

THE SHORT PEOPLE

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THE INTERPRETER ASKED, “Would you like to visit the short people?” Our team had assembled from many countries to love on the Syrian refugees in Jordan. We drove through streets of Arabic folk, simple housing, but rich smiles. There were dusty, drab, dull colors, but gaily wrapped hearts. Out of the taxi we bounded. The abode of our visit was a plain block building. Family stood outside and grinned eagerly at us. Kissing was the norm. So we always got kissed twice, once on each cheek, and again by other family members. It was 90 degree day, hot and dusty, no air conditioning, small but tidy. We lowered our humbly dressed long skirted bodies onto long flat cushions which lay on the floor. We were careful not to let the bottoms of our feet point out indiscriminately at our hosts. Then it hit: the short people. They were short because their bodies did not have proper skeletal strength to hold up. Two daughters were handicapped. One of them was severely formed in so much that she could only lie on her side and never sit up. A young boy slumped into his misshapen form.

The mother brimmed with joy, but was able to relate her story of trauma. As her story unfolded she shared being tortured in Syria. A brother and uncle had been shot and killed. Her husband had abandoned the family. After being brought to Jordan, she alone was caring for invalid children. Yet she had an unshakable joy. My normal routine in the refugee homes was to play hand games and teach simple dance to the children. While the adults shared war stories, I would entertain the children. But this home was different. There were no able children to play with. I took out my cheat sheet which contained about 20 equivalent Arabic and English terms. I edged toward one young woman, “Would you like to learn English.” “Oh yes!” So I proceeded to pronounce carefully each syllable and she repeated. I moved to the next family member and did the same. As I approached the woman who was severely handicapped, I pondered and prayed. How could I work with her? She lay on her side, on the

floor cushion, a cell phone in her hand. She appeared fully alert and mentally stable. The structure of her jaw was misaligned so much that it caused her teeth not to quite fit together, but rather spurt out in directions. At once, God opened my understanding and gave me the answer to my question! In a moment I had a flashback, of how Jesus became like us to connect us to God. Jesus took on a human body so he could suffer and die for us. He paid the price of our sins to connect us back to God. I knew I must become like Ashiya to connect with her. I lay down on the floor on my side, facing her. I placed my eyes directly in line with hers and my mouth across from her mouth. She may have seldom seen this mirror view of a person. Everyone else in her life could at least sit upright. Perhaps she had only viewed the hems of passing garments. As I proceeded to mouth English to her she smiled. When I pronounced the equivalent Arabic she chuckled at my bumbling. And so she laughed at my mispronunciations and I laughed at hers. Our eyes both twinkled at the delight of connecting. We were best friends forever. I was home again. *