

Sharing faith and caring for refugees

Is it appropriate to share the Gospel with refugees coming to Europe? Would that be exploiting vulnerability?

Is it OK to talk about Jesus to Muslims? Would that offend them?

The European Evangelical Alliance (EEA), along with many partners, is resourcing Europe's churches to reach out to refugees. Europe's Evangelicals are offering hope. For the Church, this hope includes the eternal dimension. Sensitive sharing of faith is part of the Church's job and is absolutely appropriate.

EEA believes that churches should provide help to the vulnerable regardless of age, gender, religion, sexuality or any other criteria. Practical support should be given unconditionally and never simply as a platform to proselytise. No one should exploit the vulnerability or tragedy of others.

Churches are called to love the vulnerable and minister to their needs in a holistic way. This includes caring for physical, emotional and spiritual needs. The Church has a specific biblical mandate to share the good news that all can enter into relationship with God through Jesus Christ, whatever their religious background. It is perfectly fitting for Christians to discuss faith where opportunity arises, provided this is sensitive and respectful and the refugee does not feel coerced or manipulated in any way. EEA is pointing to resources which will help Christians to share their faith appropriately.

In Middle Eastern culture it is very normal to talk about religion. Many refugees expect and welcome the opportunity to talk about spiritual matters. Secular Europeans should not imagine that refugees share their cultural squeamishness about religious discussion.

All refugees should have their religious freedom protected. This means enabling them to practice their Muslim / Christian / Yazidi / other faith or not to practice any. This also means ensuring they have the chance if they wish to explore other faith perspectives and to change faith if they choose. It is important that refugees themselves and also those who care for them understand that religious freedom for all is a foundational right and must be respected. This includes the right of those working with and befriending refugees to express their faith.

The vulnerability of refugees must never be exploited by those who wish to convert them to any cause or faith, including Christianity. However, we strongly reject the idea that sensitive discussing of faith, promotion of peaceful ideas based in faith or the faith itself, or offering spiritual comfort is inappropriate. To question or limit these activities is both unnecessary and intolerant.