

Refugee crisis offers opportunity to show love of Jesus, panelists say

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DALLAS—The global refugee crisis presents Texas Christians a tangible, significant opportunity to express the love of Jesus to the world's most vulnerable people, a panel at the No Need Among You Conference insisted.

"You're living in the middle of an incredible (refugee) crisis. What will you do? What should we do?" John Parsons, the south regional coordinator of [World Relief](#), asked participants at the conference at Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Dallas, sponsored by the Texas Christian Community Development Network.

Jesus said his followers will be judged by the way they serve six groups of at-risk people—the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and imprisoned, Parsons said, adding Texas Christians serve most of those well.

Consider the refugee

"But if you've been asking God if there is something you've been missing, I want you to consider the stranger, the foreigner, the refugee," he pleaded.

To be classified as a refugee, a person must meet specific, internationally recognized criteria, Parsons explained. They must face a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social grouping or political affiliation, and they must live outside their home country.

Even with that high standard, the world refugee population is 70 million, he

said, adding 232 million people are classified as “displaced persons,” who have been forced to flee their homes but don’t meet the rigid definition of “refugee.”

The United States ranks No. 1 in receiving refugees and accepts 70,000 of them annually, he said, stressing that number is tiny compared to the need.

Texas a leader in refugee resettlement

Texas tops the nation in resettling refugees. And even though the state government has decided to stop participating in federal refugee processing, Texans will continue to help refugees find new homes, he said.

“Texas has been active in refugee resettlement 40 years. We’re the No. 1 state,” Parsons said. “That will continue, through churches.”

Resettlement agencies will keep on accepting refugees, and churches, individuals and other groups can help simply by volunteering, he said.

Multiple volunteer opportunities

Those volunteers who want to help refugees don’t need to possess professional expertise to be effective, added [Samira Izadi Page](#), founder and executive director of [Gateway of Grace Ministries](#).



Samira Izadi Page For example, many refugees desperately need help with language skills, and English-as-a-Second-

Language teachers are in high demand. “You don’t have to be a professional,” she said. “You speak English. If you can spare two to three hours a week, we can use you.”

Gateway of Grace also serves many refugees by providing baby showers, which also offer a natural way to explain God’s love through Jesus, as do family holiday celebrations that include refugees, she said.

“We can share the gospel without being coercive,” she said. “We are God’s plan for sharing the gospel with refugees—by meeting their physical, spiritual and emotional needs.”

Chances of terrorist infiltration remote

While some Americans want to turn back refugees because they fear terrorism, the prospect of terrorists sneaking into the country through refugee resettlement is extremely remote, Parsons said.

“The refugee program is the worst process any terrorist would choose,” he explained. “You would have to pretend to be poor, stay in a refugee camp anywhere from three to 15 years, and then not know the country where you would be resettled. ...

“I’ve helped almost 20,000 refugees resettle across 40 years. I’ve not met a terrorist yet.”

“There are so many people in our world who are hurt. It’s up to Christians to help them,” said Jimmy Dorrell, the panel’s moderator and founder of Mission Waco/Mission World. “The call on our lives—we who have been blessed—is to bless others.”