REFUGEES AND OUR RESPONSE AT A GLANCE

You hear the news—refugees are being sent to your city. Hardly any time passes and it happens. “They” are really here. “They” start appearing in the grocery store, lining up to enroll their children in school, and sitting in the doctor’s waiting room with you.

Your mind races. Is the vetting process enough to protect our citizens? What if “they” are really terrorists? What if “they” have illnesses your children or grandchildren can catch? It’s easy to panic. But what we really need to ask is, who are “they” anyway?

WHO ARE THEY?

They are people. They are people who’ve been displaced from countries in distress. They are mothers, fathers, widows, widowers, grandparents, and innocent children. While we might carry concerns for what they’re capable of, we need to consider how they are feeling—frightened, alone, bewildered, and sad.

DISCOVER THEIR BACKGROUND.

After refugees arrive, conduct some research to learn where they are coming from. What is their homeland like? What trauma have they been exposed to? What are the cultural norms?

SET ASIDE FEAR.

As Christ followers, we have to set aside our fears. We have to trust God to help us overcome our fears and accept the “foreigner” among us. Fear is an emotion. Trust is an act of faith.

Praying for missionaries in hostile countries should prepare us for the day when we will share the love of Christ while swallowing our fears. If the Lord can equip missionaries with courage, He will equip us, too.

REALIZE THE MISSIONAL POSSIBILITIES.

Jesus taught us in the story of the Good Samaritan how we should respond to the hurting and broken. We cannot turn our backs. We can look for refugees in everyday moments and greet them warmly. A request for directions could turn into a friendship. Do their children have obvious needs? Will they need school supplies or clothing to enroll in school? Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. He may lead you to buy something right on the spot or ask your church for a benevolent gift.

GO MEET THEM IN THEIR WORLD.

If a local agency is already meeting basic needs of refugees, start asking questions. Does the agency know of needs? Ask where the refugees are being housed. Enlist sensitive members of your church to go door to door. Introduce yourselves and offer a tract or brochure connecting yourself with the church. A gift bag with snacks, a restaurant gift certificate, and information about local establishments should be well received. Be sincere and friendly.

If you learn about classes being organized to teach English to refugees, then research the details. Do they need help with child care while adults are in class? Can your church donate refreshments? Be ready to help in practical ways. Strive to build real relationships that require time but yield fruit for the kingdom of Christ.

Refugees were once people like you and me with friends, family, homes, careers, and dreams of the future before they were displaced by war, violence, and brutality. Won’t you reach out to help them recover some of what has been lost and add a relationship with Jesus if He has never been a part of their lives?

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