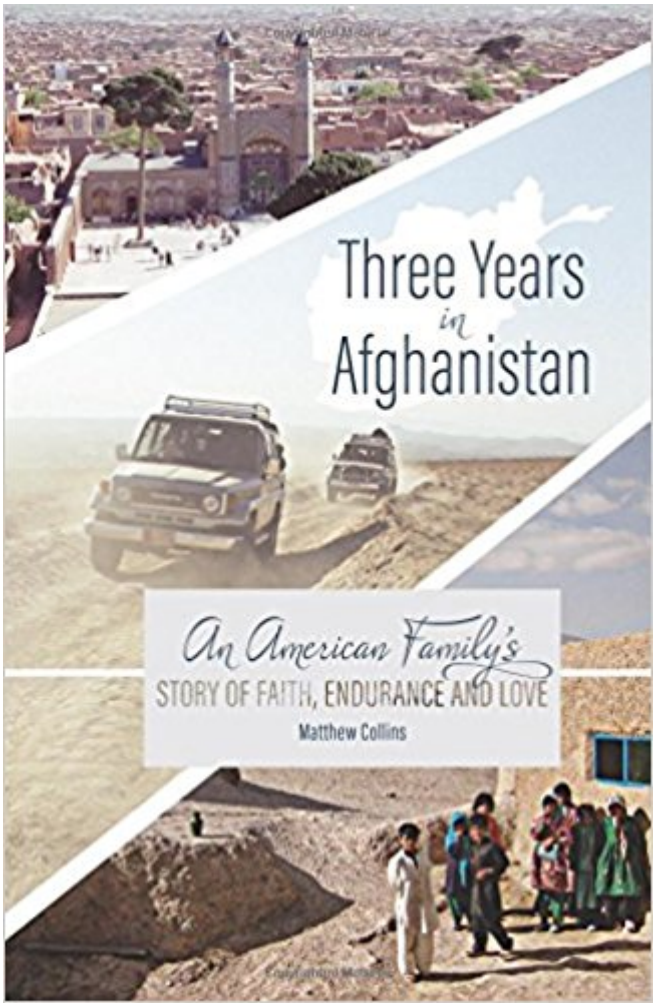
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Three Years In Afghanistan: An American Family's Story Of Faith, Endurance, And Love



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Synopsis

Afghanistan is a land of conflict and massive human needs, but it is much more than that. A place of veiled beauty, its people are resilient with deeply held traditions, generous hospitality, and a sense of leeriness toward the West. In the summer of 2004, humanitarian aid worker Matthew Collins, his wife Christine, and their one-year-old daughter Ellie moved to Afghanistan. This memoir describes their first three years trying to make a difference in this incredible country. From harrowing moments of danger, to light-hearted and heartbreaking cultural encounters, they learn to overcome the challenges of fear and culture shock through faith, endurance, and love.

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Customer Reviews

As a military veteran of multiple tours in Afghanistan, I whole-heartedly recommendÃ Â Three Years in Afghanistan. In 2003, the coalition presence provided Matt Collins and his team of aid workers a window of relative stability in Afghanistan to help those impoverished by years of war and Taliban oppression. Not one to sit by the side and just offer ideas, Matt leveraged his years of experience serving in difficult places to move his family to a remote region of Afghanistan so that they could live amongst the Afghan people to provide desperately needed humanitarian aid and community health development. I encourage everyone to read this true story of an American family making a difference and standing in the gap that many of us held open so that they could meet the personal needs of the Afghan people.For those considering such a mission as Matt's, this book marks the trail for you to follow. Matt and Christine are people of action who demonstrate how to exhibit cultural sensitivity and humility enabling them to live among and serve a people the

outside world knows very little about. I also lived amongst the Afghan people, but did so with guns, helicopters and HESCO barriers... with my family safely back in the USA.Ã Â Ã Â Matt, Christine and their young daughter and son did it with nothing more than faith and a desire to serve others more than self. This book will inspire you to action.- Brig. General Robert Armfield,Ã Â USAFRiveting!Ã Â Heartrending! Challenging! I haven't read a more compelling story in years. This book is a story of compassion, courage, faithfulness and grace in the most difficult of circumstances. It stimulated my faith to grow as I was reminded what God can do if you totally surrender to Him.Ã Â Ã Â I devoured this book. You have to read it!- David Stevens, MD, M.A. (Ethics),Ã Â CEO,Ã Â Christian Medical & Dental Associations Matthew Collins is a vivid storyteller who weaves candidness and truth into his life experiences and then openly shares them with us. Three Years in Afghanistan is his and his family's journey and presents a great read for anyone contemplating cross-cultural service. It strips away the romanticism and idealism of working overseas, looks at the struggles and joys in an objective way, and challenges the reader to look beyond the surface and count the cost to follow Christ to the ends of the earth. - Jeff Palmer,Ã Â Executive Director,Ã Â Baptist Global ResponseÃ Â What would it look like to move into a remote, war-torn setting to do development work with a longer-term mentality? What would it look like to bring along young children and to create a home in the midst of terrorist threats, military coups, harsh conditions, and extreme poverty?Three Years in Afghanistan provides a humorous but honest answer to what, for many, would be an unthinkable challenge. Matthew Collins (pen name for an American Christian aid worker) details his personal journey from a well-situated life in his home country to the highs and lows of living among and working with the war-torn communities of Afghanistan. Beginning with a survey trip just one month before 9/11, this narrative account walks with a young family through the process of discerning their calling, counting the cost, uprooting their lives, learning a new language and culture, setting up a very different sort of home, and settling in as endangered but beloved members of an Islamic community.Ã Â Far from the saintly picture that such biographies tend to paint, Matt Collins treats his readers to an endearingly honest portrayal of his struggles to navigate a foreign and often perplexing culture, to figure out approaches to sustainable development that actually help more than hurt, to hold together the tension of sheltering his own precious children while engaging the desperate situations of myriad children all around them, and to overcome his own feelings of frustration, pride, inadequacy, and fear. Through rock-bottom lows and pinnacles of exhilarating success, Collins's demonstrates what authentic Christian faith looks like when put to the test.My favorite chapter is the one in which Matt gets roped into teaching Cultural Anthropology to a group of Muslim women at the local University. I

laughed out loud at his bumbling, indelicate attempts to build bridges between their veiled, tightly restricted world and the vast diversity of peoples and cultures they had never been allowed to encounter. But as this macho Texan learned to see the world through the intelligent comments and sensitive questions of a class full of gender-oppressed survivors, neither walked away unchanged.Another highlight of the book for me was the night Matt sat up swapping tall tales as a guest in the home of a tribal warlord. This humorously recounted event captures the complexity of building relationships with people that transcend cultural, ideological, and national loyalties. In Matt's case, humbly accepting hospitality and creatively finding points of shared interest resulted in an open invitation (and promised protection) for community health workers to bring tuberculosis treatment to a vastly underserved population.Ã Â Though the story of the Collins's life in Afghanistan goes beyond the end of this book, Three Years in Afghanistan: An American Family's Story of Faith, Endurance, and Love captures what life can look like for someone seriously committed to making the world a better place. It ends with a snapshot of this family's life in their new community. Having survived cultural faux pas, development fails, anti-Western mob violence, and their own bouts of uncertainty, illness, isolation, and burnout, the Collins family celebrate the birth of their son with their whole Afghan neighborhood. For a blessed evening, music and dancing, good food and shared laughter bind their hearts to the people they have come to see not just as a project, but as their own.Ã Â - Tiffany C., Cross-Cultural Worker

Matthew Collins is the pen name for a Christian aid worker originally from Texas. He has a masterÃ¢â ¬â„¢s degree in intercultural studies and extensive experience in international development work. Matthew has traveled in more than 70 countries, but fell in love with the Afghan people.

I couldn’t help but fall in love with Afghanistan after reading this book. Matthew Collins takes you with him to the people he was called to serve, and he reveals to the reader a beautifully rich culture hidden beneath layers of dust and veiled heads. Through humorous, heartwarming, and even terrifying encounters, he shows us that making a difference requires sacrifice and endurance, but nothing is as effective as simply choosing to love. Once I started, I couldn’t put it down!

’Three years in Afghanistan’ was worth every minute invested in reading it. Written in a similar vein to Doreen Corley’s ’To Persia, with Love’, and Margaret Jensen’s ’First we have Coffee’, this heartwarming memoir allows the reader a glimpse behind the veil into another culture that many of

us may never be able to experience first hand... written with transparent vulnerability and vivid description you can almost smell, of life and culture in Afghanistan, Collin's takes you into moments where you feel your heart about to be torn, and then almost as an assault on the emotions, interjects his raw and timely humor - which is a gift I suspect helped carry them through some of their darkest hours. It is both a beautiful read, but also entertaining; Awe inspiring and yet refreshingly human. Interspersed with photographs and letters written home to friends and family, the reader is welcomed into the realities, struggles, joys, and fears of following the call to a foreign land, and immersing into a culture so very different from their own - and while some of the pages seem almost surreal, you close the book with incredible awe at the goodness and faithfulness of God and the encouragement that He guides and directs His children no matter where they are placed on the globe. I will be forever thankful that Matthew Collins took upon the labor of love to write this phenomenal book.

With a book like this, I wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t really sure what to expect. I anticipated a book running through a list lessons learned by a long-term, cross-cultural humanitarian essentially. I was excited to learn about all that Collins had to teach, and I was expecting to do so in a cut-and-dry, almost classroom fashion. That expectation was wrong. Collins did teach so much, but his method of doing so was far different and far superior. As I opened to the prologue, expecting some personal sentiments and a simple introduction, intense action exploded of the page. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“That was exciting, but itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s time to learn,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• I thought as I flipped the page to chapter one. I did learn, but the excitement didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t stop. Now, I found myself white-knuckling the pages in the stress of the narrative. This high intensity situation quickly gave way to a love story. Now, I found myself cheering for Collins in his pursuit of his ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“love-at-first-sightÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• girl. The excitement never dies down in this book as Collins invites the reader into the narrative of his experience getting to and growing to love Afghanistan, throughout which, Collins humbly shares his prayers, thoughts, and even errors that taught him, and now me, great lessons in faith, endurance, and love. If you are interested in any cross-cultural endeavors, are a Christ-follower, want to learn about Afghani culture, or are just looking for a good book, I would encourage you to give this a try.

Collins is a vivid and intriguing storyteller that keeps you always wanting one more page even after you should have been asleep two hours ago! Brilliantly and creatively mingling the humorous stories with the more serious and important issues kept me both light-hearted as well as pensive on the

deeper themes. You'll be entertained by the harrowing adventures and challenged to wrestle with spiritual and cultural struggles as well. Having lived cross-culturally in Afghanistan and having dealt with these same cultural woes, Collins writings and experiences offers truly helpful insight to anyone considering living cross-culturally, as well as to those already in the trenches who are in need of inspiration and encouragement. The constant battle against cynicism and becoming jaded is a tough one, pervasive and persistent. Hearing stories like these and employing humility and love is a helpful way to remain soft-hearted to the lost and broken. Collins deftly reminds us of that throughout the book, that dying to self by relying on Christ alone is our only hope. Highly recommend to anyone remotely interested.

Matthew Collins, 5 gold stars for your book! I've read shelves and shelves of books about the country of Afghanistan and about life lived through the eyes of nationals and expats, but rarely have I been so captivated by one book. Matt's honesty, his willingness to obey God and love others as he loves himself, and his day to day perseverance is inspiring and encouraging. The book offers lessons for cross-culture learning, what to expect as a non-Afghan family living in Afghanistan, humorous real-life stories, and heart-to-heart insights into a true relationship with God. Matt shows how true friendships can be found and cultivated between Afghans and expats simply doing life together. Each relationship is seen as important to Matt, his wife and his team. What a great example to us all! Though daily life in Afghanistan can be exponentially challenging, I appreciated Matt's approach to "tell it like it is" and not over dramatize or sugar-coat his time in country. This book would be a great read for those who have traveled or worked in Afghanistan, people who are interested in living there, family members of those living in country, or people seeking to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Thanks Matt for sharing your life through this book!

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