

Chapter 16

Discussion:

1. All that the young man took with him when he fled to Turkey was a backpack; however, once he arrived at the UN, he saw many refugees who had several pieces of luggage with them. How do you think this was possible for refugees to have so many possessions with them when leaving their home country?
2. Both Turkey and Iran are primarily populated with Muslims. The Muslims in Turkey were offered lifestyle freedoms they had never experienced in Iran. Why do you think Turkey offered more freedom than Iran did?
3. When he went to the police station to file paperwork with the UN as a refugee, the young man was surprised to see Qassem, the pastor, there doing the same. Why do you think Qassem asked the young man to keep his identity as a refugee a secret?

Reflection:

4. The man with the homosexual son had been rejected by the Farsi-speaking church in Turkey. Islam condemns homosexuality; the man was hurt to find out even he, a parent of a homosexual, would be rejected by a Christian church. Is this what you would expect of Christians in your country? Why or why not? Are you surprised to find out that the young Iranian refugee felt differently about this matter? Did you know all Christians do not see the issue of accepting homosexuals the same way?

Application:

5. Every country's refugee program is not the same. How much do you know about the refugee program in your country? This week, do a little research and find out the process refugees go through before they're allowed to enter your country. Once they arrive, what does your country help them with, and for how long is this help available?

Chapter 17

Discussion:

1. Since 9/11, we've heard much about the hatred Muslims have for people who aren't Muslim, especially Christians. Obviously, the young man experienced this first-hand in Iran at the hands of an Islamic government. In Turkey, Baris and his family—all Muslims—befriended the young refugee and helped him. How can you explain hatred on the one hand yet kindness on the other?
2. The young refugee described the interaction with his dog Tik that taught him what love means. Based on that experience and your own previous experiences, how would you define love?

Reflection:

3. The young refugee said that Sahar's excuses for not traveling to Turkey to see him were hurtful. Has anyone offered you an explanation that you really believe was just an excuse? How did it make you feel? Have you ever offered excuses instead of truthful explanations? Why?

Application:

4. Sometimes we keep our experiences to ourselves, but the young refugee appreciated it when other refugees ahead of him in the process shared their experiences with him. Consider your specific culture group. This week, what experiences have you had that you can share with other people for their benefit? How can you offer your insight politely so they don't feel like you're just talking about yourself?

Chapter 18

Discussion:

1. Cyrus the Great was a very prominent figure in Persian/world history. He was king of the Persian Empire in 550 BCE – 529 BCE. Most Iranians today revere him with great admiration; they see him as a hero and wish he were their ruler today. Do you know he created the first human rights charter in history? Do you know he respected women and was tolerant of all religions? What do you think happened between the time of Cyrus' rule and today to bring about such an oppressed society in Iran?
2. Sahar continued to give excuses to the young refugee about why she couldn't go see him in Turkey. He became angry once, yet for the most part he accepted her excuses even though he felt something wasn't right. Why do you think he so patiently endured being put off by her? Do you think he would have accepted those excuses if he had been living his normal life in Iran?

Reflection:

3. The young refugee took great pride in remodeling parts of Baris' house, probably because it was a familiar skill that he knew he could do well. It may have also brought a degree of comfort to be reminded of who he used to be. Do you have any skills or hobbies that help you gain a sense of your identity or bring you calm during stressful times?

Application:

4. Plan a vacation to Iran. Do a little research this week and explore the rich history and beautiful sites of this lovely country. Maybe you want to go to the larger cities and have a very modern, sophisticated visit; maybe you want to visit the outlying areas and see historical sites. There are mountains, deserts, forests, and lakes. You decide how long you will be gone and how much money you will spend. Don't forget to brush up on expected code of conduct for visitors to Iran.

Chapter 19

Discussion:

1. The young refugee says that publicity of an underground pastor's arrest can make the situation worse for everyone. Who, exactly, do you think the situation could get worse for and how?
2. The young refugee had a very difficult time saying goodbye to Tik, his dog. Why do you think animals, maybe especially dogs, have such a soft place in our hearts? Why would it be as difficult to say goodbye to a dog as it would be to any person you love?

Reflection:

3. Baris seems especially sad about the young refugee leaving; clearly, he would prefer he stay. Baris even knows the young refugee could stay legally and there would be a job for him, yet he understands the young man is making his choice to leave. Letting go of someone we love is hard. Have you ever had to let go of someone and let them make their choice? Maybe they moved away, or maybe you had to let them make decisions you didn't agree with. How did you find the strength to do this? Or if someone else gave you freedom you desired and let you go, did this make it any easier for you to do what you felt you had to do?

Application:

4. Imagine one of the dearest things or dearest people to you; maybe it's your child, your home, or your business. If you had built and nurtured it as the young refugee had built and nurtured the church in Turkey, how would you leave it? Who would you ask to be responsible for it? How would you provide for the future care of the thing or person you love? Eventually, we all leave one way or another. This week, write out your will. Make arrangements for the things you own or the ones you love.

Becoming Joshua: His First Two Lives

Writing Prompts

Part Two

1. The young refugee left Iran and entered Turkey with only a few personal belongings in his backpack and very little money. On top of that, he entered Turkey without knowing the language or anyone there. How did early circumstances in his life possibly prepare him for this moment?
2. Research King Cyrus and find out why Iranians today revere him. Learn about the Cyrus Cylinder and his tolerance for all people and all religions. Would his leadership style work in today's world? How do you think marginalized people today would feel about him? Are there any world leaders today who should learn from Cyrus?