

Greece: Faith to go, faith to come home

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A big part of me didn't want to write about my journey to the island of Lesbos or about our work with refugees at Camp Moria, because thinking about it makes my heart ache and tears well up in my eyes. Not many people think a lot can happen in the span of seven days or even within eight hours on a shift, but God changed my life and my heart in exactly that time. While our team was in the refugee camp, we were able help house people, serve food three times a day, distribute clothing and blankets to new arrivals, and clean out tents for new people to move into them.

When most people think of Greece, they think of beautiful hills and mountains, clear water, and amazing food and culture. But when I think of Greece, all I see is the life-changing place of Camp Moria and the people in it. I see the Afghan children running up to grab my legs to get a hug with huge smiles as they say hello to me for quite

possibly the 15th time that day. I see the women shedding their head wraps so that I can brush and braid their beautiful long hair on Women's Day. I see them gathering in the middle of the room to dance and sing to their heart's content. I see men with the biggest smiles on their faces and hear them yell, "Halle, my friend, how are you today?" I see and hear people who are living in one of the saddest situations smile and laugh more than anyone I've ever met.





They risked everything they had to leave their home or family to travel in a boat in the freezing cold. Some didn't make it because of the coast guard, or in some cases death. Yet, they still smile and laugh. They still persevere. They still have hope.

There is no way for me to put into words everything that happened in those seven days I was in Moria, but I can tell you some words that gave me the courage to leave. God is very present in Camp Moria, and he has not abandoned the people in it. No, the living situations are not ideal. Some days, the electricity doesn't work, and it gets very cold at night. Some days they don't get the option to shower. Sometimes water soaks the inside of their tents because the tarps aren't enough. Some days it's just hard. But God is there. If God has taught me one thing from this journey, it's that there are people out there with big hearts who can teach you more than you can teach them



I went across the world to serve refugees, and instead I was served. I couldn't understand a single word they said sometimes, but God showed

me in such a huge way that words are in no way necessary to share the gospel. We were prohibited to share the word of God or to give out any literature that pertained to God, and that terrified me. How on earth was I supposed to get the gospel to them? But the amazing thing about my God is that he is in no way limited to words or writing on paper. I didn't verbally share the gospel one time on this journey, but the Lord has made it known to me that gospel was being spread in abundance.

It hurt very much to leave that camp, but in the words of Go Now Missions Consultant Brenda Sanders: "I think it can take more faith to leave than to go. Before you left it was just a place. Now it is faces, names, stories and people. Now you must have faith that God will continue to care for them as you have." I firmly believe that he is doing just that.

God changed me while I was over there. My view of people changed. Before going, I was a girl who grew up in a town of 400 people and lived in the Bible Belt. My view of the world was very limited to right here in Texas. But God showed me that we are not the only children of God, and he is everywhere and in every culture. All I had ever heard of people from Afghanistan was hate and judgment, but I got to experience nothing but love and joy and acceptance from them.

Please pray for the refugees in Camp Moria. More boats and more people arrive every single day—30 to 40 people per boat. There are 6,000 people in camp right now, and that is over capacity, so housing them and providing clothing for them is getting more difficult. It has snowed, and things seem to be getting worse as far as providing warmth. They need your prayers. God hears every word, and he acts on them.

Also, please pray for me as I get accustomed to being home again. It has honestly been very hard dealing with leaving them and coming home. My heart hurts so much for the refugees and the situation they are in, and it hasn't been easy being back home.

Halle Smith, a student at the University of Texas at Tyler, served with Go Now Missions Lesvos, Greece, during Christmas break.