

Refugees



MAKING CHRIST KNOWN AMONG THE LEAST-REACHED

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

A Message From Christar U.S. Director Steve Coffey

In previous generations, missionaries gave their lives to bring the gospel to places where it wasn't yet known. Now, God is bringing people from least-reached communities into our own neighborhoods! This is a historic opportunity to share the good news with people who've never heard.

However, we also see the Church struggle to resist voices of fear and confusion regarding the issue of refugees coming to the United States. American Christians are pulled on one hand by the call of the gospel to welcome the stranger and to be Christ's witnesses, and on the other hand by fear of atrocities like those we've already experienced and witnessed. This conflict highlights the reality that we hold two citizenships: one in heaven and one on earth.

We are not only citizens of the U.S., but also of heaven (Philippians 3:20). Jesus' teaching, notably the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizes a lifestyle governed by this eternal perspective.

As we navigate our dual citizenship, Paul exhorts us to conduct ourselves "in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). We are called to live as citizens of heaven, according to the civic duties of the gospel. We must fulfill our responsibilities to our nation as long as they don't conflict with the eternal truths and directives of Scripture. But, as citizens of heaven, we must first align ourselves with God's eternal purposes, including His plan for people who don't yet know Him.

We know from God's Word that there will be people from every tongue, tribe and nation worshiping Jesus in eternity (Revelation 5:9; 7:9). Yet over 4,000 people groups remain least-reached. They're without access to a church that preaches the gospel in their language and in a culturally relevant way. Before people from these groups can worship Christ, they must hear the gospel.

In today's world, ministry to the least-reached is not only a matter of going to where they live but of reaching those who come to our own communities. Efforts to ban any group from entering our borders fail to acknowledge how God is at work in the movement of peoples. In addition, these efforts place the interests of our earthly citizenship above those of our heavenly citizenship, raising the issue of personal safety above the cause of the gospel. While it is not wrong for a country to pursue safety for its citizens, safety is not the biblical standard for God's people.

Do we deny safety and hope to refugees who surely are victims of the terrorism of extremists to reduce the possibility that we might become victims as well? As citizens of heaven, we dare not.

One question must underscore the way we view the refugee crisis as believers in Jesus: Are we living primarily for our temporary earthly citizenship or our eternal heavenly one?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Stephen Coffey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY



We've long asked God to raise up believers to share the gospel with people who've never heard the good news. He's answering that prayer, but not only by calling believers to go to the least-reached places of the earth. He's at work in the midst of the refugee crisis, bringing people to places where they can learn of His love for them.

The number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide is higher than ever recorded, and it continues to climb. Many of those who've fled their homes come from communities without churches that preach the gospel. But, as they travel the refugee road and resettle in Europe and North America, they're able to hear the good news for the first time.

In Acts 17:26-27a, Paul declares that God "made all the nations ... and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him." God intentionally moves people groups so they can seek and find Him!

The Bible contains many examples of God moving people for His glory. When Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, who'd sold him into slavery, he assured them that God had brought him to Egypt for a purpose, saying "it was not you who sent me here, but God" (Genesis 45:8a).

Likewise God is bringing refugees to the doorsteps of believers and opening the hearts of the displaced to the hope only He can provide. Christar workers in the Middle East, Europe and North America are seeing many refugees turn to Christ as they experience the love of His followers.



What the Bible Says About Refugees

God's Word is full of references to foreigners, strangers and sojourners. Not once does it tell us to fear them. The Bible depicts refugees as people God loves and protects, and He commands believers to love and care for them as well. Here are a few examples of what Scripture says about the displaced.

God watches over and sustains refugees.

"The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but He frustrates the ways of the wicked." (Psalm 146:9)

God commands His people not to oppress the foreigners in their midst.

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33-34)

Assisting those in need—both believers and unbelievers—is a sign of living faith.

"Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (James 2:15-17)

When we serve those in need, we serve Jesus.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Matthew 25:35-36)

Understanding the Terms

Refugee:

A person who has fled his or her home country due to armed conflict or persecution, and cannot safely return home. Those who have obtained refugee status are protected by international law.

Asylum Seeker:

A person who has fled his or her home country, but whose request for protection as a refugee has not yet been processed.

Internally Displaced Person:

An individual who has fled his or her home in search of safety, but has not crossed an international border.

Stateless Person:

An individual who is not a citizen of any country.

Migrant:

An individual who has chosen to leave his or her home country for reasons other than threat of persecution or death, such as to find work, obtain an education or be united with family. Migrants can safely return to their home countries.



WHAT YOU CAN DO



Start With Prayer

Praying is the most important thing you can do to help refugees, both around the world and in your own neighborhood. Ask God to lead you to people in your community that He wants you to reach, and pray that these people will see Jesus through you.

As refugees turn into friends, offer to pray with them for the things they're concerned about. As you do, you demonstrate not only that you care about their needs, but that you worship a God who hears and answers prayer:

Listen

By the time refugees arrive in their host communities, they've experienced incredible loss. Some may feel they've lost their voice. Take the time to truly get to know refugees in your neighborhood. Listen to their stories if they want to share, and ask questions about their families. Seeking to understand where they're coming from can be a powerful way to demonstrate the love of Christ.

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

—Hebrews 13:2

Demonstrate God's Love

What sort of help would you need if you moved to an unfamiliar place? There's a good chance that refugees in your community need the same things.

- **Show them around.** Take initiative to show arriving refugees around the neighborhood. Offer a ride or help them navigate the public transportation system. Help them find a doctor if they need one. Accompany them to the grocery store or the library and assist them in finding what they're looking for. In short, help make an unfamiliar place familiar.
- **Practice hospitality.** Hospitality is a nearly universal language! It's an excellent way to make refugees feel welcome. Invite refugees to your home for coffee or a meal, deliver a baked good or ask them to join your family for a game night.
- **Practice English with them.** The language barrier is often one of the biggest obstacles a refugee faces in making a new life in a new home. By helping a refugee learn English, you're helping them find a job, obtain an education and take advantage of the resources that are available to them. Many colleges and community centers offer English classes for speakers of other languages and welcome the assistance of native English speakers. Or, if you know of refugees who are trying to improve their English, offer to practice with them!

God can use you in the lives of refugees! Ask Him to work through you to show His love to the displaced people in your community.

What Churches Can Do

Churches have unique opportunities to meet the needs of refugees! Here are ways groups of believers can reach out together:

- Offer English classes.
- Organize social activities that don't require English skills, such as sports outreaches and holiday events.
- Collect supplies for refugees beginning life in their new homes.
- House refugee families.



CHRISTAR'S MINISTRY



As followers of Christ, we have a treasure in God and His kingdom. The good news is that this treasure is not limited to certain places or people. It is for all peoples—from every language, people group and nation. At Christar, it is our joy to communicate the unsurpassed value of this treasure by serving the needs of others through our lives, professions, skills and words.

Christar is motivated by a passion to establish churches among the least-reached: those without access to a church in their own language, culture or proximity. We trust the Lord to work through us as we send teams to cultivate Christ-honoring transformation in refugee communities throughout the world where He is not yet known or worshiped.

“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him.”

—Acts 17:26-27a

Our Heritage of Ministry Among the Displaced

Our outreach to the displaced reaches back more than 60 years to our roots in the Iran Interior Mission, which began as an orphanage for refugee children who'd arrived in Iran from neighboring countries following World War I. Today, we're blessed to be used by God to meet the needs of refugees, while sharing the hope that's found only in Him:

- Charstar workers have partnered with local believers to give out SD cards loaded with the Bible and Christian resources. Through this outreach, thousands of refugees have been given access to the gospel.
- Charstar workers in the Middle East are partnering with local churches to distribute aid to the displaced. Many refugees are placing their faith in Christ as they experience His love firsthand.
- A Charstar worker began a Virtual High School program to enable young refugees to resume their education. Through this outreach, workers are able to share the hope of Christ with entire families, while preparing students to continue their studies when they arrive in their host country.
- Charstar workers in several countries are providing trauma counseling to refugees, helping them find true healing and hope.
- Charstar workers and local churches are reaching out in a Yazidi community in North America. Several individuals and families are now following Christ, and a fellowship of Yazidi believers is forming.



WHAT NOW?



Partnering With Christar to Minister to Refugees



Pray:

Regularly lift up refugees and those seeking to meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. (Visit christar.org/refugees for specific ways to pray.)



Go:

Vast opportunities for ministry among refugees exist for teachers of English as a second language, business people, community development workers, computer specialists, medical workers, engineers, office personnel and teachers, as well as those with athletic, dramatic and musical abilities. Nearly any educational major, ability or skill can be used to bring the hope of Christ to least-reached refugees.

We'd love to talk with you about how God could use you for His glory among refugees! Give us a call at **1-800-2954158** or email us at info@christar.ca.



Give:

Support a Christar worker sharing the hope of Christ with refugees or a Christar project focused on meeting refugees' physical, emotional and spiritual needs. For information, go to christar.ca/give or email donation@imioi.ca.

Helpful Resources

Below are selected resources on refugees and ministering to the displaced. For more resources, including prayer guides, practical tips and a Bible study, visit christar.org/refugees.

Websites:

We Welcome Refugees (wewelcomerefugees.com): Provides resources to help churches and individuals reach out to refugees in their communities.

World Evangelical Alliance (worldevangelicals.org/refugees): Offers resources on refugees in the Bible and suggestions for getting involved in ministry to the displaced.

Global Mapping International (gmi.org): Offers missions-related infographics, books and more.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (unhcr.org): Provides statistics and facts on refugees worldwide.

Book:

Serving God in a Migrant Crisis: Ministry to People on the Move, by Patrick Johnstone with Dean Merrill. Global Mapping International, 2016.





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