



Refugees



No-one can fail to be moved by the scenes of desperation and tragedy we see on the news. And however complex our reactions to the problem itself and the prospect of solution, the way the news is reported brings home to us more and more the fact that these are individuals; people just like you and me.

Safety and a future

Like us, they are people who long to live in safety, and who want a future for themselves and for their families. The terror they faced at home may have been severe or imminent; the danger and frustration they are prepared to embark on enormous, but presumably a risk worth taking. What they may not realise is the pain and heartache they will have to go through even once they arrive in Europe, as our systems struggle to cope with assessing and housing them all.

How to cope?

I have been privileged to get to know an African refugee. Her story of suffering violence, separation from her young children, and desperate submission to the people traffickers is still only partially resolved—although



she was recently granted asylum, she has spent 3 years not knowing where her children might be, and now, having just heard that they are alive, faces miles of bureaucratic tape as she tries to be reunited with them and longs to make a safe home for them. Yet she has a radiant trust in Jesus, and however dark her situation, she has always given thanks that things are not worse. For example, although having been a victim of regular gang rape by rebel soldiers, she is just thankful that she did not contract HIV as a result.

Lessons to learn

There are many things I could say here, perhaps starting with an encouragement to be more compassionate to these people, however inconvenient or expensive or unwise or just 'different' we may perceive them to be. And don't forget, Jesus was a refugee child when he was about 2 years old.

But another lesson is the value of safety and a future. These people are looking for a physical and economic safety and future—things we also value. Don't forget to look for a spiritual safety and future too. Safety in Jesus is for ever.

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