

Devotions

Being part of a refugee committee can be rewarding and rigorous, exhilarating and exhausting. Regardless of your experience, God is your source of strength and energy. God will be present and faithful to you as you welcome newcomers to Canada. Begin each of your committee meetings in the presence of the Lord who not only rejoices in your acts of service for refugees, but who takes even more pleasure in the fact that you come near to him. Draw wisdom and strength from his Word. Praise him for his faithfulness in a world that seems out of control. Thank him for loving you and all the displaced people in the world. Intercede for refugees. God will be faithful as you carry out your ministry to refugees.

DEVOTIONS #1: Beginning with Our Faithful God

Read Philippians 2:12-13

When Paul admonished the Philippians to, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12b), he based his confidence in God. Paul understood the mysterious and divine process at work in the lives of believers who sought to honour God with acts of mercy and service. He knew that the good works they were doing weren’t initially their own idea. Instead, believers’ good works began with our faithful God nudging, prompting, and urging them to take up various tasks. Paul explained, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).

Sponsoring refugees is a way of working out your salvation with fear and trembling. God has worked in you to will and to act according to his good purpose of caring for refugees. He wants you to mirror his role as “a refuge for the oppressed” (Psalm 9:9a). Psalm 82:3-4 describes what that implies: “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

What a comfort it is to know that you are sponsoring refugees because it is God’s good idea. He will provide all you need. “The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Prayer: Faithful God and refuge of the oppressed, as we begin this good work of caring for refugees, help us to grasp the divine, mysterious way you are working in our lives.

We thank you that our work originated in you. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #2: God's Faithfulness Reaches to the Skies

Read Psalm 57

There have always been refugees—people seeking shelter from danger, persecution, and war. Long ago, the prophet Isaiah described the anguish refugees feel: “Refugees stream to Zoar, and then on to Eglath-shelishiyah. Up the slopes of Luhith they weep; on the road to Horonaim they cry their loss. The springs of Nimrim are dried up – grass brown, buds stunted, nothing grows. They leave, carrying all their possessions on their backs, everything they own, making their way as best they can across Willow Creek to safety. Poignant cries reverberate all through Moab, gut-wrenching sobs as far as Eglaim, heart-wracking sobs all the way to Beer-elim” (Isaiah 15:5-8, *The Message*).

Thinking about all the refugees who have sought shelter throughout history can be overwhelming and discouraging. The problem is so large. “Why bother trying to deal with issues so far-reaching and wide-ranging?” skeptics may ask.

But you are not one of the cynics who throw their hands up in despair and choose to do nothing. Because you know that “God’s faithfulness reaches to the skies” (Psalm 57:10b), you are willing to do your part to sponsor and resettle refugees. You know nothing is a match for God’s supreme faithfulness. As you care for the refugees you have sponsored, you will witness God’s faithfulness in ways you never dreamed.

Prayer: Dear Lord, guard our hearts and minds with the vision of your faithfulness so that we are kept from discouragement at the enormity of the number of refugees and the problems they face. Use us to make even a few lives better through this sponsorship. May we do so only for your glory. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #3: Surely the Lord is in This Place

Read Genesis 28:10-22

Leaving home on a long journey can make a person feel vulnerable and afraid. That’s how Jacob felt when he left his home in Beersheba and set out for Haran to find a wife. He didn’t know what he would encounter.

What – or, rather, who – he encountered was beyond his wildest dreams. In fact, the

one whom he met appeared to him a dream. Our faithful God made promises to the deceitful Jacob that he was not worthy to receive. Besides other things, he promised to watch over Jacob wherever he went. When Jacob awoke, he said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it” (Genesis 28:16b).

You are on a sponsorship journey with refugees who have experienced their own journeys. God has faithfully watched over them so far. He has also taken care of you. His love for all of you does not depend on your awareness of his faithfulness. But he longs for you to grow in your consciousness of his presence. As the weeks and months of the sponsorship pass, may you increasingly profess, “Lord, we are aware that you are in this place!”

Prayer: Dear Lord, we are blind to your faithful presence unless you give us the eyes of faith to see you. As we care for refugees, help us to feel your nearness. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #4: Transformed for God’s Glory

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

Peter wasn’t the same man when he began his journey with Christ as he was years later when he wrote to Jewish and Gentile Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor about being self-controlled, loving deeply, offering hospitality without grumbling, and using gifts to administer God’s grace in its various forms. He had been sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit working in him so that his life gradually and steadily became what God intended it to be.

The same process of Holy Spirit activated sanctification is also at work in each of you as you care for the refugees who have come, or will come, to your church community. The Holy Spirit will help you to be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray for them. He will fill you with a deep love that will cover over a multitude of sins and circumstances gone awry. He will give you the energy and conviction to offer hospitality happily and without grumbling. He will encourage each of you to use the particular gifts God has given to you to serve these refugees and to faithfully administer God’s grace to them in different ways. He will take your words and let them be the very words of God. He will give you strength to serve – power that you don’t possess on your own.

Your sanctification will be for God’s glory. He is the faithful one who can and will

transform you into faithful servants.

Prayer: Dear Lord, make us aware of your sanctifying hand on our lives every day. As we care for refugees, help us to act more like Jesus. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #5: The Battle Belongs to the Lord

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-18

God is the Rock that will not be moved, the unshakeable foundation of those who put their trust in him. King Jehoshaphat knew that when troubles surged over him like violent waves, his faithful God would not abandon him. So when the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites attacked him, he prayed, in trembling faith, “We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you” (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Jahaziel, on whom the Spirit of the Lord was poured out, told King Jehoshaphat, “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s . . . You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you” (2 Chronicles 20:15b; 17a).

The battle was the Lord’s then, and it still is today.

As you help to resettle your refugee family, you will experience both joyful and difficult times. No matter the circumstances, remember that the battle belongs to the Lord. He is faithfully working out his purposes for both you and them. Your calling is to be in the place God has ordained for you to be and to watch as he wins his battle in his own time and way.

Prayer: Dear God, we so often worry when we feel powerless or confused about what to do next. As we embrace our calling to care for refugees, remind us that we are standing on you, our Rock and unshakeable foundation. Help us to rest in the knowledge that the battle belongs to you. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #6: Taste and See That the Lord is Good

Read Psalm 34

The psalmist David invited believers to, “taste and see that the Lord is good” and to acknowledge that “blessed is the man who takes refuge in him” (Psalm 34:8).

Doing good to refugees begins with tasting and seeing that the Lord has been good to you. He has given you salvation through Jesus Christ, the bedrock of your lives for today and eternity. He has given you freedom, education, food, shelter, clothes, jobs, families, a Christian community, health, and much more. Your cup overflows!

Also, God shelters you and gives you refuge. Through you, he will do the same for the refugees he has sent to you.

Because of the trauma, war, hunger, and persecution these refugees have faced, it might be difficult for them to taste and see that the Lord is good. Pray that he will use you to help them to “taste” and “see” the presence, protection, and love of our faithful God.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, you are the light of the world (John 8:12a). Allow your light to shine through us so that when the refugees see our good deeds, they will “taste” and “see” your goodness and will praise your name. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #7: Let Love and Faithfulness Never Leave You

Read Proverbs 3:1-6

The Bible is replete with metaphors – word pictures – that help you to better understand your relationship to God and what he requires of you. Usually a word picture makes an abstract concept more understandable. For example, Proverbs 3:3 says, “Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” Of course, you can’t literally wear *love* and *faithfulness* around your neck like a magnificent necklace. Neither can you actually inscribe *love* and *faithfulness* on your heart as if it were a stone tablet. Yet, the word pictures help you to see how God wants love and faithfulness to be an integral part of who you are as his child. You can’t get away from your own neck and heart. God doesn’t want you to get away from love and faithfulness, either.

As you sponsor a refugee family, keep these word pictures alive in your mind. Allow them to spur you onto deeds of great love and faithfulness. As you do so, reflect on Proverbs 14:22b: “Those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, “with you is the fountain of life” (Psalm 36:9a). We thank you for all the word pictures you give us in the Bible which help us to better understand how we can serve you. As we care for refugees, help us to bind love and faithfulness around our necks and to write them on the tablets of our hearts. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #8: Faithful Provider

Read 1 Kings 17:1-16

After Elijah told King Ahab that Israel would suffer from a drought for the next few years, God sent Elijah on his way, telling him where to go and what to do. Ravens fed him and water from a brook quenched his thirst. When the brook ran dry, God commanded Elijah to go to the widow at Zarephath – a foreigner – to supply his needs. Elijah must have known immediately that the widow was poor and had limited resources. Maybe he wondered what God was doing.

The widow probably wasn’t too pleased to be asked to feed another hungry person. Was the foreign holy man kidding when he asked for a drink and bread? She might have thought, I’ll give this man an inventory of my meager resources and then perhaps he will understand how ludicrous his request is. The widow told Elijah that the meal she was preparing was to be the last one she would ever make, and afterward she and her son would die.

Elijah said, “Don’t be afraid!” – words that have echoed throughout the Bible from the lips of angels, prophets, and Jesus himself.

The widow must have been shocked by his words. Don’t be afraid when resources are depleted? Don’t be afraid when death is at the door? Don’t be afraid when all hope is gone?

Elijah’s explicit instructions included a promise that would change the woman’s physical and spiritual life. The God of Israel promised that “The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land” (1 Kings 17:14).

What was the widow's response? Amazingly, she obeyed. She could have told the foreigner that he wasn't welcome, that his words were nonsense, and that she would have nothing to do with him. But she followed Elijah's instructions. She set aside her fear, offered hospitality to the stranger, and learned that our faithful God's multiplication of resources is always enough to meet every need.

By taking care of refugees, you are following the widow's example. You have set aside your fear of caring for the stranger. You have faced your anxiety of not having enough to share. You have obeyed because you know God is faithful. When Jesus returns, you will hear him say to you, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in" (Matthew 25:35).

Prayer: God of miracles, multiplier of resources, we trust you to faithfully care for us and the refugees we are blessed to serve. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #9: A Bruised Reed He Will Not Break

Read Isaiah 42:1-9

Jesus came from heaven to earth in baby-weakness, despite the fact that he was (and is) Almighty Lord of heaven and earth. His kingdom's agenda isn't about grasping power at the expense of the weak and helpless. Rather, he is concerned for the broken, the vulnerable, and the marginalized. About him, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out" (Isaiah 42:3a).

What did Isaiah mean? He meant that "the servant will mend broken lives" (NIV text note for Isaiah 42:3a). "Bruised reeds" and "smoldering wicks" are not disposable in Jesus' eyes just because they are weak, powerless, and unprotected. Because he is faithful, he'll step in "to bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged until he establishes justice on the earth" (Isaiah 42:3b-4a).

All people are weak, powerless, and vulnerable without the embrace of our faithful God, the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God mends broken lives. Now he sends you, his ambassadors, to care for others, including the refugees you have befriended. Pass on to them the tenderness and mercy God has poured out on you.

Prayer: God of the broken-hearted ones, use us to show your mercy and kindness to the refugees you have brought into our care. Mend their broken lives through us. Make us faithful as you are faithful. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #10: Yet, the Hopeful Connecting Word

Read Habakkuk 3:17-18

Yet is a small word with immense, hopeful implications for Habakkuk's life and yours as you reflect on your responsibility to the refugees you are sponsoring.

Habakkuk didn't base his joy on circumstances. He didn't say that he would only be joyful when the fig trees budded, the vines produced grapes, the olive crop thrived, the fields produced bumper crops, and the pens and stalls were filled with sheep and cattle. Instead, Habakkuk's faith in God shaped his response to events, whether negative or positive. He knew that his Saviour was sovereign over everything and faithfully gave him strength to overcome all obstacles. Therefore he rejoiced.

For Habakkuk, yet was a hopeful connecting word.

How can yet be a hopeful connecting word for you as you take up God's calling to care for refugees?

You, too, can rejoice in your Saviour even as you think about the immense problems these refugees have faced. You can joyfully choose to depend on Him – the God of all provision – to give to you so that you can give of your resources to them.

You can ask God to help you to understand how you are connected to them. In his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote, "We are bound together in what the Bible calls 'the bundle of life.' Our humanity is caught up in that of all others. . . We are made for community . . . to exist in a delicate network of interdependence. . . Each person is not just to be respected but to be revered as one created in God's image" (Doubleday, 1999, p196).

When you step out in faith to care for refugees, you will be imitating Habakkuk's faith and boldness. You will also be displaying a profound understanding of your connection to all people in "the bundle of life." You will be rejoicing in God and obeying him, no matter what. You will be saying, in effect, that though the economy isn't always promising, though sponsoring refugees is demanding, though you are already busy, you

will yet obey God who “is known by his justice” (Psalm 9:16a), and whose throne will last forever and ever, with a scepter of justice as the scepter of his kingdom (Psalm 45:6).

Prayer: God of all hopefulness, we rejoice in you because we know that you are sufficient in all circumstances. Our lives and the lives of refugees are in your faithful hands. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #11: The Gospel on Five Fingers

Read Matthew 25:31-46

North American secular culture teaches you to take care of yourself first and to look away from the suffering of others, including refugees. But that is not what God has in mind for you: “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God” (Proverbs 14:31). By caring for refugees, you are honouring their Maker and yours. By putting others first, for the sake of Christ, you are spreading the gospel and the love of God.

Mother Teresa, in her instructions to members of her religious order, suggested a visually profound yet simple way to remember this truth. She called it the “Gospel on five fingers” – as she liked to say, ‘You - did - it - to - Me’ – one word for each finger. With this, she wanted the Missionaries of Charity to remember the poor – not only to respect the dignity of the child of God in each one, but also to realize the supernatural reality of God’s presence in each one” (*Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light – The Private Writings of the “Saint of Calcutta,”* edited by Brian Kolodiejchuk, Doubleday, 2007, pp. 314-315).

I’d like to invite you to do a simple exercise. Hold your hand in front of you. Touch one finger per word as you say, “You - did - it - to - Me.” That’s “the Gospel on five fingers.” With your hands, you can make a huge difference in the refugees’ lives, doing it for the Lord. With your open hearts, you can embrace those seeking refuge, pointing them to Christ. With your mouths, you can proclaim the faithful love of God that upholds and embraces both them and you.

Prayer: Maker of all, we bow before you, praising and exalting you for allowing us to care for refugees. Give us willingness to learn from their experiences, humility to depend on you, and love to undergird all our endeavours. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #12: Rescue the Weak and Needy

Read Jeremiah 38:1-13

Ebed-Melech is a little-known biblical character who obeyed God’s command to “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Jeremiah, the prophet, was in prison because he relentlessly spoke God’s word of judgement against his people for deserting him and following idols. The officials wanted Jeremiah silenced because he was demoralizing the soldiers and the people. With the approval of weak-kneed King Zedekiah, Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern. It was so deep that he had to be lowered in by ropes. Though the cistern had no water inside, it was muddy, and he sank into the muck.

Enter Ebed-Melech, a Cushite who was an official in the royal palace. Ebed-Melech was not his name; it was his title, meaning “king’s servant.” Being a nameless foreigner didn’t stop Ebed-Melech from taking action. Boldly, he went to the King and told him of Jeremiah’s plight.

At King Zedekiah’s command, Ebed-Melech took three men with him to free Jeremiah. But what he did next on his own initiative is of great significance. He found some old rags and worn-out clothes, and took them with him to the cistern. He told Jeremiah to put them under his arms to pad the ropes. Then he and the soldiers pulled Jeremiah out of the cistern. Ebed-Melech not only took action when he saw Jeremiah treated unjustly, but he did so with deep compassion, caring about Jeremiah’s comfort.

Jeremiah was not a refugee, but he faced injustice, abandonment, mistreatment, hunger, and pain just as many refugees do today. Like Ebed-Melech, you have compassionately spoken up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of the refugees you are sponsoring.

Prayer: God of justice, help us to faithfully seek justice for those who can’t speak for themselves. Fill our hearts with compassion as, step-by-step, we follow your Holy Spirit’s leading to care for refugees. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #13: That the Work of God Might Be Displayed

Read John 9:1-11

Jesus saw a man blind from birth. He didn't just see his physical state, but he saw the man in his entirety, as a whole person who was suffering. Compassion, love, healing, and God's glory were on Jesus' agenda for the man.

What did the disciples see when they looked at the man? Their question to Jesus – “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2) – reveals that their agenda wasn't compassion, love, and healing. Instead, they saw a person whom they thought deserved judgment based on the principle that the rabbis had developed which stated: “There is no death without sin and there is no suffering without iniquity” (NIV text note for John 9:2). Thus, the disciples hoped to lay the blame for the man's blindness at the man's or his parents' feet.

But Jesus would have none of it! Revealing his perfect agenda, he replied, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me” (John 9:3-4a). A preacher I recently listened to summed it up this way: “Don't focus on the cause of this man's blindness, but focus on the purpose.”

In this story, we are challenged to see all people as Jesus sees them. You are sponsoring refugees. When you look at them, do you see them as Jesus does – not just their physical state, but in their entirety, as whole people who are suffering? Do you seek to be compassionate instead of curious about their tormented backgrounds? Are love, compassion, healing, and putting on display the work of God your focus? Do you believe that God will empower you to care for them?

God is writing his story through your response to refugees. Compassion, love, healing, and God's glory are on his agenda for them. Work, watch, and wait as he faithfully accomplishes his purposes.

Prayer: Dear God, you bring renewal and hope to your children. You “bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair” (Isaiah 61:3a). Display your work in the lives of the refugees we are sponsoring. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #14: Working for Peace and Justice

Read Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 4:14-21

As sponsors of refugees, you are working for peace and justice. As peacemakers, you can be assured that what you sow in peace will “raise a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:18) because God will faithfully sustain you. What shape might that harvest of righteousness take in your life and the lives of the refugees you are sponsoring?

More than food and shelter, more than water and clothes, refugees long for peace. Peace from the horror of rape. Peace from the fear of being murdered. Peace from the dread of children being sold into slavery. By sponsoring refugees, you are offering them first steps toward peace in their lives. Gently, slowly, and sensitively, you may point them to the Prince of Peace, who told his disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

By supplying housing, food, community, schooling, and employment, you will introduce stability and peace into the lives of people who have known instability and strife. To sleep in safety, to have sufficient food, to not worry that your children will be harmed, to have work in order to make a living – all these good gifts of God can restore peace to people who have no other options for peace.

As you take up this task, recall Mary’s song about God’s upside-down way of bringing peace to the world: “He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:51-53).

Prayer: Prince of Peace, make us peacemakers who long for justice. Where refugees have been injured because of war, civil strife, and hatred, use us to bring peace. Thank you for faithfully directing us. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #15: Joy on the Journey

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

The book of Proverbs is full of wisdom that encapsulates both God’s truth and an accurate picture of human existence. One proverb states, “There is deceit in the hearts

of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace” (Proverbs 12:20).

As you reflect on pursuing peace by sponsoring and resettling refugees, it is helpful to contemplate the psalmist’s words: “Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other” (Psalm 85:10). What does the psalmist mean? He is giving us an astounding image of God’s merciful dealings with his covenant people. God poured out his love, faithfulness, peace, and righteousness on his children. You are his children. You have received these gifts from him. As his image bearers, you want to pass these gifts on to others, generously extending love, faithfulness, right relationships, and peace to all people, including refugees. God delights in your faithful, joyful response.

All the while, his faithful power will uphold you. That power “is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:19b-21). What amazing power is available to you as you pursue your calling to love and care for refugees! What incredible joy will be yours as you promote peace on their behalf!

Prayer: Lord of perfect love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace, fill us with resurrection joy and power as we care for the refugees you have brought to us. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #16: Faithful Interceding High Priest

Read Romans 8:31-39

Enthroned at the right hand of God, Jesus – the Prince of Peace and High Priest – is always interceding for you. How can that knowledge comfort you as you obey his call to care for refugees?

There is no one who knows the needs of refugees like Jesus does. And there is no one who knows your needs like he does. He knows refugees through and through, and nothing about you is hidden from his sight. Add to that the fact that he prays perfectly for both them and you. He only asks the Father for things that are according to his will and that will bring him glory. Therefore, anything he prays for refugees and you will ultimately be for your communal good and will point to God.

During the sponsorship period you will probably face problems that seem insurmountable. But don't be discouraged. Allow the truth of Hebrews 4:14-16 to set your hearts at rest: "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for faithfully interceding for us as we undertake this refugee sponsorship. What comfort we experience when we consider your perfect prayers for us and the refugees we are sponsoring. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #17: Be Faithful In Prayer

Read Romans 12:9-21

Faithful prayer is the necessary foundation for being peacemakers who pass on the peace of Christ to refugees so that they can thrive in peace. Asking God for strength, wisdom, perseverance, love, energy, and patience is necessary for the task. Faithful prayer acknowledges that Jesus is the vine and that you are the branches. It confesses that, in him, you will bear much fruit and that apart from him you can do nothing (John 15:5).

When you seek the faithful Creator through prayer, you will be equipped for every need and circumstance because seeking him is not a hit-or-miss affair – "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

Sponsoring refugees isn't always a comfortable and enjoyable experience. Sometimes it can be very challenging. You might have misunderstandings due to different cultures and languages. You might not agree with the refugees that you welcomed about how funds should be responsibly spent or about the adequacy of the housing you have acquired for them. Maybe the refugees will demand more time and energy of you than you can reasonably manage. Perhaps personality clashes that you never counted on, despite your best efforts, will create tension and disharmony.

For all these reasons and more, faithful prayer is essential – not just prayer at the beginning and ending of your refugee committee meetings, but daily prayers for the

refugee family. Keep your eyes fixed on the Prince of Peace. Bring all your needs to him. He will not disappoint you.

Prayer: Dear God, we realize that when we sponsor refugees, we don't know what we are getting into and we can't predict outcomes. However, we know we can pray to you at any time about anything. How comforting that is! Keep us faithful in prayer *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #18: The Kingdom of Righteousness

Read Isaiah 32:1-8; 17-18

Through the prophet Isaiah, God spoke about the fulfillment of the kingdom of righteousness: "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest" (Isaiah 32:18).

For years, the refugees you are sponsoring might have lived in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, and in undisturbed places of rest. Then peace fled when war came. Rest vanished. Unrest prevailed. They escaped from their once-secure homes, and crossed borders in search of safety, arriving in refugee camps or other safe places.

Each refugee has a story to tell. God knows each one, including the stories of the refugees you are sponsoring. You might never know their complete stories, but you can imagine the ache of their hardship as they fled their country, possibly terrified of the present and afraid of the future. They might have suffered hunger, danger, violence, and trauma completely outside of your realm of experience.

More important than their personal story is God's story. He is faithfully bringing about the kingdom of righteousness in their lives. And, praise be to God, he is using you to do it! You have believed that "the Lord watches over the alien" (Psalm 146:9). Not only that, but in obedience to God, you have made yourself available to concretely work toward the fulfillment of the kingdom of righteousness in refugees' lives.

Prayer: God of righteousness, we long to see your kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven. We are amazed at your faithfulness that embraces refugees and us – undeserving, yet loved beyond measure. Help us to act justly and faithfully in all our dealings with our sponsored family. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #19: An Eternal Refrain

Read Psalm 136

Over and over the refrain – “His love endures forever” – resounds throughout Psalm 136. It’s as if the psalmist cannot get enough of proclaiming the faithful love of God that sustained all things from the creation of the world, to the exodus from Egypt, and to the era of the biblical kings. That Love, which knows no bounds, remembers people in their neediness, frees them from enemies, and provides food to all.

The psalmist spoke of God’s unending love even before Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Imagine if he were alive today. He would be able to add verse after verse proclaiming the ongoing actions of God propelled by his abiding love.

You can do the same. For some time now you have been caring for refugees. God’s faithful love, which endures forever, has framed your entire experience. What verses could you write as a testimony to that truth? Perhaps they might sound like this:

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of justice, faithfulness, and compassion.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to God who is a shelter for oppressed refugees.

His love endures forever.

Who gave them housing, food, clothing, finances, and employment.

His love endures forever.

Who provided medical care for them.

His love endures forever.

Who dried their tears when they were homesick.

His love endures forever.

Who brought them into a loving community.

His love endures forever.

Prayer: Dear God, we will never be able to totally grasp your love for refugees and us until we see you face-to-face. Help us to hear the unceasing refrain of your love as you bring it to fruition in our lives. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DEVOTIONS #20: Ending with God

Read Philippians 1:3-11

These devotionals began with a reflection on the truth that the work you are doing for refugees was first and foremost God's idea. What a consolation that is! But even more comforting is the knowledge "that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). Again, you are reminded that everything begins, carries on, and ends in Christ.

Not only does God promise that he will bring to completion what he has begun in you, he assures you that he "is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Jude 24). Let your response to his abiding faithfulness reflect Jude's praise: "to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen" (Jude 25).

Prayer: Dear Lord, throughout this sponsorship journey we have witnessed your eternal faithfulness. You have never let us down or disappointed us. Thank you for allowing us to serve you by caring for refugees. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*