

QUESTIONS ABOUT REFUGEES

THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH THE VULNERABLE

WHO IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee is someone who has fled his/her home country and cannot return because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

HOW MANY REFUGEES ARE COMING TO THE UNITED STATES?

In 2016, the United States planned to welcome a total of 85,000 refugees. World Relief functions as one of nine voluntary agencies contracted by the Department of State to resettle those refugees. World Relief's 27 regional offices, along with partner churches, resettle approximately 10% of all refugees entering the United States—providing language skills, job training and spiritual support for these new community members.

HOW ARE REFUGEES SCREENED BEFORE THEY ENTER THE COUNTRY?

Any refugee admitted into the United States undergoes a thorough screening process that includes, among other steps, an in-person interview, a biometric background check, and a medical screening. These are led by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Department of Defense and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The screening process for a refugee to enter the U.S. takes, on average, 18 months to 3 years. These screenings are, in fact, the most thorough background checks undergone by any immigrant or visitor coming to the United States.

WHAT DO NEW REFUGEES NEED MOST WHEN THEY ARRIVE IN THE COUNTRY?

Refugees often come to the United States with only the belongings they can carry. Welcome Kits play an important part in helping refugee families start anew by providing basic household goods. World Relief also recognizes the need to help refugees build relationships in their new community. Through opportunities like

Good Neighbor Teams, small groups of volunteers can help refugees navigate the transition and form relationships and friendships here in the United States.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TELL US ABOUT REFUGEES?

The Bible has a lot to say about how God’s people should respond to refugees and other migrants. In fact, the Hebrew word, *ger*, (translated into English variously as foreigner, sojourner, stranger, or immigrant) appears 92 times in the Old Testament— often in the context of God commanding his people to love and welcome those who came as foreigners into their land. Many of the heroes of our Christian faith—David, Elijah, even Jesus, himself—had to flee persecution from tyrannical governments seeking to do them harm. The New Testament repeatedly commands us to “practice hospitality” (Rom. 12:13), which literally means to practice *loving strangers*, with the hint that, by doing so, we may be welcoming angels (Heb. 13:2).

Ultimately, we believe that each person is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). As such, we seek to serve and welcome all those fleeing persecution, regardless of their religious or cultural background.

On top of that, welcoming refugees is a tangible way to love our neighbors—part of Jesus’ Great Commandment (Luke 10:27). Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan makes it clear that our “neighbor” is to be defined broadly, not merely to include those who share our nationality, ethnicity, or religious background. When we welcome refugees, we are also able to practice the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31), treating others as each of us would hope to be treated if we were to find ourselves in a desperate situation, forced to flee to a foreign land.

Welcoming refugees also presents an opportunity to stand with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are persecuted for their faith. In fact, this past decade saw more Christian refugees resettled to the U.S. than those of any other religious traditions. Many of them faced persecution specifically because of their faith in Christ. Of course, other refugees who are resettled are not Christians. We view the arrival of those from other religious traditions as a unique opportunity to demonstrate the love of Jesus.