

Why I Don't Pray for Syria

My heart sank on Sunday morning when someone prayed aloud for the Syrian refugees. I had forgotten all about them.

When the news broke in late summer last year, I gathered my four children around me and showed them some of the photographs and stories of people who were fleeing for their lives. We prayed for them right then and there. The ice cream truck drove by our window, and I noticed that we each silently told our bodies to *sit back down!* and resist the siren call. Instead, we turned our eyes to heaven and said, "Heavenly Father, please let us know if there is something we can do to help."

That night during bedtime prayers, we sat in a circle and prayed for the people of Syria.

The next day, my sister sent us a link to a list of supplies we could send. We were delighted; it was something we could do to help. We had an extra sleeping bag and several pairs of like-new shoes. So we printed the list of needed supplies and gathered as much as we could that fit into a big cardboard box. We packed it full, taped it shut, and wrote the address in big, bold letters. We'd take it to the post office the next day and send it on its way.

That night during bedtime prayers, we sat in a circle and prayed for the people of Syria.

The next day, we delivered the box to the post office. It cost way more than I expected, and it made me wonder why I didn't just write a check to a charity and send all that money instead. But compassion was packed in there with the sleeping bags and the shoes; someone somewhere needed our humble box of supplies to arrive in the mail. So I paid the postal worker, and the box went on its way across the ocean to Greece.

And ever since then, I haven't prayed for the people of Syria.

Not once.

Not one single moment.

So I sat in church last Sunday and repented of my lack of compassion. I repented of the way in which I often think that a nice gesture—a sleeping bag or a pair of sneakers—will solve the problem and exonerate me from further concern. That day, when I smiled at the post office worker and pushed the box across the counter, I must have subconsciously thought, *I did my part! That'll fix everything.*

As we know, I was wrong. It didn't fix everything.

How sobering to see the nature of my heart.

Fixing the True Problem

God must have had a lesson in mind for me, because the same theme came up in a completely different context a few days later. I was still mulling over my fix-it-and-forget-it attitude regarding Syria when I sat down at the kitchen table to talk with a friend about our stillbirth experiences. We're both approaching significant dates on the calendar and we're both five years away from our losses, so it was good to retell our stories. We needed to hear from one another that our "Five-Year Anniversary" thoughts and feelings are normal.

We talked about how we can now see the miraculous and intricate ways that God has comforted us over time—from the moment of loss up to the present. We agreed that when we hear of other women losing their babies, we want to give them everything that helped us. We wondered aloud, "Wouldn't it be great to pack it all up in a basket and give it to them in one big gesture of love? Wouldn't that make everything better?"

But we both knew it wouldn't. True healing doesn't work that

way. It didn't work that way for either of us.

The comfort and healing came to us over time. It was a hug on Day 1, a card on Day 2, a meal on Day 7, a flower on Day 24, a raspberry pie on Day 52, a phone call on Day 365, a song on Day 574, and so on. More than that, it was *Jesus* working in us and all around us, day after day, reminding us that He was with us, that He cared about our suffering, and that He would miraculously restore our deep losses.

That's when I thought of our box for the Syrian refugees and realized that when it comes to loss like theirs, a box packed full of supplies doesn't *fix the problem*.

Don't get me wrong; the box was needed, and I'm glad we sent it. We must show our love in tangible ways. We must give from our surplus when we see a need. Those tangible gifts will give a person somewhere to sleep and some way to walk, but I must remember that things don't fix the true problem.

My friend said, "The only thing that fixes a mother's mourning is to have her baby back. But I can't do that for her."

The only thing that fixes the Syrian crisis is to have their home back. And the peace back. And the life back.

I can't do that.

Only Jesus can.

Our Prayers Matter

That's why I was crushed that I had forgotten to pray for the Syrian refugees. Because as a child of the King of heaven, I have a voice before His throne! I can plead for mercy on their behalf, request help and strength for every person, insight and ability to the surrounding Christians. I can pray that the Holy Spirit would be working in people's hearts to give them hope, courage, wisdom, healing and faith.

“Therefore I exhort first of all that you make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for everyone, for kings and for all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all. This was the testimony given at the proper time” (1 Tim. 2:1-6).

Though I may send a box of supplies, Jesus alone has the power to restore their lives. Jesus alone knows the name of every Syrian refugee and doesn't forget about them for a moment. Jesus alone understands the mysterious way that heaven and earth intertwine and He tells us to pray faithfully. Scripture resounds with the message that our prayers matter!

Consider these urgings from God's Word:

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

“Continue in prayer, and be watchful with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2).

“Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

When I forgot to pray for the Syrian refugees, I didn't just forget about them. I also forgot about Jesus' power. I forgot

about His compassion toward all who are oppressed. And I forgot that He gave me a wonderful gift: the calling and the grace to pray faithfully.

May I learn and embrace ways to do this.

Dear heavenly Father, I pray for the Syrian refugees ...

What do you do every day? Brush your teeth? Make your bed? Drive your car? Put a post-it note by an everyday activity, reminding yourself to pray for a particular person or people group every day this week.

Syria and My Prayerlessness was originally posted on . Reprinted from Revive Our Hearts. Laura Booz loves to discover the real-time application of the Bible and write about it on her blog . Because of the current joys in her life, most of her topics focus on marriage, motherhood, and ministering in the local church. She and her husband, Ryan, and their four (going on five) children make their home in Pennsylvania.