

# ***Association Discussion Questions***

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## **Truth and Pragmatism**

In Chapter 5, Krystin and her Uncle Bjorne have a key discussion. As much as they love each other, it's a clash of ideas...

Bjorne says things like: "It's an ideological battle....And it's a spiritual battle. As followers of the Teacher, we are obligated to do what's right, no matter what. And sometimes that costs us in the physical realm. Like the apostles in the book of Acts who suffered for obeying him rather than people."

- Explain why you agree or disagree with Bjorne?
- Does Bjorne's statement hold true in current-day America?

Krystin says things like: "You may be speaking the truth too, but it's obviously a truth that will fall on deaf ears by the time this is done. We know the authorities are stronger and more powerful than any group or person can fight...Surely there is a place for prudence, isn't there? Isn't there a verse in the Book about the prudent person foreseeing evil and hiding?"

- How do you agree or disagree with Krystin?
- Is there a way to reconcile her point with Bjorne's statements on ideological and spiritual battles?

Bjorne also says: "It can be very damaging to people when they do nothing, when they don't act when they should. I'm not just talking about damage to our circumstances but also damage to our souls. That's what has brought our nation to the position it is now in."

- How have you seen this dynamic in society?
- What do you think Bjorne meant by "damage to our souls"?

*Uncle reaches for my shoulder. "And we don't know what Teacher plans to work in all this. You can't know that this will all end badly, not for certain."*

*The same Teacher who didn't choose to save Inger? I step away from his hand. "Maybe not one hundred percent, but I'm ninety-nine percent sure. We all know how this stuff goes down."*

- What assumptions does Krystin have about God, his care, and good and bad?
- How do those assumptions align with the Bible?
- How much should you base your beliefs on personal experience?

### **Krystin and Inger**

- Though Inger doesn't make an appearance in *Association*, how is she vital to the storyline?
- Have you ever felt like Krystin did toward her sister Inger—that someone took on an un-winnable battle to the detriment of themselves and those around them?
- For much of the story, Krystin held a much different perspective from her sister on un-winnable battles. But in what ways are the sisters both correct?
- What caused Krystin's view of Inger's stance to change? Can you think of a time when your perspective of a person or a key issue changed?

### **Following God and Hardship**

Krystin has another pivotal conversation in Chapter 8, this time with her father. At one point he says: "If you choose to follow [God], it will include challenges. Sometimes big ones."

- Does this idea scare you?
- What biblical precedent supports his statement?
- How well prepared are you for the challenges of being a follower of God, and what can you do to prepare?

Her father also says, "Because what truly matters isn't what happens on the outside. It's what happens inside you—who you are and who you become...When Paul talked to the Ephesian elders, he sensed that chains and tribulations were coming. But he didn't let that bother him, because he had a race to run, a ministry to complete. And in one of his letters to Timothy, he said that anyone desiring to live righteously would have persecution. But note what he didn't say. He never said hardships should keep us from doing what's right or dampen our courage to follow our heavenly leader...Where there is challenge, there is also grace."

- What does he mean by "what truly matters isn't what happens on the outside"?
- How can we not keep the threats of the enemy from dampening our courage for Christ? (Krystin's father was referencing Acts 20:22-24.)

- Can you think of a Bible verse that supports the “where there is challenge, there is also grace” statement?

## Friendships

- When is it right to exclude friends from your circle?
- What did *Association* reveal about friendships? Consider the varied reactions by Krystin, Notah, and Seth to all that took place in the story, especially the efforts to ostracize the Jakobsdóttir family.
- What level of friendship did Yamada, Bjorne, and Shaggy demonstrate?
- What did loyal friendships cost those in *Association*?

## Deception and Compliance

- Were Seth and Krystin right to deceive the police so Krystin could get into the restaurant to find her uncle’s secret camera? What about Krystin’s deception to reach Yamada during the climax?
- Was Uncle Bjorne right to possess the secret camera, one he surely knew was illegal?
- Krystin largely complied with the government in the first half of the story, but not so much later. Which approach was correct? How do you know when to obey God versus earthly authorities?
- What does the Bible say about deception—when it should and shouldn’t be used?
- What were the consequences when characters used deception in *Association*? Consider Krystin, Seth, and Fang.

## Government and Technology

The nation’s motto is *Efficiency for Survival*.

- What are the ramifications of that motto—as seen in *Association* and in a broader sense?
- What truths and lies are contained in that motto?
- How was the truth in that motto used for wrong?

The government in *Association* leverages technology to survive the CE Ice Age, keep the nation running efficiently, and to empower the police.

- How did the nation's technology lead to good?
- How did the nation's technology lead to harm?
- Do you believe technology is amoral?

The government (represented by Inspector Fang) falsely accuses Bjorne of a crime and carefully crafted a narrative to suit its agenda.

- How do you know if what people—even the authorities—say about others is true?  
Consider what Proverbs 18:13 and 18:17 say.
- Can you think of an instance where people or the government manipulated mainstream messages for their agenda?