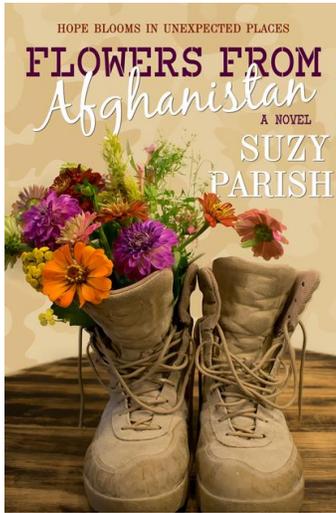


Discussion Questions



FLOWERS FROM AFGHANISTAN

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About the Book

Weighed down by guilt following the death of his two-year-old son, Mac McCann accepts a year-long position training police officers in Afghanistan. Leaving his wife Sophie to grieve alone, he hopes the life-or-death distractions of his self-imposed exile will build a wall between him and his pain.

As camaraderie builds between Mac and the men on base—including a local barber and his precocious little boy—Mac’s heart becomes invested in stories beyond his own tragedy and he learns he is not the only one running from loss. But when the hour of attack arrives, will he be able to see past his guilt to believe there’s still something—and someone—worth living for?

With touching details based on true events, *Flowers from Afghanistan* is a redemptive journey of healing, a chronicle of hope in crisis, and a testament to the faithfulness of God through it all.

TITLE: Flowers From Afghanistan

Discussion:

Question 1: If you only answer one question of these ten, this is the most important: Have you ever made a conscious choice to surrender ownership of your life to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Answer 1: The Bible says when you do this He will live in you. "On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing." 1John1:9 MSG "I'll pour pure water over you and scrub you clean. I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I'll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that's God-willed, not self-willed. I'll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands." Ezekiel 36:25-27MSG

Question 2: What did dust symbolize in the book?

Answer 2: Mac grinds his boot toe into the dusty gravel. The dust at Mac's feet represents God's creation of man from dust, and Mac's lost and fallen state. This is true for all people. "As parents feel for their children, God feels for those who fear Him. He knows us inside and out, keeps in mind that we're made of mud." Psalm 103:13-14 MSG Glenn tells Mac rose bushes in Camp grow "in the middle of dust and death." What message is hidden in his words?" This is the central theme of the book. Beauty for ashes. Life to dry bones. Regeneration, life from death. "To care for the needs of all who mourn in Zion, give them bouquets of roses instead of ashes..." Isaiah 61:3 MSG Mac tells Glenn the dust in Camp is a constant reminder that he caused Little Mac's death. And finally, the most poignant scene is where Mac showers after rescuing Bashir and dust washes off and swirls down the drain as a visual representation of Mac's salvation. When Mac rescues Bashir from the MRAP they are covered in a "baptism of dust." Once our skin color is covered, we are free to see the fact that we are all children of Adam and Eve. "...God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life." Genesis 2:7 MSG

Question 3: What did the Burn Pit symbolize?

Answer 3: The burn pit is a reference to Gehenna, Topheth, or "the valley of the son of Hinnom." All of these names refer to Hell. When Phoenix the puppy is found in the burn pit, he is covered in ashes; representative of Mac's emotional and spiritual state, exiled and without hope. Mac is covered in the ashes of his guilt. He has sentenced himself to his own hell, a war zone. Just as Mac pulls Phoenix from a dark lonely place, so God will soon rescue Mac.

Question 4: What did crumbs symbolize?

Answer 4: Mac outright asks God, "Phoenix eats the crumbs from my breakfast, don't you have anything for me?" This was a nod to the scripture: "She was quick: "You're right, Master, but beggar dogs do get scraps from the master's table. Jesus gave in. "Oh, woman, your faith is something else. What you want is what you get!" Right then her daughter became well." Matthew 15:27-28, MSG

Question 5: In what way did water play a symbolic role in the book?

Answer 5: Mac washes the ashes off Phoenix after he rescues Phoenix from the burn pit. This is a redemptive scene that foretells Mac's later salvation. At the end of the book Mac is in the shower and watches dust spiral down his arm and down the drain. Water gave a visual representation to Mac of God's ability to forgive his sin. This was the turning point for Mac, and he walked out of the shower a new man.

Question 6: What role did pinwheels play in the story?

Answer 6: It was Little Mac's favorite toy. It was Mac's last point of contact with his son. When Mac gave the pinwheel away to Bashir, it represented Mac's final surrender from trying to hold on to the past. Pinwheels represent youth and joy. They are created to spin by breath. This reminds us that we are God-breathed creations. "God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life." Genesis 2:7 MSG

Question 7: "Like a three-stranded rope that's been sawed through until there is only one strand left. I hung by that strand, and Sophie wielded the knife. A knife I'd given her."~Mac What did the three-strand rope represent?

Answer 7: The first two cut strands represent Sophie and Mac. If their marriage is fractured in the way Mac anticipates, the only one left to heal them (the third strand) would be Christ. "By yourself you're unprotected. With a friend you can face the worst. Can you round up a third? A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped."Ecclesiastes 4:12 MSG

Question 8: The loss of a child is unfathomable pain to someone who has not walked that path. What was Sophie's reply when Mac asked where God was?

Answer 8: In response to Mac's question regarding where God was when Little Mac died, Sophie replied, "I don't have an answer for that, Mac, and you know it. That's an unfair question. I just know God was there, and He will use it for good. He promised me." Sophie is referring to this scripture, "That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good."Romans 8:28 MSG

Question 9: The real life Mac was saved from injury when he moved ahead alongside the wall. His buddy behind him suffered an injury and survived. Have you ever felt guilt over surviving a situation when a good friend did not have things work out as well?

Answer 9 Ultimately when we belong to Christ, we acknowledge that everything that comes into our life is filtered through His hands. If you are a parent you have probably experienced a time when you had to take your child to a doctor or dentist and you knew it would involve pain. You, as the parent knowingly let your child be subjected to that experience, understanding it was for the better. In this way, God sometimes allows us to go through painful experiences when there is no apparent reason. Faith asks us to trust He does all things well for us, even if we won't understand the reasons until we are united with Christ in heaven.

Question 10: The scripture written inside of the real-life Mac's running shoe was a true event. The attack occurred while he was in his running shoes. Have you ever seen God's provision in a way you never could have predicted?

Answer 10: Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good. Romans 8:26-28 MSG

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