many times and I didn't remember a John. This book looked like a teaching of the Qur'an. I was



bored and I started reading in between puffs of my cigarette. I was intrigued as I read: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

"Who is this? What is this?" I asked myself. I looked around me in fear to make sure no one was watching me. Still I couldn't put it down and had to read on. I lit another cigarette as my boredom turned into excitement.

*"Through Him were all things made, and without Him nothing was made that had been made."* I thought, "What? What are these words? What are they saying? Why weren't we taught this?" I had studied about Allah all of my life in school and in the mosque, but I had never learned about this before.

Then I read the words that stunned me: *"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."*

"Shouldn't I know this? Who is this?" I closed the book and looked at the cover and the back of it. I opened the front pages and looked for a picture or something to help me understand, but I only found these words. It felt like they were prying my eyelids open. The words were churning inside me like a storm of questions that I didn't know how to ask.

I put the book in the inside pocket of my green camouflaged vest. It was windy. I enjoyed the wind. I wanted to feel something familiar. It felt like I was drawn into a spiritual battle I couldn't retreat from. "Where would it lead me?" I thought. "Why did they give *me* this book? Why me?"

I looked around at the other people walking and talking with each other. They weren't conflicted like I now was. Their lives were so simple. Could my life go back to the kind of carefree simplicity I had known a only few minutes ago?

At night in my barracks I didn't talk to anyone. I smoked a cigarette and drank a small Turkish

