

Coming Close to the Heart of Refugees



MISSION OBJECTIVES

- A. I will learn more about the challenges of living as a refugee.
- B. I will listen to someone's transition story of his or her life as a refugee.

(Note to group leader: Prepare carefully in advance for *Lesson 3 Discovery: Loss Simulation*, which is at the end of this lesson. No one else should read the handout until after the activity has been completed.)



TEAM CARE AND ACCOUNTABILITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Share something you learned from *Lesson 2 Field Activity: Cultural Study*.
2. Tell about any experiences you have had in following up on your international contacts. (Keep updating and referring to your *Contact Log*.)
3. What did you learn from study #2 in *My Favorite Missionary* and the video clips?
4. What needs or challenges are you facing that we can pray for?
5. Pray together especially for each other and the people from other cultures that you have met.



PRESENTATION (23:46 MINUTES)

WATCH: *Coming Close to the Heart of Refugees*



DISCOVERY AND DISCUSSION (30 MINUTES)

1. How do you feel after watching *Coming Close to the Heart of Refugees* and what did you learn?
2. When did you, your family, or ancestors move to this country and why did they come?
3. **Read Leviticus 19:33-34.** What kind of actions and attitudes do you think demonstrate what it means to treat the stranger as someone born among you and to love him or her as yourself?
4. **Read Matthew 2:13-15 and 8:20.** What are some of the ways that Jesus experienced what refugees and immigrants go through that you can see in these texts and at other times in His life?
5. Experience together *Lesson 3 Discovery: Loss Simulation*, which you will find at the end of this lesson. Only the leader should look at the instruction sheet while the rest of the group participates.
6. What have you learned today and how will you use it this week?



TEAM PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Pray together for your visits with refugees to touch their hearts and bring encouragement; for the many displaced people throughout the world; for the soon coming of Jesus to end all suffering.

Promises to Claim:

- ✔ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God* (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- ✔ *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men [women], for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men [women] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy 2:1-4).
- ✔ *It is in this speck of a world, in the souls that He gave His only-begotten Son to save, that His interest and the interest of all heaven is centered. God is bending from His throne to hear the cry of the oppressed. To every sincere prayer He answers, "Here am I." He uplifts the distressed and downtrodden. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. In every temptation and every trial, the angel of his presence is near to deliver* (White 1898, 356).



ASSIGNMENTS (5 MINUTES)

1. What will you do this week to follow up on your friendships with the people you met last week from other countries? Use the *Contact Log* for each individual. (If you have not made a contact that you can follow up on, go back to the ideas from week #1 to make sure you are developing a new friendship with someone of another culture who is not a Christian.)
2. Read over *Lesson 3 Field Activity: Listen to Their Moving Stories*. Discuss together how you will find refugees to talk with. If appropriate and possible, take someone with you who is not part of your team yet, so they can catch the vision for this ministry as well. After completing the interview, write your response on paper so you can share with your team next week.
3. Mobilize and Multiply. Share with a friend or family member what you learned about refugees. Encourage him or her to watch one of the video clips that touched you or to visit a refugee with you.
4. Complete study #3 in *My Favorite Missionary* and focus your prayers on "Refugees" in *Praying for the World Next Door*.
5. Watch at least one of the following video clips to learn more about the experience of refugees:
 - A. Ms. Tara Vang tells the huge impact church members made on her refugee family (GYC) (Start at 15:53.)
 - B. Three friends from Iowa, Missouri, and the world share, "Refugees, Pain and Trauma Dealing with Everyday Life" (3ABN)
 - C. Pastor Desta describes the journey from Ethiopia to Minnesota and how to help refugees adjust (ASAP Ministries)
 - D. See what God's people are doing around the world to help refugees.
6. Complete the form: *Field Report #3*.

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES AND VOLUNTEER POSSIBILITIES.

If you would like to volunteer overseas or help financially, here are the websites of some organizations that work with refugees: adra.org, adventisthelp.org, asapministries.org, impact-hope.org, refugeeministries.org.

It is possible that you will meet refugees from one of the language groups that have many Christians among them already. For example, the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists is coordinating work among a number of groups such as those from Myanmar (Burma) and Central Africa which have many Seventh-day Adventists among them. You can find out which groups already have church planting consultants and get advice and support from them as needed. (See list at refugeeministries.org/church-planting-consultants.)

Do not be surprised if the people group you are trying to help has no consultant. That simply confirms what these lessons show—there are many unreached groups that we must now focus on. If you discover one, please consult Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministries (ARIM) with questions about reaching out to them. At the time of this writing Terri Saelee is the coordinator for ARIM. (Contact address: terrisaelee@nadadventist.org.)

LESSON 3 DISCOVERY: LOSS SIMULATION

SET UP

Leader: Give 16 small pieces of paper (e.g., index cards, sticky notes, or paper cut/torn to a similar size) to each participant, and make sure everyone has something to write with. (Optional: You may wish to use four different colors of paper, and give each participant four pieces of each color.)

Tell Them (demonstrate with one piece of paper):

- Divide the pieces of paper into four piles of four (divide by colors, if using four colors of paper)
- In the first pile, write four activities you enjoy (one on each piece of paper); in the next pile, write four things you own that are important to you; in the next pile, write four of the most special people presently in your life; and in the last pile, write four roles you currently hold in your life (e.g., parent, sister, student, teacher, etc.).

SELECTED LOSS

Tell Them:

- Look at the four piles of papers and quickly choose one from each category that you would be willing to give up first.
- Tear up the four pieces of paper that you selected and discard them in a pile.

Ask and Share:

- How does it feel to have to make a quick decision about what you are willing to give up, especially when everything you wrote down is special and important to you?
- Imagine what it might feel like to be a refugee fleeing a village and having to choose whether you take your Bible OR take your clothes. Consider what it feels like to have to decide whether you run by the school to see if you can find your son OR just flee with the child who is in your arms, knowing that between here and the school you could be killed.

UNKNOWN LOSS

Tell Them:

- Turn the piles of paper over so you cannot see the words.
- Without looking, take one piece of paper from each pile. Tear up the papers and discard them.
- Do not look.
- Sit and wait.

Ask and Share:

- How does it feel to not know what you have lost?
- Imagine sitting in a refugee camp not knowing where your mother is or if your child is alive. Think how you might feel not knowing if your home still stands or if there will be anything to return to if you ever get to go back to your hometown.

LOSS OF CONTROL

Tell Them:

- Keep all piles face down, sit quietly, and ponder your loss.
- Do not look at your papers to see what you have left.

Leader: Walk quietly around the room removing papers from in front of people. Take only a few papers from some people, take many pieces from others, and from a few, do not take any papers at all. You may walk past someone only to return and take papers.

Tell them:

- If you have any remaining papers, turn them over to see what you still have.

Ask and Share:

- How does it feel to have important people and things taken from right in front of you?
- How does it feel to lose more than others?
- How does it feel to not lose while others did?
- Imagine how refugees feel about the lack of control in their situations. In the refugee camps, people have few opportunities to make choices. They may sit for years in a camp waiting for someone else to decide if they get to go to another country, return to their own or keep sitting in the camp. Even when they arrive in a new country, they have little control over where they live or what they might do in their first few days or months. They must rely on a single case manager, or possibly a volunteer, entrusting their lives to a stranger.

Further Discussion:

- How has this activity changed the way you feel about refugees?
- What can you do to be a good friend to refugees?

PRAYER

Take a few moments for silent prayer or group prayer for the refugees and other displaced person struggling throughout the world and in your community.

“The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34).

LESSON 3 FIELD ACTIVITY: LISTEN TO THEIR MOVING STORIES

Interview someone who is a recent refugee or immigrant living in the United States. To find someone, you can check with local ethnic churches, do an Internet search for “refugee resettlement agencies,” or call your local conference or church’s headquarters to get contact information for a refugee church. Say something like, “I would like to have the privilege of meeting a refugee so I can hear and understand his or her story.”

Review these sample interview questions before you visit. You do not need to use them all or follow them exactly. It may be more personal to not have the list of questions in front of you and writing down the answers while you talk.

Keep your words simple for anyone who is still learning the language and may be struggling to understand. If necessary, take a translator with you.

Listen well and show your interest. Know that you are asking that person to share a very personal and perhaps painful story. Pray that you will be able to be a good friend who will listen and respond as God leads.

Write down answers and responses soon after you leave so that you do not forget important details. Staple your notes of the interview to the back of this person’s *Contact Log* in order to reference his or her story in your future interactions.

Sample Interview Questions:

- 🗣️ Would you be willing to share the story of how you came to live in this country?
- 🗣️ Where did you live when you were a child and what was it like?
- 🗣️ How long ago did you come to this country and why did you leave your home?
- 🗣️ Did you live in a refugee camp? If so, what was it like?
- 🗣️ What do you miss from your home country?
- 🗣️ What do you like about living here?
- 🗣️ What is difficult about living in this new country?
- 🗣️ Who of your family members came with you and who are still there?
- 🗣️ What is it like for your family who is still back in your home country?
- 🗣️ What do you think people in this country can do to welcome refugees and immigrants and help them adjust to their new lives in this country?

Ending Your Conversation

You might end with, “Thank you for sharing with me. I am so thankful to hear the story of your courageous journey. I believe that God watched over you. I believe He even helped us meet so I could know you and learn from you. Could I say a prayer to ask God’s blessing on you as you continue to make your home here? Is there anything or anyone in your family that I could pray for?”

You will find that most people in most cultures will welcome you praying for them. Simply ask if it is okay with them if you ask God for a blessing on them and their family.

You might learn in advance or ask them what posture they pray in. Many Muslims pray with their hands extended, palms up, symbolizing that they want to receive God's blessing. They call this *dua* which means a personal prayer rather than the ritual prayer. Many Asians pray with their hands pressed together pointing upwards. Do what you feel comfortable with, seeking to press close to them where you can.

See if you can set up an opportunity to meet again to follow up on this new friendship.

Reflections

1. Write a summary of the person's story, aiming for at least a full page.
2. Write also a paragraph about your own feelings and thoughts from this interview.
3. Write a list of things you think you and your church could do to help refugees and immigrants who have come to your country.

