

YOU
WELCOMED
ME

Family Toolkit



Simple Ways to Grow As a Welcoming Family

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INTRODUCTION

With this toolkit, your on-the-go family can be shaped by the big idea of Welcome. We're lovingly welcomed into God's family, so we can respond by welcoming others into our neighborhoods, schools, churches, social gatherings, and family table. We extend that hope and belief further when we welcome refugees and immigrants, too.

Like us, you probably don't always know how to talk about complex, global, "politically-charged" issues with your kids. But our kids are probably already forming opinions about refugees and immigrants – maybe from what they overhear on the news, around the dinner table, from grandparents, and hopefully from church. Like Kent's son on the first pages of the book, they may be wondering, "Wait, Dad, are we for them or against them?"

We want to help you and your kids enter into rich conversations and into the practices of welcome with curiosity, joy, humility, and confidence. We can do this!

This Family Toolkit has three sections:

1. Car Questions

You can take this question sheet into your car as-is or cut the questions into cards to stack in a cup holder for when the time seems right. We hope each question starts a good conversation about welcoming refugees, immigrants, and each other as you drive to school or practice or church, since this is when some of our best conversations with our kids happen. Of course, the questions can also work well during a meal or at bedtime (put a stack by the fruit bowl on the kitchen table, or in a baggie in your purse, or by your kids' bookshelves).

2. Family Welcoming Activities

Here are fifteen simple activities we can do as a family to move our hearts and homes toward welcoming. It might be a little messy, because family life always is. But we promise it will be worth it! We included ideas that work for curious preschoolers through thoughtful high schoolers.

3. Family Prayer Prompts

These are simple invitations for your family to pray about welcoming refugees and immigrants. They include suggestions and ideas to pray for yourself and your home.

This toolkit is based on the book *You Welcomed Me: Loving Refugees and Immigrants Because God First Loved Us* (InterVarsity Press, 2018) by Kent Annan and was produced by Aimee Fritz, founder of Family Compassion Focus. You can learn more about Aimee at familycompassionfocus.com and about Kent at KentAnnan.com.

This toolkit was created in collaboration between InterVarsity Press and the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at Wheaton College. Learn more about InterVarsity Press at ivpress.com and about the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at wheaton.edu/HDI.

FAMILY CAR QUESTIONS

Parent Guide:

1. Read *You Welcomed Me*. (Your kids don't need to read the book to do this activity. But your older kids are welcome to read it!)
2. Print these questions and keep them in your car. (You can cut them up to fit in your console or cup holder if you prefer.)
3. When driving to soccer practice or on the way to school (or at a meal or at bedtime), ask your kids one of the questions. Or let them flip through and pick a question.
4. Of course there might be an occasional groan! But worthwhile questions and ideas will surface between you and your children about loving God and welcoming our refugee and immigrant neighbors.

1. Who is your favorite superhero? If they were coming over to your house tomorrow, what would you prepare for them?

2. Do you think Jesus would hang out with refugees or illegal immigrants? Why or why not?

3. What is a refugee? Do you know any? Where are they from? What is their name? [See definition on page 6 of YWM]

4. What breaks your heart? Why?

5. Can you think of a time you felt left out? How did that feel? Is there anyone you need to apologize to because you left them out?

6. What does "welcome" look like? When we welcome a person, what do our faces do? Our hands? Our arms? Our legs? What do we say or do to make sure someone knows we are happy to be with them?

7. Who do you think we are "for" as a family? Who are we rooting for? Whose team are we on? Who are we proud to be associated with?

8. Who do you think we are "against" as a family? Who are the "bad guys?" What would need to happen to make us root for them?

9. Have you heard anything new about refugees or immigrants these days? Who did you hear it from?

10. Could money fix everything for refugees or immigrants? Why or why not?

11. It's scary to think about, but what if our home was taken away and we had nowhere to sleep? How would you feel? What would you do? What would you want people to do to help you?

12. Would you like to have people from other countries at your school? Why or why not? What might change at your school?

13. Tell me about a time when someone helped you. How did they know you wanted help? How did it feel to be seen and taken care of?

14. Do you have any friends who look or talk differently than you? How are they different? How could you meet more people who are different from you?

15. Do you think Jesus would hang out with refugees or illegal immigrants? Why or why not?

16. What do you think our town would look like if God was the mayor? How do you think people who had to run away from their town would be welcomed in a new town where God was the mayor?

17. If you were going on an adventure for 4 years and could only bring what would fit in your backpack, what would you bring?

18. If our family had to live in a different country, what do you think would be the hardest part? (New language? New foods? New home? Missing people from your old home?)

19. Do you know your national heritage? Where were your great great grandmother and grandfather born? Do you know the story of the first person in our family to move to our country?

20. Tell me about a time when someone helped you. How did they know you wanted help? How did it feel to be seen and taken care of?

21. If you were going on an adventure for 4 years and could only bring what would fit in your backpack, what would you bring?

22. If our family had to live in a different country, what do you think would be the hardest part? (New language? New foods? New home? Missing people from your old home?)

23. Do you know your national heritage? Where were your great great grandmother and grandfather born? Do you know the story of the first person in our family to move to our country?

FAMILY WELCOMING ACTIVITIES

When one day we look back on our life with our kids, we want to be able to see that faithful practices—not just urgent busyness—guided our way. But sometimes it's hard to know where to start. We hope that these simple, meaningful activities will help your family practice Welcoming together. When we do these things with our own families, we're never sure how it's going to go; sometimes it's rough, sometimes it's transformational. But practicing has been worth it.

It helps if you've read *You Welcomed Me* before you begin, since these suggestions flow out of the stories and the specific practices Kent lays out in each chapter. We hope you'll give them a try with plenty of grace, humor, and a spirit of fun. They will make a real difference in how you relate to each other and those who need Welcome.

- Welcome a Neighbor.** As a family, write down the names of all the neighbors you can remember. Start with those who live closest to you and keep going farther out. Include pets. Add anything you remember about their front door or yard. Add the last time any of you talked with them on the phone or in person. Add the last time you had them in your house. How many neighbors have you welcomed? If someone has moved in recently, make a family plan to welcome them: 1. On a store-bought or kid-made card, write, "GLAD WE'RE NEIGHBORS!" 2. Include your names, phone number, street address, and kids' ages. 3. Bring a gift (ideas in activity #3). 4. Ring the bell and welcome them in person.
- Host a Surprise Welcome Home Party.** Look for videos online by searching for "welcome home videos." You will find mostly stories of soldiers surprising their families, and you will probably cry. Together, notice what welcome looks like. What emotions, physical touch, and gifts do you see? Now as a family, plan a surprise welcome home party for someone you already know – maybe grandparents or another relative who is coming to visit soon, maybe a family that's been going through a rough time, maybe someone you know who's been working really hard and is tired. Make banners with their name and what you like about them, find out their favorite meal (even if it's cheap take-out pizza). Get a cake, and maybe balloons, streamers, and noisemakers, too. When the time comes and the guest of honor arrives at your home, go crazy!
- Welcome with Gifts.** In many cultures, hospitality is a key value. Welcoming strangers and sharing your very best with them is regularly practiced and expected. We gathered many cultural house-warming gifts here, along with welcoming messages. Perhaps include some of these the next time a new family moves in or a new colleague starts at work:

"We are glad you chose to live/work here with us. These gifts are our blessings for you in this fresh start:

- Bread – May your home/job be a place of contentment and satisfaction.
- Salt – May your home/job be flavorful, not bland or boring.
- Honey – May the conversations in your home/office be sweet.
- Succulents (for the hipsters!) – May your home/job be a place of sturdy new growth.
- Broom – May evil and darkness be swept from your home/office.
- Candle – May light and hope fill your home/office."

4. **Listen to Stories Together.** Kent suggests a few practices for recognizing God in others on page 25 of *You Welcomed Me*. “The first one is to read a long story about an immigrant or refugee today and let their experience get into your heart and head.” The depth and information included in nonfiction news articles and memoirs may be inappropriate for children, so we recommend these thoughtful books instead. *All Are Welcome* (Katherine Penfold), *Strictly No Elephants* (Lisa Mantchev) and *The Big Umbrella* (Amy June Bates) are sweet and compelling picture books for children about inclusion. *Wishtree* (Katherine Applegate), *Nowhere Boy* (Katherine Marsh), and *Refugee* (Alan Gratz) are good middle-grade books about friendship, welcoming, immigration, and the refugee experience. Also consider a family book club or another out-loud family reading time to dive into these stories together. Check Kent and Aimee’s websites for more book ideas.
5. **Welcome a Stranger.** Who do you know in the middle of an international adoption? Who has relatives moving into the country? Who advocates for refugees and/or immigrants? If a few days of scrolling your social media feeds doesn’t yield any opportunities to welcome a stranger, pray about this as a family (see prayer prompts). When you hear of a new child, refugee, or immigrant arriving from a foreign country, ask if you could join in welcoming them. This may mean bringing an empty car to the airport, having a hot meal ready, being the photographer, making signs, buying balloons, helping the host/chief welcomer with whatever last-minute needs arise.
6. **Read about Refugees and Immigrants Together.** In the appendix of *You Welcomed Me*, Kent lists eight organizations specializing in welcoming refugees and immigrants. Go to one of their websites and pick a story. Read it aloud or pass it around. Ask your kids if they know which countries refugees are coming from. Look for those countries on a map or globe to help them visualize the location and the distance between your home and their homeland. What questions do you have about the story? Perhaps take a few moments to do quick Google research together. If the news is unsettling, stop and pray together (see prayer prompts); you may want to repeat the prayer later on and in the days to come.
7. **Define Home.** A common story theme is the longing for home: the Israelites wandering the desert, Ulysses fighting mythical monsters, Lassie, Benji, and 101 Dalmatians running through the fields to get back to the families from which they’ve been separated. Home is not just where we live, it’s the refuge we create for those we love. Give everyone a blank piece of paper, put a box of crayons or markers in the middle of the table, and ask everyone to draw home. Lead a reflection time looking at each other’s pictures. Pray together (see prayer prompts). Ask everyone what new person or kind of person they hope to draw in their house in the next year. Maybe write that at the bottom or on the back.
8. **Put on a Good Samaritan Play.** Read Luke 10:25-37 out loud together. Assign different family members to be the expert in the law, Jesus, the bandit, the man hurt on the side of the road, the priest, the Levite, the Good Samaritan and the innkeeper. Translate the play into real life – what if someone was hurt in the Target parking lot, the school playground, or the bus stop? Would you put the person in your car and drive them to the hospital? Would you pay their hospital bills? Would you call the police? Play out all these different ideas, taking turns playing the Good Samaritan. Which part was the most fun to play? Which part was the hardest to play? Perhaps end this time with the suggestions from our prayer prompts.

9. **You Are Very Welcome.** In Kent's travels, he discovered people in Uganda starting each interaction with, "You are very welcome." For one day, start every conversation within your family with "you are very welcome." It's how you will wake each other up, start each meal, greet every person at the door, pick them up from school, help them with their homework. Think about each word: "you"—my parent, my child, my sibling; "are"—right now in this moment; "very"—not a little, not begrudgingly; "welcome"—you belong here, there is a space for you here, and I want you here. Make eye contact and let giving and receiving these words touch your heart. *Bonus challenge: continue the day starting every conversation you have with "you are very welcome"—with your peers at work, at school, at the grocery store, in the neighborhood. At the end of the day, come back together as a family, tell each other "you are very welcome," and go out for ice cream to talk about how it went.
10. **Read the Bible Together.** "The Bible is a story of liberation, yes, but also of wandering, of homelessness, of seeking, of being immigrants and refugees, in strange lands searching for a home" (p. 107). Reading these stories together as a family (even with teenagers) gives you a strong foundation and common bond in advocating for truth and justice with grace.
- Take one small passage of Scripture and read it aloud several times.
 - Invite your children to read. In our house, we allow reading in dramatic voices (granny, opera, baby, cowboy, robot, Shakespeare, Darth Vader). Let your kids read in a way that works for them. Loosening their holy imaginations gives them permission to humbly interact with Scripture. These are the building blocks of trust, creativity, and growing faith in the Bible.
 - Listen to each person read.
 - Release your imaginations: Where do you think this story took place? Who is talking? Who is listening? What does each character's face look like? Who do you like in the story? Who do you have a hard time liking? What do you think the setting looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes like?
 - Have a dictionary nearby to look up words that aren't familiar. Go a step further and look up those words in a thesaurus.
 - Some passages to try: Matthew 25:35-40 ("when I was a stranger you welcomed me"), Luke 10:25-37 (Good Samaritan), Psalm 46 (God is our refuge), Galatians 3:28, Leviticus 19:33-34, and Deuteronomy 10:16-23 (God's rules for treating foreigners), Hebrews 13:2 and Genesis 18:1-10 (holy hospitality)
 - Perhaps end your time with a prayer prompt from this family toolkit.
11. **Practical Ways to Help Locally.** Read Kent's list on pages 69-70 in *You Welcomed Me*. Write them all down and at the bottom of the list, ask a child to write, "Lord, which one would you like our family to do?" Put it on the fridge. Pray about it every day as a family at breakfast or dinner. After a week, make a special dessert to talk about this as a family and circle the one you choose. Commit to do it that month. Maybe have every family member sign it. Keep the list on the fridge until it's done.
12. **Practical Ways to Help Nationally.** Read Kent's list of ideas on pages 70-72 in *You Welcomed Me*. Write them all down and at the bottom of the list have a child write, "Lord, which one would you like our family to do?" Tape it to your dashboard and pray about it every day on the way to school

and activities. After a week go for a walk as a family and circle the one you choose. Commit to do it that month. Maybe invite some friends to join you.

13. **Name Your Fears.** (This may be more appropriate for middle schoolers and older.) It is good to ask all our questions and commit ourselves to finding answers, especially together in the safety of our own family. Ask each other: What scares you most about welcoming refugees and immigrants as a nation, community, and/or family? What is the worst-case scenario? List them all out. Look at the stats on page 31 about the shark attack. Look up the refugee vetting process (there is a good infographic available at worldrelief.org). Has your worst-case scenario happened before? Consider joining hands or kneeling as a family and admitting your fears about helping refugees and immigrants from complex situations and faraway places. Then end in prayer (see prayer prompts).
14. **Do the Numbers.** Key statistics about refugees and immigrants can be found in gray boxes throughout *You Welcomed Me*. Find the stats on pages 20, 31, 54, 55, 75, 84, and 85, then take turns reading them aloud as a family. Here are suggestions to help the numbers come to life:
 - “Around the world, 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. That’s the most since World War II, according to the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Most people remain displaced within their home countries, but about 25.4 million people worldwide have fled to other countries as refugees.” – World Vision, 6/26/18
 - Look up what countries have a total population of close to 68.5 million or 25.4 million (we recommend worldometers.info). Imagine an entire country emptied out and on the run from danger. Pray for those swirling in that current of fear and restlessness.
 - Historically the United States had welcomed 1,000,000 immigrants a year including 925,000 legal immigrants and 75,000 fully vetted refugees. Look up what cities have populations of 1 million, 925,000, and 75,000 (worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/ is helpful). How many people live in your city?
 - Historically the United States has welcomed about 75,000 refugees a year since 1975. As of October, 2018 the administration has lowered that number to approximately 22,000. Look up what cities have a population of 75,000. What if a gate went up and 53,000 people were not allowed into their homes? How would that feel?
 - The Bank of America stadium (Carolina Panthers’ headquarters) has a capacity of 73,788. What if all those spectators were suddenly without a home?
15. **Who Do You Want to Be?** What would we try if we weren’t afraid? What would we try if we had all the money and protection we needed? Read the story of Nicholas Winton in *You Welcomed Me* on pages 62-63. Was he a hero? Who did he help? Do you think that was easy or hard for him? Do you think he was ever scared? Why do you think he did it? Do you think our family could do something like that? Why or why not? What story do we want our family to be telling? What kind of Welcome do we want to try in 6 months? 3 years? 10 years? Do we want people to talk about how we welcomed others when we’re grandparents someday?

FAMILY PRAYER PROMPTS

Who are we welcoming? Inspired by the chapter "Are We For or Against?"

When our family begins to explore what welcoming means:

Lord, our family doesn't know a lot about refugees, immigrants, or welcoming, but we want to know more. Reshape us to want, seek, find, know, love, and serve you and those you heartily welcome. Open our eyes, hearts, and maybe even our home. Give us unity and joy as we explore together. Amen. [see also Activity #1 "Welcome a Neighbor"]

When we want to learn how to welcome others:

Lord, give us your eyes to see other people the way you do. Help us to welcome each other with your generous love. You created every person as beautiful and valuable. Help us to see and receive the gifts you have placed inside people from faraway places. Help us not to be too busy to notice and welcome them. Amen. [see also Activity #5 "Welcome a Stranger"]

When the news of the day is unsettling:

Lord, the news we heard today is scary and confusing. The problem feels big and we feel small. You are not surprised by it or afraid of it. We're on the lookout for your tender might. We are paying attention. Help us to keep paying attention. Show us how you'd like our family to respond. Amen. [see also Activity #6 "Read About Refugees & Immigrants Together"]

What is empathy? Inspired by the chapter "That Could be Me"

When we don't know how to enter the pain of others' experiences:

Lord, I'm overwhelmed by the sad refugee and immigrant stories I'm hearing. I've been spared from the traumas of war, violence, danger, and family separation. I don't know how to process it. Help our family to look at the pain of others with courage and grace, tethered to the truth of your goodness. Thank you for sending Jesus as the perfect example of empathy and entering in. Amen. [see also Activity #4 "Listen to Stories Together"]

When we admit we need help to welcome anyone the way Jesus does:

God, you are our indispensable helper. We need you. Be the bridge between our love, our secret judgments, and our subconscious biases. Fill in the gaps between our best and what is needed in your kingdom. Thank you for inviting us to participate in your will and your way. Amen. [see also Activity #2 "Host a Surprise Welcome Home Party"]

But what about...? Inspired by the chapter "Real Concerns"

When our family has big questions:

God, we see beautiful acts of love and justice all around, but we also have questions about suffering and injustice. Show and tell us where you are already at work, where welcome is growing and flourishing. We believe you are good and know everything that's going on. Guide

us by what is true. Amen. [see also Activity #13 "Name Your Fears"]

When we worry there's not enough to go around:

Lord, we want to be welcomers, but we get nervous. Are there really enough jobs? Is there enough government money? Are there enough volunteers and donations? Does our family have time to help? Can our church handle more people, especially if they don't speak our language? Lord, we know you are the God of provision and abundance. Please fill in the gaps for refugees and immigrants, for our country, and for our family. We believe you've got this covered, and we want to do our part. Amen. [see also Activity #14 "Do the Numbers"]

When we worry about safety:

Lord, we keep hearing that refugees and immigrants are entering our country with evil intentions. We don't think this is true, but we're not sure. Please help us to discern what is true and what is false so we know the way toward wise welcoming. Thank you for caring about the those who are fleeing the most unsafe places. Show us how to be a refuge as a friend, family, and church to those arriving in a new country. Amen. [see also Activity #12 "Practical Ways to Help Nationally"]

Would you tell me a story? Inspired by the chapter "This Is Our Story"

When it's time to welcome someone's story:

Lord, you are writing beautiful stories in every person's life. We are grateful to hear the stories from our new friend today. Give us your ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand where this person has journeyed physically, spiritually, and relationally. Help us to receive their words with gentle care. Help us to listen long without interrupting or rushing too fast to fix anything. Help us to guard their story like a treasure. Please protect and grow this relationship. Amen. [see also Activity #3 "Welcome with Gifts"]

When our family is trying to read the Bible together:

God, help our family to find your truth, inspiration, and kingdom in Scripture. Open our ears, imaginations, and hearts as we slowly read your Word together. We pay attention to how the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and home. Thank you for the gift of these words. Amen. [see also Activity #10 "Read the Bible Together"]

What do we do? Inspired by the chapter "Getting Practical"

When our family wants to take action, but isn't sure how:

Lord, how can our family welcome others today? Amen. [see also Activity #11 "Practice Ways to Help Locally"]

When we want to be Good Samaritans:

Oh, to have the brave heart of the Good Samaritan! He risked his safety, gave up his comfort, and used his own money to help a stranger in a desperate situation. Lord, please grant us the readiness, courage, and generosity to help when the time is right. We are listening. Make us ready. Amen. [see also Activity #8 "Put on a Good Samaritan Play"]

When we are ready to welcome:

Lord, trying new things is exciting but hard. Meeting new people who are different from us is interesting but stressful. Help us to walk in with the soft, eager attitude of learners. Please mediate between us and the people you are nudging us to love and serve. May the words of our mouths and meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight (Psalm 19:14). Amen. [see also Activity #12 "Practical Ways to Help Nationally"]

How to reach out to others? Inspired by the chapter "Form a Human Chain"

When we need a longer human chain:

Lord, we know that welcoming refugees and immigrants takes the effort of many people over many years. We know we are just one link in the chain. Please guide us toward like-minded, joyful, and creative advocates we can learn from and partner with. Show us how to serve well and with joy. Strengthen our arms to keep our link from breaking. Amen. [see also Activity #5 "Welcome a Stranger"]

When we are looking for heroes:

Oh God, we need people to inspire us. Thank you for those rising up to help, protect, listen to, welcome, and partner with refugees and immigrants. We pray for leaders with courage, clarity, and creativity to advocate for those forced to flee from their homes. Grant us courage to stand with refugees and immigrants in our daily errands, jobs, conversations, and prayers. Amen. [see also Activity #15 "Who Do You Want to Be?"]

How to side with hope? Inspired by the chapter "Here is Life"

When we feel something new stirring in our family:

God, we feel like you may be writing a new story, a new song, for our family. We are deeply humbled and honored to be a part of your welcoming work. Give us hearts that dream big, listen long, and risk wisely. We know our very best still involves a lot of stumbling. You are the great Welcomer. Lead us into a new story of holy welcoming. Amen. [see also Activity #9 "You Are Very Welcome"]

When we want our Home to be a place of Welcome:

Lord, we know you put the longing for home in all our hearts. We long to be a refuge for our family, friends, and immigrants looking for a place to fit in. Please expand our vision of our home. Help us to open our doors wider. Help us to roll out a bigger welcome mat. Grant us bigger tables and available guest rooms. Help us to be a lighthouse at the end of a stormy day at sea. Help us to be a cold cup of water for those running the race. Help us see the stranger and welcome him or her in. Amen. [see also Activity #7 "Define Home"]