

Listen to Their Moving Stories: Interview Questions

Interview someone who is a recent refugee or immigrant living in the United States. To find someone, you can check with local ethnic churches, do an Internet search for “refugee resettlement agencies,” or call your local conference or church’s headquarters to get contact information for a refugee church. Say something like, “I would like to have the privilege of meeting a refugee so I can hear and understand his or her story.”

Review these sample interview questions before you visit. You do not need to use them all or follow them exactly. It may be more personal to not have the list of questions in front of you and writing down the answers while you talk.

Keep your words simple for anyone who is still learning the language and may be struggling to understand. If necessary, take a translator with you.

Listen well and show your interest. Know that you are asking that person to share a very personal and perhaps painful story. Pray that you will be able to be a good friend who will listen and respond as God leads.

Write down answers and responses soon after you leave so that you do not forget important details. Staple your notes of the interview to the back of this person’s *Contact Log* in order to reference his or her story in your future interactions.

Sample Interview Questions:

1. Would you be willing to share the story of how you came to live in this country?
2. Where did you live when you were a child and what was it like?
3. How long ago did you come to this country and why did you leave your home?
4. Did you live in a refugee camp? If so, what was it like?
5. What do you miss from your home country?

6. What do you like about living here?
7. What is difficult about living in this new country?
8. Who of your family members came with you and who are still there?
9. What is it like for your family who is still back in your home country?
10. What do you think people in this country can do to welcome refugees and immigrants and help them adjust to their new lives in this country?

Ending Your Conversation

You might end with, “Thank you for sharing with me. I am so thankful to hear the story of your courageous journey. I believe that God watched over you. I believe He even helped us meet so I could know you and learn from you. Could I say a prayer to ask God’s blessing on you as you continue to make your home here? Is there anything or anyone in your family that I could pray for?”

You will find that most people in most cultures will welcome you praying for them. Simply ask if it is okay with them if you ask God for a blessing on them and their family.

You might learn in advance or ask them what posture they pray in. Many Muslims pray with their hands extended, palms up, symbolizing that they want to receive God’s blessing. They call this *dua* which means a personal prayer rather than the ritual prayer. Many Asians pray with their hands pressed together pointing upwards. Do what you feel comfortable with, seeking to press close to them where you can.

See if you can set up an opportunity to meet again to follow up on this new friendship.

Reflections

1. Write a summary of the person’s story aiming for at least a full page.
2. Write also a paragraph about your own feelings and thoughts from this interview.

3. Write a list of things you think you and your church could do to help refugees and immigrants who have come to your country.