



**FACILITATOR GUIDE
DIGITAL SAMPLER**

**DIA
LOG
UES**

— ON —
**THE REFUGEE
CRISIS**

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DIALOGUES ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS

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ABOUT DIALOGUES

It's not news to anyone that we are living in a time of conflict, division, and disagreement. In politics, in religion, in education, in relationships and communities and churches, we are becoming people who can't seem to find our way out of the "us vs. them" pit of divisiveness. It doesn't matter who you think is "us" and who is "them." We are all stuck.

And yet we know it doesn't have to be like this. In the face of cracking communities and strained family dynamics, the church is uniquely equipped to bring healing, hope, and wholeness to a hurting world. Ours is a faith built on hope, on the belief that we are all created in the image of God, on the assurance that no person or situation is beyond redemption. We believe faith is not only believing in God, but doing the work of God in the world. We are the shining city on a hill, and the world needs our light more than ever.

One small group resource isn't going to change everything, but it can be a catalyst for new models of relational repair and social action. It can give participants a set of tools they can use to have bridge-building conversations rather than explosive arguments. It can serve as a model of peacemaking for a community struggling with strife. In other words, it can help the church be the church.

That's why we created the Dialogues collection of courses. Each course takes a small group through a topic using a book and video as the central resources, and then adding a carefully created facilitator guide to help the group engage with the topic and each other in deeper, more intentional ways.

Dialogues uses a two-pronged approach to equip groups for meaningful conversation:

1. Well-researched, trustworthy information gives participants a common starting point for discussion. No matter where someone sits on a controversial topic, they can benefit from getting more information to help them add nuance to their beliefs and recognize the complexities of a given subject.
2. A collection of simple but effective skills serve as a toolkit participants take with them into the world. It doesn't matter how much we know or how deep our convictions are if we are lousy conversation partners. But when we know how to listen, how to ask questions, how to empathize and tell stories and find common ground, we become people who can navigate difficult conversations without tearing up relationships.

In this course, your small group will learn about the ongoing refugee crisis. You'll read essays from experts in the fields of refugee resettlement and public policy. You'll hear stories from refugees themselves and from the many organizations that walk alongside refugees as they build new lives. You'll spend time talking to one another and sharing perspectives on the week's topic. You'll have time to explore your ideas as a group, and time to process your ideas with a partner. You'll work together to create an action plan that fits your context.

Then you'll take all of that with you, into your jobs and homes and Thanksgiving dinners, and offer an alternative to conflict and division. You'll offer dialogues.

PREPARING TO FACILITATE

Whether you've been facilitating small groups for a long time or this is your first go, we've got your back. Facilitating well is more than just handing out pencils and making sure there are enough chairs. It's creating an environment where participants feel like they can be honest, that their ideas have value, and that they are part of a group that cares about their well-being. That environment starts with you.

This is particularly true when a group is talking about difficult topics and the point of the lesson is to bring up disagreement. As a Dialogues facilitator, your primary role is to put some structure around the group's time together, giving them a kind of map they can use as they venture into some rocky terrain. This guide will walk you step-by-step through each lesson—we'll show you how on the next page. But creating an environment of honesty, trust, and safety involves having your own reliable framework to keep you oriented as a facilitator. Here's what we suggest:

- ↳ **START SIMPLE:** We recommend kicking off this small group experience with a dinner or other casual time to get to know each other, hand out the participant books, and create your community covenant (see page 8). This is a chance for people to talk a bit about what they hope to discover through this process and to work together to set expectations and ground rules. Participants should leave this event with their books and their first assignment: Read Chapter 1.
- ↳ **CLEAR THE ROAD, DON'T DRIVE THE CAR:** You don't have to teach this group. You don't have to steer them in a particular direction. Your role is to lay out each stage of the lesson, giving the group a goal to aim for and clear directions for getting there.
- ↳ **STAY FLEXIBLE:** You'll need to read the room as you work through the lesson, paying attention to times when the group seems ready to move on and times when they want to keep diving into whatever they're doing. If you need to skip some parts of the lesson one week, do it. If you find the group needs more time for their dialogues, give it to them.
- ↳ **DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW:** You are probably not an expert on the refugee crisis. You're likely not an expert on group dynamics. No problem. As the facilitator, you don't need to have answers to every question or have strong opinions about the topic. You can stay open to learning and having your mind changed, just like the rest of the group.
- ↳ **KNOW WHEN TO STEP BACK AND WHEN TO STEP IN:** This resource is built on the belief that we can disagree with one another without being disagreeable. Your group will undoubtedly experience moments of tension and even conflict as you discuss the topics each week. As the facilitator, resist the urge to jump in and solve the problem. When you do feel like you need to step in, use your community covenant as a guide for resolving conflict well.

This small group process will ask you and your group to be a little uncomfortable at times, to take some risks, and to try some new practices. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide your time together and to nurture the connections you're creating.

HOW IT WORKS

This small group resource is made up of three components that work together to create an engaging experience of discovery for facilitators and participants:

THE BOOK: Each participant needs a copy of *The Refugee Crisis*. They'll read one chapter each week to prepare and come to the group ready to talk about what they read.

THE DVD: The documentary-style video component of Dialogues brings life to the topic of the week, putting what can be abstract facts and figures into a human context.

THE FACILITATOR GUIDE: This resource was created to make it as easy as possible for you to guide your small group with minimal prep.

Each week's session follows this format:

PREPARE

The opening section of each week's guide is a general overview of the topic you'll be discussing. You'll also find some ways to talk about the topic with your group that can help them unpack the bigger picture behind the chapter they've read.

Each week you'll also have a dialogue technique for the group to practice together. These techniques are fairly simple, but they're surprisingly effective. They help people avoid running headlong into conflict and instead force more careful, thoughtful interactions, the kind that can build empathy and understanding even between people who disagree.

Finally, you'll find a Bible passage that you can use any way you like. It can be a brief reading to help ground you in Scripture as you get started. It can be something you use during the reflection time later in the session. Whatever you think will be most helpful for your group will work.

SET UP

In general, you need a room with seating that can be moved around a bit, enough space for break-out groups to find a place to sit, and a wall or whiteboard you can use for group projects. You'll need a DVD player and monitor to watch the video each week. You'll also want some kind of timer or clock to help you manage the time.

We'll give you a supply list to let you know what you'll need for the various activities each week. The activities were created with groups of fewer than fifteen people in mind, so if you have more than that, consider breaking into two smaller groups during the Welcome Activity and the Create project.

GATHER (10–15 MINUTES)

Each session starts with some time to settle in.

WELCOME ACTIVITY

Kick things off with a group activity that helps bring some focus to the week's topic. Sometimes it will be as simple as writing down some thoughts on sticky notes and posting them on the wall. Other weeks it might be a group brainstorming process or a team challenge. When you're done,

you'll spend a few minutes talking about the activity and setting up a framework for the rest of your time together. You can also use this time to ask the group to reflect on their "homework" from the previous week.

WATCH

You'll spend 5-7 minutes each week watching a video related to the week's reading. This video component creates one more access point for participants to dive into the complicated issues at the heart of this topic.

CONNECT (25-30 MINUTES)

This set of activities form the core of each session.

DIALOGUE (8-10 MINUTES)

Before you dive into talking about the week's topic, the group will break into smaller groups of three or four people to have some heart-opening conversations based on the personal stories and experiences of the people in the group. You'll give your groups a question to work with and introduce them to a dialogue technique to use as each person responds to the question.

Even if time is tight, don't skip this part of the session. It's a critical component of the dialogue process and lays an essential foundation for the conversations to come. When we have the chance to hear someone's story—to understand the lens through which they view a topic—we are far more open to what they have to say, even when we disagree with them.

RESPOND (5-10 MINUTES)

After sharing stories and practicing a dialogue technique, these same small groups will discuss a short list of questions about the week's reading and video. It's a time for participants to be honest about their questions, concerns, and uncertainties about the subject and to talk about them in a respectful community of friends.

You can decide the best way to introduce these questions. You can print them out and hand a copy to each small group, read them aloud one at a time, or write them on a white board before you gather so all the groups can read them. No matter how you present the questions, they are intended to draw out a variety of responses from participants. They don't have to be conflictual, but this is where you might find group members disagreeing with each other. And that's okay. This is where robust conversations can lead to real breakthroughs as participants practice their dialogue techniques and remember the context they discovered during their dialogues.

CREATE (10 MINUTES)

You'll finish up the Connect time with a group project. Through art, visual expressions of ideas, and other hands-on experiences, the group will create a physical reminder of what they've discussed and discovered. If you can, leave these on display in your space to help you connect one week's conversation to the next.

REFLECT (10 MINUTES)

End your time as a full group by sharing your thoughts on the day using a set of questions that will remain the same from week to week. Having these regular moments of reflection will help participants track their progression through the course, giving them a way to see where they are changing, learning, and discovering. Before you leave, offer the group something to read and consider during the week and a prayer to close out your session.

WEEK 1: THE CHURCH AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

PREPARE

THIS WEEK

The focus of your first session of Dialogues is on history. The group will explore the ways in which history informs the present by considering how their own stories inform their sense of themselves. As a group, you'll practice telling and listening to stories and will talk about the ways stories shape us as individuals and communities.

That is crucial work when talking about the ongoing refugee crisis. For some people in your group, the current situation might seem like a new-ish problem, one that has arisen out of recent civil wars in Syria, Somalia, Burma, and other far-off places. It's entirely possible they never thought much about refugees prior to the 2017 travel ban. It's possible they've heard stirrings of concern about national security and refugees since 2001 and are just now seeing those ripples churn into fear and dramatic policy changes. Others might remember refugees coming to their hometowns after the Vietnam War, when more than 100,000 people from Southeast Asia were resettled in the United States. Whether we've been thinking about the refugee crisis for a year or for decades, we all find ourselves living in a time when refugees have become a hot-button issue. That's a big change from the way the nation—and the church in particular—has traditionally thought about, talked about, and felt about refugees.

The first chapter of the book centers on the church's long history of serving refugees both in the United States and around the world. The intent of your first group dialogue is to lay a bit of groundwork for the conversations to come as the group gathers some history, shares experiences, and establishes a common starting point you can come back to in the weeks ahead.

This week's dialogue technique is making eye contact. During this session's dialogue time, your group members will take turns telling stories and listening well, using eye contact as their tool for building empathy and understanding. You know the whole thing about the eyes being the window into the soul, but you don't have to go soul deep with someone to appreciate having them look you in the eye when you're talking to them. It sounds a little odd to think of looking at someone as a dialogue skill, but it's a core element of really paying attention. We're not talking about staring intensely, but about making an effort to focus on the face of the person speaking in order to listen beyond their words and to demonstrate real, human connection.

BIBLE PASSAGE FOR REFLECTION

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”

—Ephesians 2:19-22

SET UP

WELCOME ACTIVITY

- ↳ Index cards, one for each person
- ↳ Pens or pencils

CREATE

- ↳ Large pieces of butcher paper or poster board
- ↳ Markers or colored pencils



GATHER

WELCOME ACTIVITY

Place a stack of index cards and writing utensils on a chair or table by the entrance to the room. As group members enter, ask them to take a card and write one short sentence that describes a funny or interesting family story, the kind that gets repeated at family gatherings. For example, someone might write, “My Uncle Al sneezed on the Prince of Monaco,” or “My niece met Taylor Swift.” Let them know this story will be shared with the group. They should not write their name on the card.

- ↳ Once everyone has arrived, collect the completed cards. Shuffle them a bit and hand them back out, one for every person. If anyone gets their own, have them switch cards with someone.
- ↳ Start with one person, asking them to read the sentence on their card out loud for the group. Then have the person who wrote the card retrieve it.
- ↳ Now it's this person's turn to tell the group a slightly more expanded version of the story they wrote down. Invite them to add the kind of backstory and details only someone who knows the story could add—the why, the how, the when. Use the timer and try to keep these to about thirty seconds per person.
- ↳ Repeat this pattern—one person reads a card, and then the person who wrote it gets to tell the story—until all the cards have been read and all the stories told.
- ↳ If you have more than fifteen people, consider doing this activity in two smaller groups.

This activity points to the importance of telling our own stories and listening to the stories of other people. Obviously, only one person in the group could tell the whole story. Spend a few minutes asking the group to think about the role of stories in our lives. Why do we tell them? What makes a story stick with you? What other stories are you a part of? How do stories help us understand who we are and where we come from?

WATCH

This week's video lays out the biblical call to care for refugees and invites the church to get involved.

CONNECT

DIALOGUE

Ask the group to line up in order based on how long they have been involved in your church. The person who's been there the longest stands at one end; the person who's been there the shortest stands at the other. Once everyone is in place, have the two people in the middle form a small group with the two people on the ends. Keep doing this—the new middle people/person forming a group with the people on the ends—making groups of three or four people as you go. These are your groups for today. Have each group find a space to sit together.

QUESTION PROMPT

When have you willingly stepped into an experience you were afraid of?

DIALOGUE TECHNIQUE OF THE WEEK: EYE CONTACT

For the next eight to ten minutes, have each person share their response to the question prompt with their group. Tell the groups that while one person speaks, the rest of the group will practice listening carefully and looking at the person talking, making eye contact as often as possible. The storyteller also works on making eye contact. Remind the groups that anyone can pass on the question if they like.

QUESTION FOR THE GROUPS:

How can making eye contact help us listen and speak more intentionally with others?

TIP

Each person has about two minutes to tell their story, so use the timer to keep things moving. Give a quick update every couple of minutes to let groups know it's time for the next person to speak.

RESPOND

Now that the groups have had a chance to listen to each other well, it's time for them to respond to what they read in this week's chapter and saw in this week's video. Ask participants to discuss the following questions in their small groups:

- ↳ What did you discover in this week's chapter or video that you never knew before? How does it fit with other things you know about the church's present-day response to the refugee experience?
- ↳ What story from the chapter or video might change or challenge any assumptions you've had about the history of refugees in the United States?
- ↳ How might this information inform the conversations we'll be having over the next several weeks?
- ↳ (Optional) We talked earlier about this passage from Ephesians: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." Does the chapter and video for today change the way you understand this passage? Does the passage change the way you think about the chapter and video?

CREATE

FAMILY TIMELINES

To set up this activity, remind the groups that every family has a story and that sharing those stories can help us find points of connection not only with the other people in the room, but also with the people living their refugee stories right now.

- ↳ Hand out a large piece of paper or poster board and some markers to each group.
- ↳ Ask people to draw a timeline across the paper with today's date on one end.
- ↳ Have each person in the group add dates from their own family story to the timeline, going back as far as they can and being specific where they're able. Include births, deaths, marriages, moves, or other major life transitions for as many generations as they can. As the groups work, encourage them to talk with each other about some of the events they're adding to the timeline.
- ↳ Hang these timelines up in your meeting space and invite groups to walk around and look at the various timelines. Invite people to circle or note any places they notice their own story intersecting or aligning with someone else's story.

REFLECT

Gather back together as a large group to reflect on today's dialogue process.

- ↳ What did you discover about yourself or someone else in your small group?
- ↳ When were you most engaged?
- ↳ When did you feel challenged?
- ↳ What are you struggling with?
- ↳ What's changed for you?
- ↳ What do we want to do in response to the conversations we've had today?

READ AND CONSIDER

In the coming week, ask the class to look for an essay, article, book, Bible passage, blog post, or news story about the church's historic or present-day response to refugees. What might someone outside the church think about the story they found?

PRAY

PRAYER FOR UNITY OF THE CHURCH, FROM *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER*

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior,
the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the
great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away
all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us
from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body
and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith,
one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all
of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth
and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and
one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.