



The Evangelical Covenant Church

REFUGEE

JOURNEY

HOW - TO GUIDE

Why the Refugee Journey?

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The Refugee Journey can be used as a stand-alone resource or as part of the Unite curriculum, developed by Make and Deepen Disciples. The Unite curriculum is a six-week discipleship journey focusing around five specific biblical purposes: strengthening and being the church, our call to be disciples, loving mercy and doing justice, serving globally, and being servant leaders. The final week of the Unite curriculum is the Refugee Journey. Visit unitecurriculum.org for more information.

We are in the middle of the largest forced migration of people ever in recorded history.

Today, more people have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict and crisis than any other time on record. These are unprecedented days, and it is time for us as a church to respond. The Refugee Journey allows us to learn a piece of the story of what it means to be a refugee and gives us a glimpse into real-life journeys of refugees from Syria, South Sudan, and Ukraine. These are three of the largest refugee-producing countries in recent years.

THE REFUGEE JOURNEY INVITES US TO:

1. Become aware of the story of refugees.
2. Engage with issues of biblical injustice faced by refugees.
3. Work together to raise funds for the work of the Evangelical Covenant Church to respond to the refugee crisis around the world through Covenant World Relief and Development and the global personnel of Serve Globally.

Although the need is great, we find hope as we join the work God is already doing. As “partners in transformation,” Covenant World Relief and Development hopes for transformation both in the communal and personal aspects of the refugee journey. We are working for transformation in refugee communities, and we also hope for transformation in each of us. As we develop new understandings of global conflicts and the lives of displaced people, we hope we will become more like Christ and see refugees as our brothers and sisters who are worthy of dignity and respect.

Won't you join us on the journey?



Before You Get Started

This guide links you to everything you need to re-create the Refugee Journey at your church. We would love to hear from you as you are considering the Refugee Journey or starting this process!

Covenant World Relief and Development (CWRD), a ministry of Serve Globally, has been the Covenant's response to human suffering and injustice for more than 65 years.

CWRD is involved in both long-term and short-term responses with refugees throughout the world. Global personnel of Serve Globally have also been intimately involved in responding to the refugee crisis, and some global personnel are even former refugees themselves.

Through this simulation you will specifically learn about South Sudanese and Syrian refugees.

CWRD has been supporting relief efforts, community development, and peacemaking projects among

displaced people of Syria and South Sudan, and most recently, we are engaged in relief efforts among those who have fled from the violence in Ukraine. We would love the chance to update you on those projects and let you know how your church can stay involved.

CWRD values the partnership of Covenant churches around the world, and we look forward to uniting together in this response. Being aware of your interest and the conversations that are sparked in your community because of this simulation experience encourages CWRD as we continue to support refugees and other vulnerable people groups around the world.

As you consider creating this experience for your faith community, we would love to be involved in any ways that might be helpful. The CWRD team can provide advice, updated statistics, or video content to help your church. We can also provide a guest speaker to visit your worship service virtually or in person. Just let us know how we can help.

Please contact Covenant World Relief and Development at 773.907.3372 or CWRD@covchurch.org.

Introduction for Leaders

The Refugee Journey is an opportunity for you and your church to experience what it is like to be forced from your home and become a refugee. The project gives each person the opportunity to follow the story of Syrian or South Sudanese refugees from life before conflict all the way through to 10 years after being forced from their home. In addition, you will hear stories of recent refugees from Ukraine.

IN THIS PACKET OF MATERIALS, YOU WILL FIND:

- Instructions on how to plan, promote, and host a Refugee Journey
- Material lists
- Suggested scripts and talking points
- Ideas to customize the Refugee Journey
- Next steps after the Refugee Journey

Before the Journey

Talk with your congregation in the weeks preceding the experience and use the promotional video to help people get a taste of the Refugee Journey. Help your congregation anticipate the Refugee Journey and begin to prepare.

Here is some sample language to use on your website, bulletins, and social media:

- On (day of month) at (time), we will be participating in the Refugee Journey. Join us to learn what it is like to be forced from home.
- Join us for the Refugee Journey. You will experience the stories of refugees like Mathew, Mohammed, Samira, and Maria from South Sudan and Syria. You will also hear from Ukrainian refugees recounting the early days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Use the graphics and logos found at covchurch.org/refugeejourney.

TIME NEEDED

The Refugee Journey can be completed in one hour in the context of a larger presentation on global ministry, but we suggest allowing two hours for the full experience.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Digital files for all printed materials or videos are available at covchurch.org/refugeejourney.

- Story cards for Sudanese and Syrian refugees (*Print enough for all participants. Print most of the cards with squares and circles. The cards with triangles should be approximately 1% of your group.*)

PHYSICAL SETUP for simulation of Sudanese and Syrian experience.

Introduction, Resettlement, and Debrief

- A large space for entire group

Pre-Exile

- Classroom: tables, chairs, pencils
- Hospital: gauze
- Soccer: soccer balls
- Field: outdoor space or be creative—use hay bales, straw, garden tools, children's plastic fruit, and vegetables inside
- Videos
- Photos
- Statistics + signs (*provided online*)
- Arabic worksheets (*provided online*)
- Chaos soundtrack (*provided online*)

Exile

- Tents
- Laundry line
- Jerry cans
- Photos
- Video projection and sound

Simulation Setup

The experience can be done in a variety of physical spaces. You may choose to host it outside, in one large room, throughout your church building, or even in your home.

Set up your Refugee Journey to include space for the four major sections.

- 1. Pre-Flight:** Include a space designated as hospital, field, soccer, and school. Be as creative or simple as you like with these areas. In your gathering space, post the provided photos and statistics.
- 2. Flight:** Create a winding pathway to get from the start of the pre-flight to the landing in exile. You can use hallways, pipe and drape, or volunteers to steer people through an arduous journey.
- 3. Exile:** Include tents or smaller spaces for watching videos and learning about life in a refugee camp. Decorate with items such as jerry cans, laundry, gauze, etc.
- 4. Resettlement:** Choose a large space where your entire group can gather together and see one another as you are divided into four groups as marked by the four symbols on the story cards.

GATHER

(5 minutes)

Welcome people to the Refugee Journey. Invite them to take time to look around the room at the photos and statistics you have posted.

INTRODUCE THE REFUGEE JOURNEY (5 minutes)

Take this time to give instructions and prepare participants for the experience. We suggest that participants do the Refugee Journey in family groups. We have created the Refugee Journey for groups of five, but it can be doubled to be families of 10, with each character in the Syrian or South Sudanese family shared by two participants. *You'll find a sample script for the introduction below.*

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

For the introduction

Welcome to the Refugee Journey. Today we will be exploring what it is like to be a refugee. Imagine what it would be like to be forced from your home in the middle of a normal day. This experience simulates the stories of actual Syrian and South Sudanese refugees.

As you participate in the Refugee Journey, please keep these questions in mind:

- *What are you feeling as you experience the Refugee Journey?*
- *What is difficult about your experience?*
- *What impact does being a refugee have on your life?*

Before we begin the Refugee Journey, we need to divide into families. Each group should be made up of five people and you should have both males and females in your group. Once you have your group, introduce yourselves to one another.

You will start by getting story cards for your family with instructions for the next phase of our Refugee Journey. Your story cards will become your identity throughout the experience, so don't lose them.

Four Major Sections

Pre-Exile (10 minutes)

In this phase of the Refugee Journey, you want people to experience “normal” life of a Syrian or South Sudanese family. Refugees have more to their stories than being forced to flee their homes. The pre-exile time will also help families move to separate areas so that when the chaos happens, they aren’t always able to flee together. Have volunteers available in the pre-exile portion to help people find their stations and participate in the selected activities. They can use the provided Arabic worksheets for school, wrap gauze around a wounded leg at the hospital, work in the field, and play soccer.

Chaos and Flight (5 minutes)

Use the provided chaos soundtrack to signal the group when it is time to flee. Have volunteers in the pre-exile area with participants and force them to flee to their place of exile. Make them go difficult paths to get there. Have volunteers check their story card identity to make sure they are at the correct place of exile that is consistent with the video you will show. Cause the chaos and flight stage to be a time of fear, the unknown, and confusion.

Exile (15 minutes)

Have a host in each tent or room to share about the physical surroundings and introduce the video. Play the video that corresponds to the story card of the participants.

Resettlement (10 minutes)

Move participants to a location with signs corresponding to the four symbols on the story cards. These symbols represent the four paths of refugees.

1. Returning home
2. Resettling in a third country (like the United States of America, Canada, or Sweden)
3. Assimilating into the host country
4. Remaining in the refugee camp

In these spaces we will examine what typically happens to refugees 10 years after flight.

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

Leading the resettlement section of the Refugee Journey

Welcome to your life 10 years after fleeing violence in your community.

Those of you with a square are still living life in a refugee camp.

Those of you with a circle have left the refugee camp and assimilated into life in the country you fled to. You remain an outsider to the host community, but you no longer have to live in a tent.

Those of you with a star have returned home. Your home community is safe enough for you to begin again there. Much was lost in the violence—buildings, schools, and education and health systems, not to mention many of your friends and family.

Those of you with a triangle have resettled in a third country like the US, Canada, or Sweden. You face unique challenges of learning a new culture and language, finding a new job, and often being discriminated against because of the color of your skin or because you are different.

Look around the room—what do you notice first? Likely you noticed that very few people have moved home or to a third country. Each year, 1% or less of the world’s refugees are able to resettle in a third country. And two-thirds of the world’s refugees come from protracted refugee situations where the average length of stay in a refugee camp is 26 years.

Debrief

Debrief (30 minutes)

This phase allows participants to debrief what they experienced and to explore next steps. The goal is not to leave people feeling overwhelmed, guilty, or unable to respond. We want to help participants explore what they felt as they went through the experience and determine next steps together. In addition, we would like to expose participants to the more recent Ukrainian crisis and encourage them to reflect on the similarities and differences between the refugee experiences.

ASK: Invite each participant to turn to one person and share what was most powerful for them during the Refugee Journey. Ask one person from each story (Syrian and South Sudanese) to share their experience as a summary for the group.

SHOW: Several videos of Ukrainian refugees are available online. In addition to the questions below, discussion questions are included with each video. Choose one to show the group.

READ: Throughout the Bible, God reminds his people to remember their own refugee journey. Throughout the Old Testament the Hebrew word *ger*, meaning “sojourner,” appears 92 times! God keeps reminding the Israelites:

- “You must neither wrong nor oppress a foreigner living among you, for you yourselves were foreigners in the land of Egypt” (EXODUS 22:21).
- “He secures justice for the orphan and the widow; he loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. Therefore, you are to love the foreigner, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt” (DEUTERONOMY 10:18-19).

Engage Further

The Refugee Journey can be used as a stand-alone resource or as part of the Unite curriculum, developed by Make and Deepen Disciples. The Unite curriculum is a six-week discipleship journey focusing around five specific biblical purposes: strengthening and being the church, our call to be disciples, loving mercy and doing justice, serving globally, and being servant leaders. The final week of the curriculum is the Refugee Journey. Visit unitecurriculum.org for more information.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *How was the Ukrainian refugee story that you watched similar to the story of the refugees from Syria and Sudan? How was it different?*
- *What are some things that are common among many displaced peoples?*
- *Do you notice any similar needs of displaced people? Were there needs that were unique to each situation?*
- *What did you feel as you experienced the Refugee Journey?*
- *Did anything surprise you as you experienced the Refugee Journey?*
- *What was difficult about the experience?*
- *If the refugee you learned about during your journey resettled in your community, what do you think they would find challenging?*
- *What did you know or feel about refugees before this experience, and how has your perspective shifted?*
- *If you had to flee your country, could you imagine what that would be like? Where would you go and what would you do?*
- *How can we honor our common story by loving the newcomers among us in our community?*
- *How can we be involved in the work God is doing around the world in the lives of refugees?*
- *Which aspects of your daily life would be difficult for a refugee? What obstacles do they face?*
- *Refugees are not the same as immigrants. What are the similarities and differences?*
- *Refugees are people with an official designation by the United Nations. It takes major atrocities faced by a large group of people to be classified as a refugee. What justice issues are faced by refugees?*

Suggested Next Steps

After you've experienced the Refugee Journey, it is easy to be overwhelmed or feel like the problem is too big for you to make an impact. But you can make a difference. Below are some suggested next steps. Your congregation and community may have additional ideas. Brainstorm together how you might take a step of action after this journey.

SHARE THE STORY

- Share with your friends, family, and others about the Refugee Journey. Tell them what you experienced and invite them to host a Refugee Journey in their church or community.

MAKE A FRIEND

- Build a relationship with a refugee in your community. Almost every state in the US and province in Canada has refugees.
- Look online to learn which nonprofits are working with refugees and see how you can volunteer with them.

LEARN MORE

- Read *A Better Country*, by Cindy Wu; *Seeking Refuge*, by Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, and Dr. Issam Smeir; or *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion, and Truth in the Immigration Debate*, by Matthew Soerens
- Visit covchurch.org/refugeejourney for more resources and recommendations.

GIVE

- Give to support refugees through Covenant World Relief and Development. Your gift will provide education, medical care, food, water, and care for refugees around the world. Visit covchurch.org/refugeejourney.

Examples of the ways your gifts will make a difference:

- \$5 Mosquito net
- \$35 School uniform and shoes for one student
- \$40 School fees for one child
- \$150 Emergency food relief
- \$500 Sewing machine for income generation
- \$2000 Microfinance loan for refugees

Follow Up

SHARE YOUR REFUGEE JOURNEY.

Post your photos and stories on social media and tag:

Covenant World Relief and Development

 @covworldreliefanddevelopment

 @covenantworldreliefanddevelopment

Serve Globally

 @serve_globally

 @serveglobally

The Evangelical Covenant Church

 @cov_church

 @covchurch

Tell us how you will continue your Refugee Journey by posting with the hashtag **#CovRefugeeJourney**.

Send us your photos and stories so we can share them with others. Email us at CWRD@covchurch.org.



Possible Modifications

- If you have a small group (less than 10), join together in one story and come back another time to watch the video of the second storyline.
- Invite the youth from your church to lead the Refugee Journey and act as models to your congregation.
- Invite a refugee who has been resettled in your community to share their story inside a tent or at the debrief time.
- Invite a Covenanter who is a refugee to join you online or in person to tell their story. Contact Covenant World Relief and Development for these connections at CWRD@covchurch.org.
- Invite a Covenant World Relief and Development staff or team member to lead you through the Refugee Journey.
- Show other Covenant World Relief and Development videos at covchurch.org/resource/covenant-world-relief-development-sunday-materials.
- Use the Kids Helping Kids: Refugees Around the World resource in your children's ministry. Visit covchurch.org/serve-globally/covenant-world-relief/kids-helping-kids-resources

Will you join us?





covchurch.org/refugeejourney