

LOVING, SERVING, & SHARING WELL: Afghan Refugees

Here are some basics to know in terms of loving, serving, and sharing Christ with Afghans:

1. Afghans are some of the most hospitable people on the planet. The Pashtun people do not have a word for you're welcome in their language that directly communicates, "You are welcome." This is because hospitality is expected. For example, it is very common for Afghans to invite someone to their home on the first meeting or anytime afterwards.
 - a. **Afghan Proverb:** 1st Day we are friends, 2nd day brothers!
2. Asking Afghans to share their story, if they are willing, about their journey, family, and life before this incident forms a connection. They are craving opportunities to connect during this time. After listening to their story, then please share your story, including a simple version of your testimony. Obviously, translation may be an issue. From this you can connect them at their next destination, or they may want to go where you are.
3. Remember Muslim taboos and to be culturally sensitive. Having some simple understanding of culture and how to approach others is one way to communicate love, i.e., it says I care about you, your family, and your situation. Here are some basics:
 - a. Speak to the same gender unless engaged first.
 - b. Men do not touch women.
 - c. Do not shake hands, serve items, wave, or do anything that would extend your left hand.
 - d. Be warm and close in conversation with people of the same gender. Focus on topics of family, friends, and community.
 - e. Be prepared to share about these things in your life. This will be the opportunity for you to project the gospel softly into their life. Listen to their story, and then share yours.
4. A good way to engage and demonstrate your faith is to ask how you can pray for an individual. I usually ask their name first so that if I am rejected on the prayer request, I can follow up that I will pray for you _____ (insert name).
5. Let them know that you are connected with a network of people (your church, association, KBC, etc.) who care about them, and who are praying for them as well. In fact, one aspect that we are working on is to mobilize churches in the cities and communities that they will eventually be moving to in the United States. Do not get distracted by this aspect, and I will explain more if we are able to Zoom.
6. Most of us have never had to think about or worry about our lives being displaced by war, violence and persecution in our neighborhoods, communities, or cities. One of the best ways for us to empathize, understand, and share Christ with forcibly displaced people is to understand their situation. Remember, this is not your normal Disaster Relief project, and these people will most likely NEVER return home! Although your role may feel like a normal trip to help those in need, this is not a short term move or displacement for them. Many will have seen family members and friends who have

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been killed or kidnapped in front of them, and they will have faced the very real horror of someone trying to kill them. So, in light of this trauma and long-term crisis, it is good to understand the journey that many have been through and the types of loss they have faced. 3 Types of Loss along the refugee highway:

- a. **Selected Loss:** Forcibly Displaced People (refugees) have to make heart breaking decisions in midst of fleeing their homes and villages. In the midst of the sudden attack or militant takeover, they may have to choose between who to help or how to help in the midst of the chaos. If a loved one is taken or lost in the midst of running or trying to hide, a person may have to choose whether to go back or to continue to run. They may not know what happened, and they have to choose/select what to do in a moment's notice. So, selected loss is huge issue and can lead to a lot of guilt, remorse, and trauma.
 - b. **Unknown Loss:** Forcibly Displaced People (refugees) live with the unknown-sometimes short term and sometimes forever. Imagine being in a new country and not knowing if your brother, sister, mother, father, friend made it out? Are they Still alive? Is your home still standing? Will I ever see my home, family, or friends again? This is extremely difficult! It could be short term, or it could be forever. Remember, this is permanent displacement and loss of everything. Home, Family, Identity, Country, Customs, Culture....
 - c. **Loss of Control:** Forcibly Displaced People (refugees) have not only loss control of their situation for the short run, but the long run. These refugees where forced to leave, and do not have a choice (per se) in their next destination, opportunities available, etc. They are being told when to go, where to go, when to eat, to sleep, etc. This, coupled with the other forms of loss, can lead to an ultimate despair. This is not a "loss" of a freedom, but it a loss of control over your life. Loss of everything.
7. Remember, people know that you love them not by what you do for them, but by how you approach them, i.e., how you serve them. Regardless of language and culture, you cannot fake this part. Let them see Christ in you! Although the "Project" that you are going to do is extremely important, it is NOT and NEVER will be more important than the PEOPLE! Remember the extreme trauma they have faced, and that no one ever wakes up and says, "I hope that someone will overrun my village or government, so that I might lose everything and become a refugee (displaced person)." These are the people who are running away from radicalism.
 8. **Final Perspective-** Most Muslims are not opposed to the gospel; they have simply never heard it!