



STAND WITH REFUGEES

A prayer guide



Will you step into the margins with us?

We worship a God who loves us deeply—so deeply that He sent His only Son to become flesh and walk among us. Not only that, He became poor and went into the margins, reaching out to those living in the shadow of oppression and injustice. Jesus identified with the oppressed and the excluded.

In Psalm 12:5 we read, “Into the hovels of the poor, into the dark streets where the homeless groan, God speaks: ‘I’ve had enough; I’m on my way to heal the ache in the heart of the wretched!’” (*The Message*). Jesus followed His Father’s heart for people, and we’re called to follow in His footsteps.

This means reaching into the dark places, where poverty and injustice hold the vulnerable captive, and offering His hope—not only for the hereafter, but for the here and now.

We invite you to reflect on what the Bible says about God’s love for the marginalized, the broken, the refugee.

And we invite you to pray with us for people in five countries who have been forced from their homes by conflict, hunger, and injustice.

Around the world, 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. That’s the most ever recorded, according to the U.N. Most people are displaced within their home countries, but about 25 million people worldwide have fled to other countries as refugees.

More than half of these refugees are children. We know this breaks God’s heart, that suffering and pain is not what He wants for any child. We invite you to spend time in prayer, individually or with others, and allow your own heart to be moved to compassion for refugees. Let your goal be to grow in faith as you consider this humanitarian crisis happening all around the world—one that cries out for a compassionate response.



Life in the margins

Child refugees: Udai and Rana

Eleven-year-old Udai was 6 when the Syrian civil war began. His little sister, Rana, was 2. They hardly remember life before the violence and chaos.

Their family of eight stayed in eastern Aleppo as long as they could. But they were forced from their home when the fierce battle between government and rebel forces came to their doorstep in late 2016.

“We had dinner and were getting ready for bed when we heard a ‘booooooom,’” Udai recounted. “I was shouting, ‘Dad!’ No one was answering. People came in with flashlights, and they found us.”

By the time Udai, Rana, and their three siblings escaped the city in mid-December, they had lost both of their parents and their 7-year-old sister in bomb attacks. The orphaned children relied on relatives and caring strangers to usher them to relative safety in Idlib, Syria.

“I was shouting, ‘Dad!’ No one was answering.”



Pray for Syria

Udai and his siblings are among more than 12.4 million Syrians who have fled the armed conflict, a little over half of whom are displaced within Syria.

In mid-2019, the U.N. refugee agency counted 5.6 million Syrian refugees and asylum seekers who are still living outside their country because of the violence and instability. Most remain in neighboring countries in the Middle East, including 3.6 million in Turkey (the largest number of refugees hosted by any country).

Since the crisis began, World Vision has helped more than 2 million people in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Serbia.

“Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.” —Deuteronomy 24:17–18 (NIV)

God’s heart is broken by injustice and oppression—and as people made in His image, our hearts should break too. But it’s not enough to be brokenhearted. To offer hope, we must enter into people’s suffering. Concern that doesn’t lead to compassion changes nothing.

If we hear the cries of the suffering, and then act, as God’s people we can bring hope and transformation to people in the harshest places in our world.

Prayer points

- Ask God to protect those who have left everything behind in search of safety.
- Pray for them to seek God and trust Him to be their hope.
- Pray that God will move the nations of the world to seek compassionate solutions for Syria’s refugees and displaced families.
- Pray for God to open your eyes to ways you can respond, and for your heart to be open to His leading.



Pray for Afghanistan

About 2.5 million people from Afghanistan are living as refugees, representing the second-largest refugee population in the world. Pakistan hosts nearly 1.4 million, including some second- or third-generation Afghan refugees who have never lived in their home country. Some have been forced to return home, but increased violence in Afghanistan since 2015 has led to a new surge of asylum seekers. About 1.3 million Afghans are displaced within the country.

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. —Deuteronomy 10:18 (NIV)

God's sheltering love for people forced from their homes is the same love He extends through Christ to us. Since we were once strangers in God's kingdom, we can identify with refugees and displaced people by remembering our spiritual state of separation from God—until Christ brought us home.

Prayer points

- *Pray for all those affected by violence—people who have lost loved ones, and those who have been injured.*
- *Ask God to come to the aid of those who are personally suffering as a result of the conflict in Afghanistan.*
- *Pray that God will move more people to act on their faith—to put what they believe into action and help their neighbors in need.*
- *Pray that God will help you give not just of your resources, but of yourself, that you might learn to love others as He loves you.*



Pray for South Sudan

The number of refugees from South Sudan jumped significantly in 2017, from 1.4 million to 2.4 million people—nearly half of them in Uganda. The world's youngest country sank back into violent turmoil in July 2016 after renewed fighting shattered a peace deal that was years in the making. Almost 2 million people have been displaced within the country.

World Vision has helped more than 1 million people in South Sudan and the surrounding countries with aid, including food, a special nutrition treatment for malnourished children and breastfeeding mothers, livelihood training, seeds and farming supplies, household items like bed nets and blankets, and water and sanitation services.

*"... my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation.
He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—
from violent people you save me."
—2 Samuel 22:3 (NIV)*

Think of how graciously God treats us, the people living in His world, taking refuge in His goodness. He is the ultimate shelter for all of His people in need. His kindness to us can guide our thoughts and actions toward those living as strangers among us. And no matter what we face, we can take comfort knowing that God, the rock of our salvation, will never fail us.

Prayer points

- Pray for children affected by conflict, that they might be able to return to their homes in peace and safety.
- Pray for mothers and fathers who worry for their children's futures, that they will find joy in knowing that God is with them.
- Ask God to help kids who are struggling to keep up with their education under difficult circumstances.
- Pray that God will fill you with His joy so that you can share it with others and reflect His love through your own life.



Pray for Myanmar

Over a million people who identify as Rohingya, an ethnic minority, have fled their homes in western Myanmar, most of them to Bangladesh. Aid agencies are struggling to adequately serve them as conditions continue to shift.

After fleeing violence in Myanmar, refugees have battled to survive seasonal monsoon rains and the continuing threat of cyclones. They've faced flooding, landslides, collapsed or damaged shelters, contaminated water, overflowing latrines, and disease. Refugees are suffering from physical illnesses—easily spread in overcrowded, unhygienic camps—as well as psychosocial conditions. With such a high concentration of people, any disease outbreak has the potential to kill thousands. Children in particular are

affected by things like malnutrition, gender-based violence, lack of schooling, and more.

Since September 2017, World Vision has served nearly 265,000 refugees in Bangladesh with food, water, sanitation, shelter, and other essentials.

*The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble. —Psalm 9:9 (NIV)*

God is with the poor. He is with the brokenhearted and the refugees in the midst of their lament. He dwells with the oppressed, giving them an anchor for their souls and providing them an unflinching place of refuge in His steadfast love.

Prayer points

- *Pray that God will grant His peace to those who have experienced war.*
- *Pray for a peaceful resolution to the turmoil in Myanmar so that children and families may find safety.*
- *Ask God to stir the hearts of Christians around the world to pursue peace and justice for all those affected by injustice.*
- *Pray that God will open your eyes to those who are suffering, and show you where you can help. Ask Him to extend hope through you, making you His hands and feet through the power of the Holy Spirit.*



Pray for Somalia

Over 870,000 Somali refugees have fled to countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, and Yemen to find safety from over two decades of armed conflict that's been intensified by drought. Some have lived in massive refugee camps for years. About 100,000 have returned to the country since June 2016, largely due to the Kenyan government's intent to eventually close Dadaab refugee camp, at one time the world's largest. But the widespread humanitarian need continues as conflict and recurring drought linger. Within Somalia, over 2 million people are displaced.

"The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God."
—Leviticus 19:34 (NIV)

Most Christians know Jesus' instruction to "love your neighbor as yourself," but may not be as familiar with the

law of Moses that gives the same instruction for how to treat foreigners. In this verse, God's command to treat foreigners as "native-born" would have been shocking to people in Moses' day.

Refugees then and now can end up far from home for a short time or for many years. Over half of the world's refugees have been out of their country for more than five years. A third of these have been refugees between 10 and 37 years. And another third have been displaced for 37-plus years—that's a lifetime! This instruction in Leviticus is especially helpful when people end up staying for years as refugees or migrants.

God has set a high standard for how we are to behave toward those who are foreigners. We are to love them as ourselves, and treat them like citizens.

Prayer points

- Pray that families who have lived away from their homes for a long time would be welcomed into their new societies.
- Pray for God's miraculous peace to change the situation in Somalia so people can return home in safety.
- Ask that children affected by the drought would get the nourishment they need to grow up healthy.
- Ask for God's love to fill you so that you can extend His welcome to those in need around you.



Extending God's welcome

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household ..."
—Ephesians 2:19 (NIV)

This verse follows the great passage that lays out how we have been saved by faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8–10). In it, the words "foreigners" and "strangers" are used as metaphors for our condition before our faith in Christ. Before we believed, we were outside the covenant and considered foreigners or strangers in God's kingdom (2:11–13). But because of our faith in Him, we are now part of God's community—strangers who have been welcomed in.

Now that you've spent some time praying for those in greatest need of God's shelter, we hope your heart has been stirred by the Holy Spirit to continue. To speak up for those who are in distress. To take action.

Consider joining World Vision's efforts to help by donating, raising funds, and advocating for refugees. Together, we can demonstrate compassion to our neighbors and share God's love with those in need.

worldvision.org/refugees



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