

Refugees, Immigrants Face the Biggest Struggle During Coronavirus

Around the world, millions of refugees are living in conditions without clean water and soap, in tents and makeshift locations where it's impossible to socially isolate, and with access to little if any medical care. According to the UNHCR, there are 70.8 million displaced people in the world. This includes here over 50,000 asylum seekers on the other side of the U.S. southern border, often in tent cities or other temporary shelters, waiting for their asylum cases in court. In the U.S., refugees and immigrants are socially isolated from their families and churches, and many have lost their jobs.

The collective work that we have done with refugees in camps in Greece and those resettled in the U.S. makes us acutely aware of the need that these men and women exist in on a daily basis—under normal circumstances. And when Robbie's most recent trip to help refugees was cancelled because of the virus, the urgency for these individuals and families to have access to protective measures became even more vivid.

God repeatedly called His people to care for the “quartet of the vulnerable” in the Old Testament: the widow, the poor, the refugee and the orphan. A global shutdown is not an excuse to suspend that calling. Instead, these groups need our help more than ever:

Be Motivated by Grace Over Guilt

The grace of God is the most transformational, life-freeing motivator. Ephesians 2:12 says that without Christ, we were once aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. Now, we are called to extend our

lives for those who live as literal strangers and aliens displaced in foreign lands. When we meditate on this, we are internally compelled to act not out of guilt or duty but out of thankfulness and love for Him.

Lament

The Psalms, Lamentations, the Prophets and Jesus tell us what to do in times of brokenness: Lament. Give yourself a moment in your prayer time to lament before the Lord how many people have been affected by this pandemic and how many have yet to suffer, with no way out.

Check in With Immigrant Pastors

Many American churches have the finances and technology to be able to have church meetings online. Their members have the resources to connect to these gatherings. However, many immigrant churches in our communities don't have the capacity to do this.

Check with immigrant faith leaders in your community and see how you can pray for them. Ask what they are doing to support their congregations. See if there is any collaboration that can happen. Ask if there are needs in smaller churches that larger churches could help with. Also, learn from their endurance in times of trial.

Check With Immigrants You Know

Most immigrants are without a lot of local family support. Can you reach out by phone or text as a family, small group or church and check in on them? Is their job still essential, but public transportation is closed in your city? Do they have a car? Could you help them keep their job and coordinate rides to work each day (wearing masks)? You might be able to help support their family in another country, either financially or in prayer.

Give to Ministries Serving at Our Border or in Refugee Camps Around the World

World Relief and Abara Frontiers are Christian ministries we can give to who are caring for refugees and asylum seekers during this pandemic. Most Christian denominations have relief departments that can use our gifts and time as well. The UNHCR also has great resources and information on what is happening globally with refugees to inform your prayers.

Advocate

Contact your political leaders. Refugees should not have to live in camps around the world for years or wait for a year in squalid conditions along our border before their cases are processed. Most of these people are vulnerable already, fleeing violence and persecution seeking a safe life for themselves and their families.

While we are living in uncertain times, there are many beautiful stories of people caring for others including sacrificing to meet needs. History has taught us that it is sometimes during the darkest hours that the light of Christ shines the brightest. May it be so during these times in our own neighborhoods, cities, country and even around the world.
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