

September 5, 2021

1. Hospitality to Strangers — Jeremiah 29:4-14 NRSV

Recently, it's been easy to find news about migrants and refugees. Attempts to flee from Afghanistan into the unknown were vividly depicted by numerous words and images. As a writer, I found myself grateful that my assignment to connect this week's Scripture passage with current events was so easy. But as a human being I found it hard to process scenes of suffering, sacrifice, and desperation.

Commentaries centered on emotional responses: "Western leaders are *panicking* about a new surge in migration"¹; "Hundreds of Afghans packed into a . . . cargo plane, in a *desperate* attempt to flee Kabul"²; "Scenes of people clinging to aircraft taking off from Kabul's airport have only deepened Europe's *anxiety* over a potential refugee crisis"³ (my emphases).

I wonder:

- Will Afghan refugees ever reunite safely with loved ones? How? (Not all refugees have a *Sound of Music* ending!)
- If lonely and disoriented Afghans lived next to me, how would I treat them? Would I see them as loved by God?
- Will successfully relocated Afghans "seek the welfare of the city where [God has sent them], and pray to the Lord on its behalf"? How will they learn about God's desires for them?
- Recently, our minister of outreach broadcasted a need for local landlords to rent space to or temporarily house refugees. If I had room, would I offer hospitality? How much of God's provision to me am I willing to risk?

These questions require deep, personal God-seeking. They prompt reflection on our blessings, as well as imagination to perceive ourselves in circumstances like those of refugees. They necessitate action that rejects fear and selfishness.

What role do we as the body of Christ have in helping refugees return to a "normal" life as described by Jeremiah: "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.

Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters" (29:5-6)?

—Helen Tellez

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¹. Daniel Trilling, "[Fear of refugees must not shape the response to Afghanistan's crisis](#)," *The Guardian*, August 18, 2021.

². "[Afghanistan: Striking Image Shows 640 People Fleeing Kabul in Packed US Military Plane](#)," *The Guardian*, August 17, 2021.

³. Karl Ritter and Mehmet Guzel, "[Europe Fears Afghan Refugee Crisis after Taliban Takeover](#)," *Yahoo News*, August 21, 2021.



Helen Tellez has been a writer, editor, and copy editor for church and secular organizations for more than four decades. Formerly from northern Indiana, she now resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with her husband, José, where they run a clothing alterations business. Being married to José for 18 years has opened her eyes to the world beyond rural, white America, and she is grateful for the changes in her Christian perspective.

Resources for this session

Salt & Light Videos

These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each session. They are available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#).

URLs recommended in the Leader Guide: