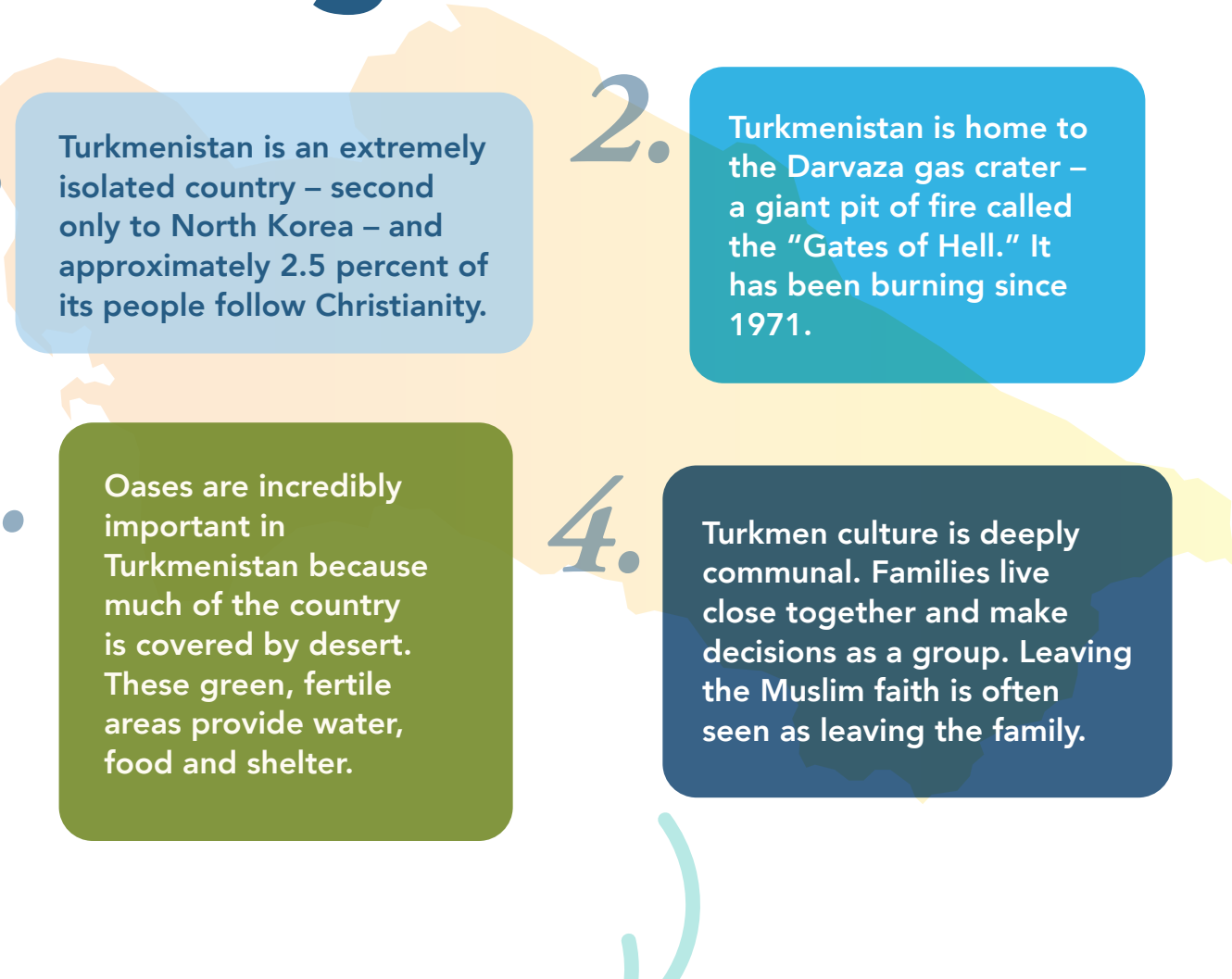


Weigh In

Weighing the facts
about Turkmenistan

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1. Turkmenistan is an extremely isolated country – second only to North Korea – and approximately 2.5 percent of its people follow Christianity.
 2. Turkmenistan is home to the Darvaza gas crater – a giant pit of fire called the “Gates of Hell.” It has been burning since 1971.
 3. Oases are incredibly important in Turkmenistan because much of the country is covered by desert. These green, fertile areas provide water, food and shelter.
 4. Turkmen culture is deeply communal. Families live close together and make decisions as a group. Leaving the Muslim faith is often seen as leaving the family.

Corresponding Question Points:

(1) What do you think it would be like to live in one of the most isolated countries in the world? What kind of support do you think Christians in isolated places need most?

(2) If no one lives near the crater, do you think it’s still important to try to extinguish it? Why or why not? (*Hint: It’s burning up valuable natural gas!*)

(3) How would the importance of oases, and the fact that Turkmenistan is covered by desert, have a greater impact on persecuted Christians in the country? (*Hint: Think about what is needed for survival.*)

(4) Why do you think family is so important in Turkmen culture? Does this contribute to question (3)? What would it be like to feel cut off from your family?

Fun Fact!

The plural form of the word “oasis” is “oases.”

One Way

Religious Comparison: Compare & Contrast What the Bible Says

Many of the “One Way” sections of *Table Talks* explore the concept of worldview – an essential lens for understanding culture and aligning it with God’s Word.

Culture is formed when people who live in the same area begin acting in similar ways because they learn from each other. A country’s culture is shaped by the common ways its people think and live. These habits are often learned and followed without questioning whether they’re right or wrong. It’s just “what everyone does.” This is why it is so important to ask yourself *what* you believe and *why* you believe it.

In Turkmenistan, the government tightly controls the daily life of its people. According to *Human Rights Watch*, it remains one of the world’s most repressive (strict or cruel) countries. People are not allowed to speak their minds, gather in groups or practise what they believe. Freedom to travel within the country and across its borders is heavily restricted. There are also reports of forced labour, even involving children. Citizens, especially Christians, are arrested for no reason and denied fair trials. Others are taken away and never seen again. Life in a Turkmen prison can be very harsh.

Look at the pyramid chart below. Think about the leadership in Turkmenistan. If what a person truly believes always shows up in their actions, what conclusions can you draw about their worldview? Specifically, what do the country’s leaders appear to believe about ultimate leadership or about God?

Biblical Worldview

God, the ultimate Leader, decided that He did not want to live without humankind. To atone for our sins, He became a man so that He could overcome death and make a way for us to live eternally with Him.

With this kind of Leader as the model for our worldview, how should we behave towards other members of the human race?

