

## **The refugee crisis is sad but what can I do?**

Pictures of distressed children and desperate adults and terrible conditions in camps upset us. Statistics overwhelm us. It can be hard not to look away because we simply don't know what to do or it just seems frightening.

Can an ordinary individual make a difference?

We believe that the answer is yes. Here are some ideas. Our contexts and opportunities vary but focus on what you can do and don't worry about the rest.

Pray. Pray for hope, protection, provision, fairness, compassion. Pray for those who are afraid. Pray against xenophobia or abuse and those who would seek to exploit people's misery for profit. Pray for those who care for refugees and are worn down. You probably cannot go to the worst places and help but you can support and encourage those who do work there.

Find out more. There is a lot of fear. There is a lot of misinformation. So make a decision to find out reliable information and share it in your conversations and on social media. Be an advocate for truth. Reassure. Ask questions to help friends consider what is right. Challenge falsehood. If politics is your thing, look at our advocacy materials and get ready to speak up. Pray for the politics of the situation.

Are there refugees or asylum seekers living near you? Can you befriend them? Can you volunteer with a local NGO or persuade your church to get involved? If not, be sensible and don't act alone but you and a friend can still say hello to refugees (of your gender).

What simple things will make a difference? Helping someone understand the bus timetable or how to find what they want in the supermarket or how to fill in a form. Encouraging them in their language learning. Enjoying the local park / museum together. Accompanying a mum and child to a parent and toddler club. Playing sport or games together. Cooking for one another and sharing meals.

Look at the other FAQs and resources on this website and you will gain many ideas. These include getting to understand Islam.

If getting to know refugees personally is not an option, can you contact a ministry working with refugees (at home or abroad) and ask how you can pray or collect items needed? Can you raise money? Could you get sponsored e.g. for camping under a plastic sheet? OR invite friends to pay to come to a Middle Eastern meal?

But of course, there are other needs. There are many other people in need of support all around us. It is right that Christians respond to the refugee crisis. Let's keep working to bless other vulnerable people who are struggling with material or relational poverty or other needs. If this is your focus, that's fine.

The scale of the refugee crisis is indeed overwhelming but that does not mean we are powerless. As Christians, we are all invited to offer our few loaves of bread and fish to Jesus and see what He can do with them. So let's be encouraged by what we can do with His help, and pray and leave to God the things that are beyond us.