

## Refugee Sunday – Sermon Planning Resource

### What’s Causing the Refugee Crisis?

Syria’s ongoing conflict has devastated the nation. According to the UN, more than 400,000 people have been killed, including more than 14,000 children. Over a million more are wounded or permanently disabled. Neighborhoods are leveled, entire towns uninhabitable. Refugees are literally running for their lives to neighboring countries – particularly Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan – putting a strain on nations that already face high poverty and unemployment numbers as well as limited resources like water.

At the same time, funds to assist refugees in these host countries are critically low. Refugees in Lebanon have seen their rations cut several times and now must survive on just \$13 of food assistance per month. Refugees living outside formal camps in Jordan were told they would no longer receive any food voucher assistance at all as of August of 2015.

This lack of assistance is increasingly pushing people to flee to Europe and other parts of the world.

### What is World Vision doing to help?

Since the beginning of this crisis, World Vision has helped more than 2 million people in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. World Vision has been providing aid to refugees and host communities in the Middle East since the crisis began.

In Lebanon and Jordan, this includes distributing personal and household supplies and providing clean water and sanitation. Programs for children include remedial and supplemental education so they can return to school, as well as safe places where children can play and recover from emotional scars.

We are working in northern Syria, providing critical food aid, hygiene support, health assistance, and water and sanitation. Displaced Iraqis in the Kurdish northern region benefit from food aid, health services, and children’s programming. We furnished 3,000 baby kits for a local partner to distribute to newly-arrived Syrian refugees in Turkey.

We’re distributing food and hygiene items to assist families traveling through Serbia on the refugee route. Hygiene kits are being distributed as soon as they are received in Serbia. We’re expanding our work to include child protection services. We’re distributing baby packs, including items for mothers, in camps in northern Serbia, near the Hungarian border. The kit includes diapers, baby cream, baby soap, wet wipes, a toy, toothbrush, toothpaste, hand disinfectant, shampoo, sanitary pads for mothers and cotton swabs.

## How Your Church Can Respond

### 1. Take Up a One-Time Special Offering – Refugee Sunday

Caring for this overwhelming human need requires churches to come alongside those who remain in Syria or nearby. The special offering you collect on Refugee Sunday will be used to continue our work in helping refugees.

### 2. Commit to regularly pray for Syrian refugees and other international refugees

Often when we cease to pray – we lose the sense of connection, urgency, and direction from the Lord. Use the *Prayer Points for the Syrian Conflict*, informed by stories of human migration reported by the Canadian media. Also consider consistently lifting up several families that your church is connected to, that they would call Canada home in the same way that we do.

### 3. Continue to assist and welcome refugees in your community

Many churches have opened up their hearts to welcome refugees into their communities. Many of our children are sharing stories of Syrian classmates. Now that we have sponsored families in our midst, what is God calling us to do?

## Talking Points

- There are now more refugees in the world than at any time in recorded history. More than half of these refugees are children
- The Syrian Refugee Crisis is the greatest forced migration of people since World War II, the Church needs to stand in the gap, by demonstrating the love and compassion of Christ
- Nearly 12 million Syrians have fled their homes because of the conflict. This would be the equivalent of the entire populations of Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, forced to pack up and leave, becoming homeless overnight
- Children affected by the Syrian conflict are at risk of becoming a lost generation – facing threats of early marriage, child labor and recruitment into armed groups. Millions have been forced to quit school
- Assistance in critical areas like food has been cut again and again, due to lack of funding. This is forcing refugees to make increasingly difficult decisions as they run out of options, driving many to flee to Europe
- Since the beginning of this crisis, World Vision has helped more than 2 million people in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. We recently expanded our work into Turkey as well as Serbia to provide assistance to refugees who are passing through Europe

## Sermon Topic Outlines

### I. Loving The Sojourner

*“Love the sojourner...for you were sojourners...” Deuteronomy 10:19*

When we consider refugees we easily forget that every person is a refugee. You are a refugee. I am a refugee. Even though you will not find the word “refugee” in the Scriptures:

- A. God’s People are sojourners
  - a. A sojourner in the Bible can be a guest, or a pilgrim
  - b. The sojourner can stay for a short or a long time
  - c. A sojourner in the Bible might flee from famine, or persecution, or be a victim of war, or economic injustice
  - d. A sojourner might be escaping grief, or have been carried off into captivity
  - e. What we learn from the sojourner is one size will not fit all
- B. We all are refugees in a land to which we don’t ultimately belong
  - a. We too were once in their place. In our transient time we have all been on the move, and will continue to be in transition
  - b. We have all been in places and times of transition. What difference does it make when you have a community that walks with you?
- C. We are citizens of a Kingdom whose King is God (“Metoicos” – Resident Aliens)
  - a. Today’s headline sojourners are, in fact, brothers and sisters in God’s family
- D. God calls us to love sojourners because in each one God’s image is found
  - a. To love the sojourner is to love God and to love ourselves. See Gen. 3:22; Gen. 37-46; I Chron 29:15-16; Heb. 11; Acts 7; Phil 3:20-21)

### 2. Being The Good Samaritan

*“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor?” ... The one who had mercy on him ... Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” Lk 10.36-37*

Luke 10:29-37 – Luke uses the Samaritan as an example that the Gospel message is to the person in need, no matter how different the person is:

- B. The Samaritan was moved with pity, taking action, even though Jews and Samaritans did not interact
  - a. He did something to practically help the man’s needs. He was not passive, or a bystander, or a passerby
  - b. Being a bystander and passerby were the responses of the priest, and the Levite – they knew better, but they ignored, and walked past.
  - c. The Samaritan not only bandaged his wounds but took him to an inn and paid for his care. He went way beyond superficial aid to help the man become self-sufficient again.

He did it not out of obligation, but because he chose to. He loved his neighbor as himself

- d. We are often moved with pity about situations around the world, but how often does our pity lead us to action? The Samaritan knew that love must act
- C. A common theme of Scripture is God's care for the foreigner, widow and orphan. (see Lev. 19:32-34; Deut 10:18-19; 27:19; 24:17-22; Psa 9:9; Psa 105; Psa 146:9; Prov 28:27; Isa 25:4; 58:6-11; James 1:27)
  - a. No limits of ethnicity, religion or nationality. The person in need is one's neighbor
- D. The stranger affords God's people the opportunity to show hospitality
  - a. We are to stand up for the refugee, sharing of our resources even to the point of selling our possessions in order that they may have enough (see Gen 18; Ex 2, Deut 24:19-21; 14:28-29; 26:12; 1 Kings 17:7-16; Josh 20; Jer. 5:5-7; Luke 9:3-5; Luke 12:33; Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2, 1 Pet 4:9)
  - b. Hospitality is a sign of a grateful and obedient heart (Luke 14:12; Acts 4:32; Rom 12:13)
  - c. Hospitality allows us to entertain angels unaware, and minister to the Lord Jesus (Heb 13:2, Matt 25:35)

### 3. Inviting People to The Party

*Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. Lk 14:21*

Luke 14:7-24 – When we invite people to a party, we usually invite people we know, who share the same interests as we do. Jesus challenges us about whom we include in our fellowship and whom we exclude from it.

- A. The story of the Wedding Feast shows how the kingdom of God transcends our limits
  - a. There is no limit to who can be invited – even the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame
  - b. Think about what it is that stops you from inviting those who are different into your parties
  - c. Reflect upon what it feels like to be left out, forgotten, marginalized, ignored, and unwanted. The welcome of the Kingdom is for everyone to come
  - d. Remember when you were a stranger in your community or when you first came to Canada
  - e. Think about how God affirms the human dignity of even the marginalized and how you can participate in this affirmation of the identity and human dignity of strangers
- B. In Christ we are no longer strangers, but beloved children and heirs according to His Promise. (see Eph 2:11-22, 19; Gal 3:29)
  - a. Those who are far, are brought near
  - b. We are welcomed into the family of God
  - c. Family is what every person longs for, because it is the place where we belong
  - d. As we invite the stranger in our midst, we have a taste of the Kingdom

- C. God's people are deemed obedient followers and blessed when they show compassion to the foreigner and stranger (see Josh 20; Heb 13:1-2; Deut 24:19-21; Deut 27:19; Is 58:6-11; Matt 25:31-46; Luke 14:13-14)

#### 4. Rescued to Milk & Honey

*So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Deut 26.8-9*

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 – This passage is of former refugees who had been in bondage in Egypt but had been brought to a land of milk and honey

- A. The phrase “a wandering Aramean” is a reference to Jacob who was the patriarch of the family who wandered, and ended up in bondage in Egypt
  - a. In Hebrew, the word for “wandering” means more than just a nomadic lifestyle
    - i. It carries the sense of being lost or about to perish
- B. This passage points to people of God being rescued by God and His provision
  - a. In recognition and worship for what God had done, the first fruits of the land were presented to God in the sanctuary
  - b. The first fruits were shared with the sojourners and wanderers that lived in the land. We, too, live in a land flowing with milk and honey
  - c. We live in that part of the world that is wealthy in ways more than financial.
  - d. We rarely consider the uncertainty of life, but often those around the world live on the edge of life. God has given us more than we can give away
- C. Conflict that often preempts mass or solitary migration does not have the last word. God often uses the movement of people to His good purpose. (Genesis – Joseph into Egypt to save many; Acts – the life of the early Church)
- D. Jesus identifies with the refugee (in Egypt after his birth), He understands the life of the sojourner and wanderer. They are made in His image (see Gen 1:26,28; Psa 107; Matt 2:19-21; Matt 8:20, Matt 12:1; Matt 25:31-46)