

Middle East: No more running away

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I've wanted to do mission work in the Middle East since my freshman year of college. I went on a Go Now trip that summer in Phoenix, Ariz., doing refugee work, and I fell in love with Arabs and their culture. So, this summer I was the most stoked to be here in the Middle East for an extended amount of time.

But when I got here, it didn't look like the fairy tale I had created in my mind with bright colors and camels everywhere. It's hot—far worse than it was in Arizona. And it makes me angry that I'm not allowed to look men in the eyes; that makes me feel weak, inferior and defenseless.

So, I hunkered down for the first couple weeks until one night I gave in and admitted I was not happy here. I realized my desire for the Middle East was not pure. When I left for college, I was running away from my broken family. Subconsciously, it was easy to turn my back on them, and the idea of moving across the ocean meant I wouldn't have to see them often. I simultaneously truly felt the Father giving me a passion for unreached people, and mission work fit really well into that description.

But being in this culture has shown me the gift and the beauty that family can be. The idea of moving from family to an unknown, foreign place sounds horrendous to me now. God used this culture to show me my desire to do good here was also partially motivated by my desire to run away, but our God is one of full redemption and wants to make us whole, even if it's a painful process. It's painful, because my mother left when I was little, and I've recently learned that running away doesn't fix anything; it just allows time to pass and scars to form.

In having to dig up suppressed emotions and scabbed wounds, God has shown me it's best to not leave them that way. He's had to take me on a journey in order to bring those emotions to the surface and teach me to fully trust, to live fully redeemed and complete in him. This has also allowed me to understand my mother a little, because I almost did what she did to me.

So I'm not for or against long-term life in the Middle East now. All that matters is that I'm near to the Father and doing what he has for me.

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