

A journey through  
the **Bible**  
for **migrants**

***On the road...***



This booklet was produced by the French Bible Society, in cooperation with a group of migrant people.

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Special thanks to all contributors from Austria, England, France and Morocco, who helped with the selection of Bible passages and questions, shared their testimonies and prayers, and offered suggestions and corrections.

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Pictures: [www.fotolia.com](http://www.fotolia.com), Damien Baslé, Charles Daniel Maire, Christophe Nambot, United Bible Societies

Scripture quotations are from the Contemporary English Version

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[www.alliancebiblique.fr](http://www.alliancebiblique.fr) — [www.editionsbiblio.fr](http://www.editionsbiblio.fr)

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ISBN 978-2-85300-952-2

AB9052



The Lord will protect you  
now and always  
wherever you go

PSALM 121:8

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## WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

**T**he Bible is like a library: it is made up of many books that were written and put together to make one book, over a period of more than 1,000 years.

In it, you will find stories, laws, poems, speeches, prayers, letters, and more. The authors lived at different times and belonged to different cultures.

Even though it was birthed by the ancient people of Israel, the Bible does not belong to any one group. Rather, it is a treasure for all of humanity.

Many of the stories in the Bible were written by people living in exile. They tell how God was with them through this particular experience.



## WHY READ THE BIBLE?

**B**elievers have experienced that God speaks through the Bible and that reading it can help us come nearer to Him, as well as to live a better life. We also learn about Jesus' life and teachings, which are found in the second part of the Bible, called the New Testament.

Even without being a believer, anyone can find in the stories of the Bible, situations or people that resemble our own experiences. In this way, Bible passages can be an encouragement, and guide us in the way we think and act.

## HOW TO USE THIS BROCHURE

**T**his brochure does not replace the Bible. It gives a selection of passages from the Bible that tell of the experiences of men and women who left their country to look for another place to live.

The seven chapters correspond to different stages of the journey and to finally settling in a new country. Each chapter contains several passages to read and think about. To help the reader understand each passage, there is an introduction, followed by questions and suggestions:

1° to **think about** the meaning of the passage, 2° to **discuss** possible applications of the passage, 3° to **pray** using a phrase (or verse) from the passage, 4° to **go a step further** by reading more from the Bible. These passages and questions can be studied alone or, even better, by discussing them with others.

By following each of the steps, the reader will also discover testimonies and prayers that might reflect his or her own journey, contributed by people from different places. They share their stories, revealing their doubt and suffering as well as affirming their faith and hope.

This brochure, prepared by the Bible Societies and translated into several languages, was developed in collaboration with a group of migrant people. The passages and prayers have already given many people counsel, comfort and hope, as well as an invitation to **consider a different perspective on life**, and to discover that God is not far from each one of us.

"He gives life, breath, and everything else to all people. From one person God made all nations who live on earth, and he decided when and where every nation would be. God has done all this, so that we will look for him and reach out and find him. He isn't far from any of us, and he gives us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are. 'We are his children,' just as some of your poets have said." (Acts 17:25b-28)

If you want to learn more, we encourage you to obtain a complete Bible... and to read it!







# STEP 1

## WHY LEAVE?

It is hard to leave your country, to leave those you love, not knowing what lies ahead. So, why leave?

The Bible tells many stories of people who went far away from their homelands. Some left willingly, like Abraham who was called by God; others were banished or forcibly carried away. Still others had to flee because they were threatened or because their life was too hard. Often, a difficult situation forced them to leave, in the hope of finding a better life elsewhere. Between what was left behind and what is hoped for, a path opens up with its trials, joys, and disappointments. The attraction of big cities and their wealth is always strong: the Biblical prophets warned that this attraction can be deceiving or even dangerous.



**A**T THE AGE OF SIX, I LEFT CHINA and came to France with my brother and my uncle. We had been granted a family reunion. My parents had left home four years earlier, and we had had very little contact with them during this time; just a few photos. I felt like an orphan. When I asked questions, my family told me: "Your parents have gone to work in the West."

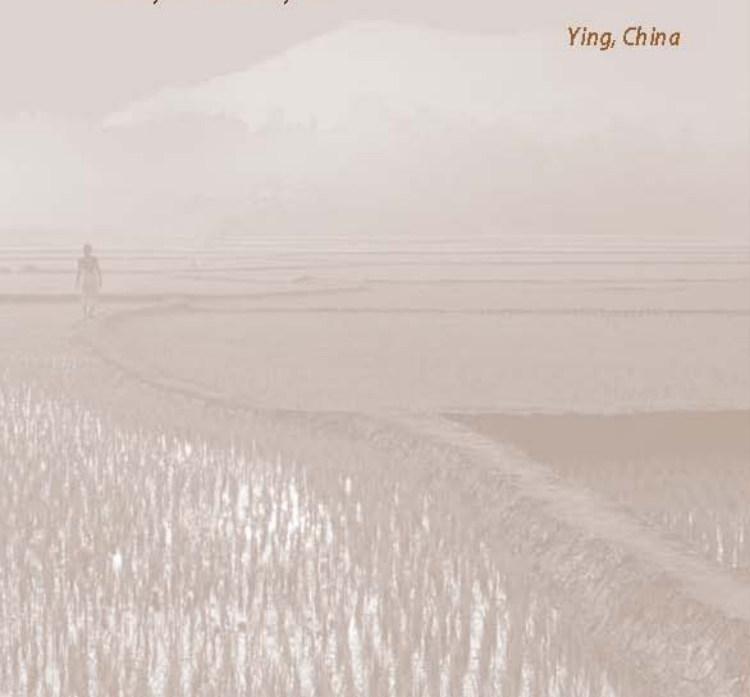
The fact was, they had risked everything to come to a country they knew nothing about – except that the salaries there were ten times those of China for the same work, or so they had been told. Western gold attracted thousands of people who were tired of working for next to nothing.

But my parents soon realised that they had been deceived. They worked hard for a fashion design company and their salaries depended on the number of garments they made. The language barrier made it difficult for them to communicate, travel around, fill in official forms, etc.

But despite all the problems, my parents persevered for the sake of pride. Returning home empty handed would have made them feel like failures. In the meantime they had made an official request to be reunited with their family.

A dream and an illusion changed the lives of two generations. But God blessed our family. I was in a foreign land, far away from home, when I met my Saviour and my Lord.

*Ying, China*



**DIDN'T PLAN MY DEPARTURE.** I had never even thought of leaving... That Wednesday evening I could not have imagined that I wouldn't be spending the night in my own home.

But the voices rang out clearly in my head: "Leave! You have to leave if you want to stay alive!" I could hear the roar of canon fire and the sound of human screams. I felt like I was lost at sea, with the wind blowing me in all directions. I asked myself: "What should I take with me, and what should I leave behind?" Then I looked at the four young children looking up at me and realised that I had quite enough to carry. So I only took my passport.

Where should I go? I just followed the other fugitives: southwards, then south-east, then towards the west.

Soon we were asked for our official documents. The customs officers did not speak our language and it suddenly hit me that I was already outside my country. I had not made any plans, and had no provisions. It was as though a path had been prepared for me, but it was a difficult path to tread because I had never been in such a situation before. Now I was a foreigner in a strange land.

The people in this country looked like my people, but they were unfriendly and did not welcome me. So I left and went back towards the east. There, I was able to regain my strength before setting off again, this time going much further afield... until I met a people who were different from my people, and yet similar to them. And I still live there today.

So that's the story of how I left my home and family – even my husband, bone of my bone, without knowing what had happened to him, or which escape route he had taken, but hoping and praying that our paths would cross again one day.

*Yvonne, Rwanda*







## UNKNOWN DESTINATION

### 1 GENESIS 12:1-5

• Abraham, who was first called Abram, is seen as the father of all believers. One day he hears a call from God to leave his country for an unknown destination. This is the beginning of a long journey during which he will learn to listen to God and to trust Him.

Why

leave?

The Lord said to Abram: Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you. I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others. I will bless anyone who blesses you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you. Abram was seventy-five years old when the Lord told him to leave the city of Haran. He obeyed and left with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions and slaves they had got while in Haran. They came to the land of Canaan.



#### Think about

- Why does Abraham leave?
- What are God's promises to him?
- What does he leave behind, and what does he take with him?



#### Discuss

- Do you think God called you to leave (or were you forced to go)?
- What do these promises given to Abraham, and this unknown country, mean to us?



#### Pray, using verse 2

"I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others."

As we step into the unknown, God's blessing goes with us.



#### Go a step further

- Read Genesis 12 to 25.

See also passages 9 and 18 in this brochure.





Why

leave?

**Think about**

- Describe the circumstances causing Joseph to be exiled in Egypt.
- Did he choose to leave?

**Discuss**

- How should we act when we experience hate and jealousy from those who are close to us?
- Does Joseph's story remind you of stories that you know of in your circle of acquaintances?

**Pray, using verse 24**

"Joseph's brothers threw him into a dry well."  
When I feel like I'm down at the bottom of a well, and even if my problems remain, God doesn't forget me: I can cry out to Him!

**Go a step further**

- Read Genesis 37 to 50.
- "You tried to harm me, but God made it turn out for the best." (Genesis 50:20)
- See also passages 26 and 28 in this brochure.

**BETRAYED BY HIS FAMILY****2 GENESIS 37:23-28**

- Joseph is the second youngest son of the patriarch Jacob, and he receives many more favours than his brothers. One day his jealous brothers decide to get rid of him, when he meets them where they are looking after their animals.

When Joseph came to his brothers, they pulled off his fine coat and threw him into a dry well. As Joseph's brothers sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with all kinds of spices that they were taking to Egypt. So Judah said, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and hide his body? Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not harm him. After all, he is our brother." And the others agreed. When the Midianite merchants came by, Joseph's brothers took him out of the well, and for twenty pieces of silver they sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt.



Why

leave?

## A DEATH THREAT

### 3 MATTHEW 2:13-18

• *During the early years of Jesus' life, his parents Joseph and Mary are visited by Wise Men ("magi") who come from the East to "worship the king of the Jews who was just born." This news frightens King Herod who fears for his throne. Herod decides to eliminate any potential competitor.*

After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him." That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "I called my son out of Egypt."

When Herod found out that the wise men from the east had tricked him, he was very angry. He gave orders for his men to kill all the boys who lived in or near Bethlehem and were two years old and younger. This was based on what he had learnt from the wise men.

So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet Jeremiah had said, "In Ramah a voice was heard crying and weeping loudly. Rachel was mourning for her children, and she refused to be comforted, because they were dead."



#### Think about

- Why do Joseph, Mary, and Jesus flee to Egypt?
- Did they choose to leave?
- What happens to those who stay behind?
- In what way is God present in this story? What about Jesus?



#### Discuss

- Do you think God allowed you to leave, either alone or with your family?
- Does God speak through dreams?
- Does this account of Herod killing children, and the example of the mother crying, remind you of events that you know of?



#### Pray, using verse 14

"That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt." God opens a way that gives reason to hope.



#### Go a step further

- Read Matthew 1 and 2.

## POVERTY AND HUNGER

### 4 RUTH 1:1-5

Before Israel was ruled by kings, Elimelech from the tribe of Ephrath lived in the town of Bethlehem. His wife was named Naomi, and their two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. But when their crops failed, they moved to the country of Moab.

And while they were there, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with only her two sons. Later, Naomi's sons married Moabite women. One was named Orpah and the other Ruth. About ten years later, Mahlon and Chilion also died. Now Naomi had no husband or sons.

• *The book of Ruth begins with the story of a family from Israel who leave to settle in a neighbouring country in order to escape a famine.*



#### Think about

- Why does this family leave its homeland?
- Will they find happiness in the country of Moab?



#### Discuss

- How can someone bear to continue living after having known much sorrow?
- What particular difficulties do women who live alone in exile have to face?



#### Pray, using verse 5

"Now Naomi had no husband or sons." When there is no one else to turn to, God is our only support. He will bless Naomi at the end of her life.



#### Go a step further

- Read Ruth 1, especially verses 18 to 22. See also passages 14 and 19 in this brochure.



Why

leave?

5 GENESIS 27:33-37, 41-45

• *Shortly before his death, Isaac, one of the ancestors of the people of Israel, wants to give his blessing to his older son, Esau, as was the custom. But Rebekah, Isaac's wife, arranges things so that Jacob, the younger son, who is her favourite, receives the blessing instead.*

*Because of this, Esau starts to hate his brother, who consequently has to flee for his life.*

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Isaac started trembling and said, "Then who brought me some wild meat just before you came in? I ate it and gave him a blessing that cannot be taken back."

Esau cried loudly and begged, "Father, give me a blessing too!"

Isaac answered, "Your brother tricked me and stole your blessing."

Esau replied, "My brother deserves the name Jacob, because he has already cheated me twice. The first time he cheated me out of my rights as the firstborn son, and now he has cheated me out of my blessing." Then Esau asked his father, "Don't you still have any blessing left for me?"

"My son," Isaac answered, "I have made Jacob the ruler over you and your brothers, and all of you will be his servants. I have also promised him all the grain and grapes that he needs. There's nothing left that I can do for you."

Esau hated his brother Jacob because he had stolen the blessing that was supposed to be his. So he said to himself, "Just as soon as my father dies, I'll kill Jacob."

When Rebekah found out what Esau planned to do, she sent for Jacob and told him, "Son, your brother Esau is just waiting for the time when he can kill you. Now listen carefully and do what I say. Go to the home of my brother Laban in Haran and stay with him for a while. When Esau stops being angry and forgets what you have done to him, I'll send for you to come home. Why should I lose both of my sons on the same day?"



### Think about

- Why does Esau hate his brother Jacob?
- In this situation, do the parents treat their children fairly?



### Discuss

- What must Jacob think of his brother? Of his mother? Of his enforced departure?
- Where does our responsibility begin in the things that happen to us?



### Pray, using verse 43

"Go to the home of my brother Laban in Haran and stay with him for a while."

Ask God for wisdom in order to know how to act.



### Go a step further

- Read Genesis 25 to 36.

See also passages 1 and 18 in this brochure.



## Is it the will of God?

6 ISAIAH 30:1-7

- *The people of Israel often sought the protection of their more powerful neighbours, but without weighing the consequences of their choices, and especially without consulting God. The prophet Isaiah denounces this behaviour.*

This is the Lord's message for his rebellious people: "You follow your own plans instead of mine; you make treaties without asking me, and you keep on sinning. You trust Egypt for protection. So you refuse my advice and send messengers to Egypt to beg their king for help. You will be disappointed, completely disgraced for trusting Egypt. The king's power reaches from the city of Zoan as far south as Hanes. But Egypt can't protect you, and to trust that nation is useless and foolish."

Why

leave?

This is a message about the animals of the Southern Desert:

"You people carry treasures on donkeys and camels. You travel to a feeble nation through a troublesome desert filled with lions and flying fiery dragons. Egypt can't help you! That's why I call that nation a helpless monster."



### Think about

- *Why do you think that these people wanted to go to Egypt?*
- *What do they think they will find there?*
- *What does God think about this situation?*



### Discuss

- *What ideas do we entertain about the country where we want to go?*
- *Can that lead to disappointment later?*
- *How should we react when the reality does not match our hopes?*
- *How do we know the will of God concerning our departure plans?*



### Pray, using verse 2

*"So you refuse my advice and send messengers to Egypt to beg their king for help."*

*It is never too late to seek God's will, and to ask others for advice.*



### Go a step further

- *Read Isaiah 30 to 32.*



## THE DECEPTION OF THE CITIES

7 REVELATION 18:1-5, 10-19

• *In the Bible, Babylon is an example of a great power that does not respect God's will. In the book of Revelation, Babylon represents Rome, capital of the Roman Empire that ruled the world at that time. The passage describes how the city will be destroyed because of pride and injustice.*

Her sufferings will frighten them, and they will stand at a distance and say, "Pity that great and powerful city! Pity Babylon! In a single hour her judgment has come."

Every merchant on earth will mourn, because there is no one to buy their goods. There won't be anyone to buy their gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, sweet-smelling wood, fancy carvings of ivory and wood, as well as things made of bronze, iron, or marble. No one will buy their cinnamon, spices, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, chariots, slaves, and other humans. Babylon, the things your heart desired have all escaped from you. Every luxury and all your glory will be lost for ever. You will never get them back. The merchants had become rich because of her. But when they saw her sufferings, they were terrified. They stood at a distance, crying and mourning. Then they shouted, "Pity the great city of Babylon! She dressed in fine linen and wore purple and scarlet cloth. She had jewellery made of gold and precious stones and pearls. Yet in a single hour her riches disappeared."

Why

leave?



Every ship's captain and passenger and sailor stood at a distance, together with everyone who does business by travelling on the sea. When they saw the smoke from her fire, they shouted, "This was the greatest city ever!" They cried loudly, and in their sorrow they threw dust on their heads, as they said, "Pity the great city of Babylon! Everyone who sailed the seas became rich from her treasures. But in a single hour the city was destroyed."



### Think about

- What is the wealth of this city?
- What are the reasons for God's judgment and curse?
- What could the last verse mean: "in a single hour"?



### Discuss

- Can this passage help us to think about the cities or countries that now seem important in the world?
- Do we belong in cities like these?
- Do our dreams match reality?



### Pray, using verse 10

"Pity that great and powerful city! Pity Babylon! In a single hour her judgment has come."

The arrogance of wealth often leads to trouble. God can give us the strength to avoid it.



### Go a step further

- Read Revelation 17 to 22.



## PRAYER

I chose to leave, Lord.  
 I left behind the village orchards,  
 The misery of famine,  
 The laughter of children, the noise of war,  
 The singing of women at work,  
 And the shame of my failures...  
 I was living a peaceful life with my family,  
 Now I'm alone,  
 With all the worries that go with being an immigrant...  
 When morning comes I pray to you:  
 Be my strength and my guide in these difficult days!  
 When evening arrives  
 And I start to worry about tomorrow  
 Take away my fears and renew my courage.  
 Look favourably upon me, my God,  
 You are the Father and you never forget your children  
 I left the life I had to become a new person.  
 I don't know what lies ahead,  
 But I believe that in your love  
 You will give me a new start in life,  
 Somewhere far away from the pain  
 That pushed me to leave.

*Ruth, Congo*

“ I don't know what lies ahead,  
 But I believe that in your love  
 You will give me a new start in life,  
 Somewhere far away from the pain  
 That pushed me to leave. ”

Why

leave?



Lord, you are in control of everything that happens, you reign over all your Creation.  
 I worship you my God and my Saviour.  
 I praise you because you have a wonderful plan for my life.

Thank you for allowing my family to be reunited,  
 thank you for giving us everything we needed in  
 this foreign land, thank you for preparing me to  
 meet you personally one evening at the age of  
 twelve.

From China to France via Italy, you called me,  
 you transformed my life through Jesus Christ,  
 and you called me to share the Good News of his  
 love.

May all the glory be yours!

*Ying, China*



**WHEN I LEFT THE LAND OF MY FATHERS, WHERE I WAS GOING TO BE KILLED,** I knew that I'd never see my family again. I had to leave behind everything I owned. I felt like the Children of Israel leaving Egypt: my enemies behind me, the sea before me.

The first staging post of this journey into the unknown was in a country where I could stay legally. After a month of waiting in vain for a visa for Europe, I took a flight to a transit country. But I couldn't find any of the people whose addresses I had been given. Finally, someone helped me: she bought me a train ticket to a town near the border and gave me some money.

I looked for a smuggler to take us across, my son and myself, along with some other people from my country. I had left all our belongings at the hotel. The man asked for a large amount of money, and also for my passport.

We walked from the border town. It was a freezing cold night – it was snowing, in fact. I thought I was going to die because of my heart problems. I stumbled many times and fell face-down in the mud. Would we be caught by the police like the other group of fugitives the previous night? But we were protected: the police didn't come out that night because it was too cold.

After walking for three hours we finally crossed the border. We were dirty, soaking wet and exhausted. All day long we had looked for someone who might be able to help us. We had had nothing to eat. Where should we go? I didn't know anyone and had no money...

I shall never forget the person who said: "You can stay here. Are you hungry?" This young couple opened their home to us and gave us clean clothes to wear. I always used to ask: "What's going to happen next?", but this time I had been led to the 'promised land'.

*Ester, Iran*

### **IT WAS THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS.**

Just like Mary and Joseph when the angel of God came to warn them of impending danger, these people had to leave their village in haste. Some had to leave their homes, their countries and their loved ones in the same way. Under a rain of bombs, through the clatter of kalashnikovs, facing the threat of death, we left with no preparation and ventured into the unknown. Then the interminable journey began. Along the way you often meet people like Rahab (Joshua 2), who are willing to shelter and protect you, risking their own lives in the process. God will never forget their kind gestures. On this difficult journey God is always present, and guides our footsteps along the path he has chosen for us in advance.

*Yvonne, Rwanda*

## STEP 2

# A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

**S**tarting out on a journey into the unknown might mean facing the suspicion and unkindness of others. At the same time, it means experiencing God's help and protection, sometimes in unbelievable ways. On the road, you also meet some very kind people.



A difficult

journey

## THE HARDNESS OF MANKIND

8 NUMBERS 20:14-21

Moses sent messengers from Israel's camp near Kadesh with this message for the king of Edom: We are Israelites, your own relatives, and we're sure you have heard the terrible things that have happened to us. Our ancestors settled in Egypt and lived there a long time. But later the Egyptians were cruel to us, and when we begged our Lord for help, he answered our prayer and brought us out of that land.

Now we are camped at the border of your territory, near the town of Kadesh. Please let us go through your country. We won't go near your fields and vineyards, and we won't drink any water from your wells. We will stay on the main road until we leave your territory.

But the Edomite king answered, "No, I won't let you go through our country! And if you try, we will attack you." Moses sent back this message: "We promise to stay on the main road, and if any of us or our livestock drink your water, we will pay for it. We just want to pass through."

But the Edomite king insisted, "You can't go through our land!" Then Edom sent out its strongest troops to keep Israel from passing through its territory. So the Israelites had to go in another direction.

• After leaving Egypt where they had been slaves, the people of Israel find themselves in the desert. To get to the country that God had promised to give them, they have to cross the territory of the king of Edom.



### Think about

- What do the Israelites ask for?
- Why do you think the king of Edom stops them from crossing his territory?



### Discuss

- Does this story remind you of situations in your own journey?
- How did you react at the time?
- What do you now think of your reaction?



### Pray, using verse 21

"Then Edom sent out its strongest troops to keep Israel from passing through its territory. So the Israelites had to go in another direction."

When we face people who are hostile to us, God can show us another path.



### Go a step further

- Read Numbers 20 and 21.



## GOD'S HELP AND PROTECTION

9 GENESIS 21:14-21

• Sarah, Abraham's wife, was infertile for a long time. One day she asks Abraham to sleep with Hagar, her slave: the child who is born to them is named Ishmael. Sarah herself would finally have a child, called Isaac. Some years later, she asks Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. However, according to the custom, Sarah should have thought of Ishmael as her own son.

Early the next morning Abraham gave Hagar an animal skin full of water and some bread. Then he put the boy on her shoulder and sent them away.

They wandered around in the desert near Beersheba, and after they had run out of water, Hagar put her son under a bush. Then she sat down a long way off, because she could not bear to watch him die. And she cried bitterly.

When God heard the boy crying, the angel of God called out to Hagar

from heaven and said, "Hagar, why are you worried? Don't be afraid. I have heard your son crying. Help him up and hold his hand, because I will make him the father of a great nation." Then God let her see a well. So she went to the well and filled the skin with water, then gave some to her son.

God blessed Ishmael, and as the boy grew older, he became an expert with his bow and arrows. He lived in the Paran Desert, and his mother chose an Egyptian woman for him to marry.



### Think about

- Why do Hagar and her son find themselves abandoned in the desert?
- How does Hagar feel?
- How does God take care of them?



### Discuss

- Did you suffer from a family conflict that forced you to leave?
- What did you do to survive?
- Have you already experienced God's help?



### Pray, using verse 17

"Why are you worried? Don't be afraid."  
Trusting God with all my fears.



### Go a step further

- Read Genesis 12 to 25.
- See also passages 1 and 18 in this brochure.

“Don't be afraid”



## GOD GOES WITH HIS PEOPLE

### 10 DEUTERONOMY 8:1-6

• *Before arriving in the country promised by God, Israel spent endless years in the desert. Thanks to God, the people lacked nothing. But, they must continue to obey His commandments.*

Moses said: Israel, do you want to go into the land the Lord promised your ancestors? Do you want to capture it, live there, and become a powerful nation? Then be sure to obey every command I am giving you.

Don't forget how the Lord your God has led you through the desert for the past forty years. He wanted to find out if you were truly willing to obey him and depend on him, so he made you go hungry. Then he gave you manna, a kind of food that you and your ancestors had never even heard about. The Lord was teaching you that people need more than food to live – they need every word that the Lord has spoken.

Over the past forty years, your clothing hasn't worn out, and your feet haven't swollen. So keep in mind that the Lord has been correcting you, just as parents correct their children.

Obey the commands the Lord your God has given you and worship him with fear and trembling.



### Think about

- What should the people of God learn from their trials and suffering in the desert?
- How did God accompany His children during these 40 years?



### Discuss

- Have you suffered in order to get where you are?
- How do you understand the trials that you have gone through?
- How does God intervene in the midst of difficulties?



### Pray, using verse 3

*"The Lord was teaching you that people need more than food to live – they need every word that the Lord has spoken."*

*God's Word is essential food: it helps us live and believe in Him.*



### Go a step further

- Read Deuteronomy 1 to 11.



## HELP AND HOSPITALITY FOR OTHERS

11 Luke 10:30-37

• One day, a specialist in the Jewish law came to ask Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus answers with a story that involves some religious people, and also a Samaritan man. At that time, the Samaritans were rejected and despised by the Jews.

Jesus replied: As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, robbers attacked him and grabbed everything he had. They beat him up and ran off, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road. But when he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. Later a temple helper came to the same place. But when he saw the man who had been beaten up, he also went by on the other side.

A man from Samaria then came travelling along that road. When he saw the man, he felt sorry for him and went over to him. He treated his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put him on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next morning he gave the innkeeper two silver coins and said, "Please take care of the man. If you spend more than this on him, I will pay you when I return." Then Jesus asked, "Which one of these three people was a real neighbour to the man who was beaten up by robbers?" The teacher answered, "The one who showed pity." Jesus said, "Go and do the same!"



### Think about

- Why does Jesus tell this story?
- Why does he choose a Samaritan in order to teach about being a good neighbour?
- Imagine the reaction of the wounded man who must accept that he has been helped by a Samaritan.



### Discuss

- Have you ever found yourself in a situation similar to that of one of the people in this story?
- As a foreigner, is it always easy to help others?
- How can we act so that others abandon their prejudices against foreigners?



### Pray, using verse 34

"He took him to an inn, where he took care of him." Thank God for all the "good Samaritans" we meet along our path!



### Go a step further

- Read Luke 9:51 to 11:36.



**L**ord, you are the one who led me to this new country. You called me to leave the land of my ancestors for a place you promised to show me. I have never stopped trusting you from the moment I left until today. You have protected me and you've shown me what I should do. You have sent people to help me. My Lord, I trust you more than I trust human beings. I miss my family, but I know you're taking care of them. Your plan for my life is not yet finished. I want to serve you in this new country. I want to help other foreigners who come here in search of a peaceful place to live. Oh Lord, my God and my Saviour, I thank you for the wonderful things you have done in my life.

*Ester, Iran*

**Y**ou have blessed me, Lord,  
Through the kindness of all those  
Whom you've placed on my journey.  
In the warm looks of the people I've met,  
I've seen your eyes looking at me,  
Full of love and compassion.  
In all the hands that have reached out to me,  
I've seen your hands, open, ready to rescue me.  
In the comforting words that have been spoken to me,  
I've received your word,  
Resounding in the depth of my being  
And restoring my faith.  
I want to say thank you, Lord,  
For your goodness that goes with me every day.

*Ruth, Congo*



**“**You, Lord, are my shepherd,  
I will never be in need.  
You let me rest in fields of green grass.  
You lead me to streams of peaceful water,  
And you refresh my life.  
You are true to your name,  
And you lead me along the right paths.  
I may walk through valleys as dark as death,  
But I won't be afraid.  
You are with me,  
And your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.  
You treat me to a feast, while my enemies watch.  
You honour me as your guest,  
And you fill my cup until it overflows.  
Your kindness and love  
Will always be with me each day of my life,  
And I will live forever in your house, Lord.**”**

*Psalms 23*



## STEP 3

# SEEKING A PLACE

**A**rriving in a new country does not solve all our problems. Many men and women are victims of exploitation; they work illegally for a pittance and often stir up jealousy. Abuse of this kind is not in line with Biblical law, which commands to respect foreigners. The Bible encourages all believers, whatever their circumstances, to adopt a lifestyle marked by goodness and the rejection of hatred.

**MY LIFE WAS DIFFICULT IN THE COUNTRY I COME FROM.** As well as poverty, I also had to face social rejection because I'm a Christian. I left my country in search of somewhere to live humanely. There have been so many obstacles on my journey – enough to make the strongest of minds give up their goal!

But by today many things have changed in my life. I'm delighted to say that I'm safe and completely free. I can practise my faith without fear. I have also received the professional training I needed. I've met many people, believers and non-believers, who have shown me love and helped me along the way.

Nevertheless, my situation remains precarious. My biggest problem is finding a job so that I can be independent. I do sometimes get discouraged when I realise that I'm being discriminated against. I get the impression that my foreign-sounding name, the colour of my skin, and my age, all contribute to this negative reaction. Still, I try to put these problems into perspective, and to have a positive attitude towards people – like Jesus said: "Do not judge others, and God will not judge you." (Matthew 7:1)

I try to always have faith, in myself, but mostly in God. In the face of difficulty, and in my weakness, I try to live out my faith and never give up.

*Ibrahim, Comoros*

## LEFT MY COUNTRY BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

Following my divorce, I couldn't afford to bring up my two children on my nursery teacher's salary. When I got home after three months in Cyprus where I worked as a farm labourer, I thought: "I want to start again somewhere else, life is too hard here!" When I arrived in Paris by train I requested political asylum, knowing very well that my request was far-fetched. I persisted in spite of all the refusals, but ended up going underground. I had been ordered to leave the country four times. I worked on the side (moonlighting), but I had managed to get an apartment and was able to pay the rent. I went to evening classes to learn French. I had also managed to bring my children with me.

During this time I went to church regularly. The faith I had known since childhood was a constant support to me.

Unfortunately, I committed a crime and ended up in prison for a few months. There, I started to read the Bible avidly. In the Orthodox tradition I was brought up in, we only come into contact with the Bible through the liturgy. But while I was in prison I realised that the Word of God is of utmost importance, and it's the tool we have in common with all the Christian churches. One Sunday morning during the service, while the priest was explaining the Word of God, I closed my eyes and I imagined that I was back in my home church.

Discovering this fellowship with other believers has opened up the rest of my life. The other good news is that I've just received my official documents!

*Tatiana, Russia*

## THE FOREIGNER SHOULD BE RESPECTED

12 LEVITICUS 19:33-34

13 DEUTERONOMY 27:19

• *In the Bible, respect for those who are weak – widows, orphans, and immigrants – is a basic value.*



Don't ill-treat any foreigners who live in your land. Instead, treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

We ask the Lord to put a curse on anyone who keeps the poor from getting justice, whether these poor are foreigners, widows, or orphans. And... the people will answer, "Amen!"



### Think about

- Why does God tell His people to respect and love foreigners?
- What must the people of Israel remember?



### Discuss

- It is sometimes said that only he who has been treated like a foreigner can love and respect foreigners: what do you think?
- As a newcomer, do you think that you are treated the same as the inhabitants of your host country?



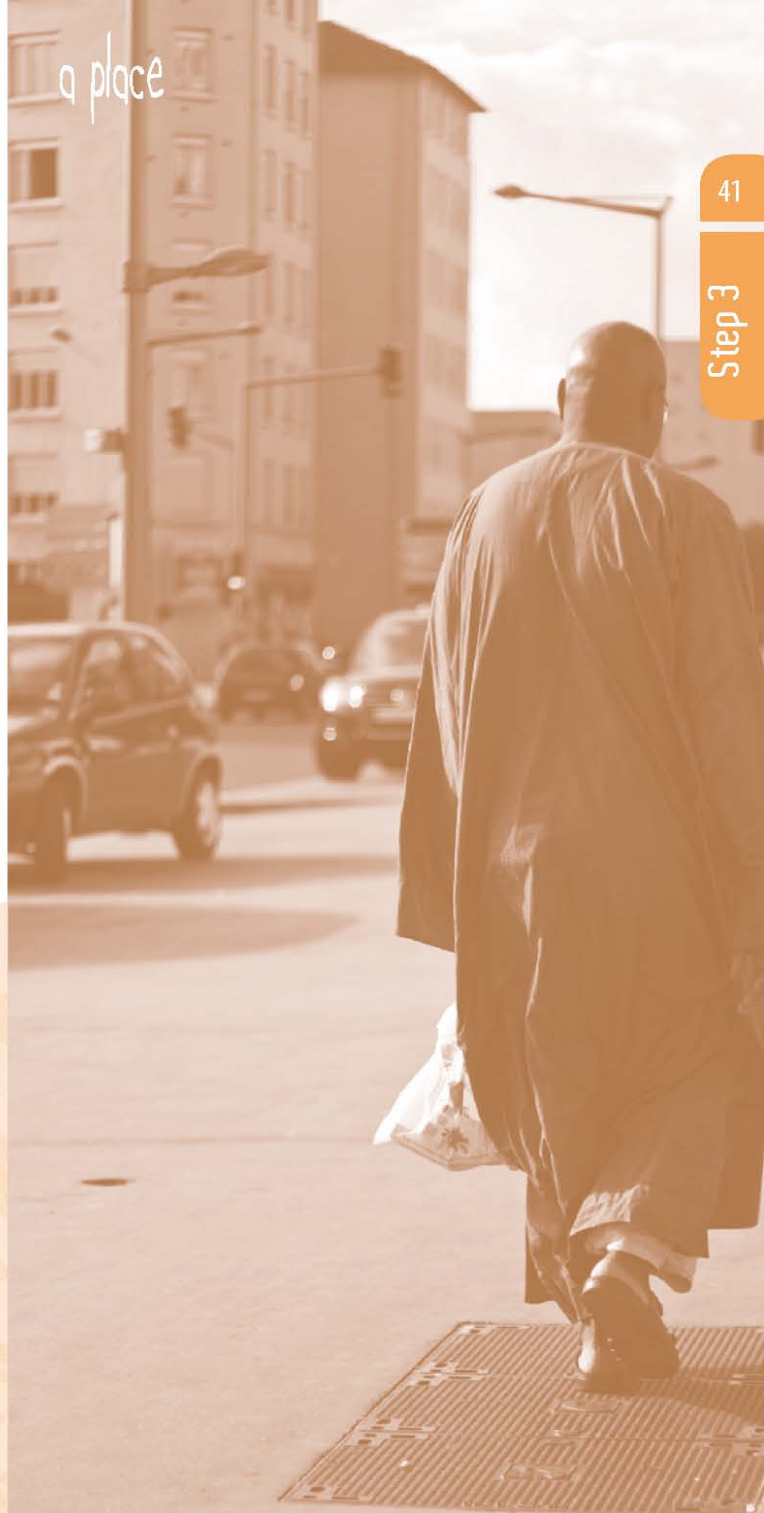
### Pray, using verse 34

"Treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself."  
May this requirement be understood by everyone!



### Go a step further

- Read Leviticus 19 and Joshua 8:30-35.





## MEETING OUR BASIC NEEDS

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Step 3

Step 3

## 14 RUTH 2:1-13

- Naomi returned to Israel with her daughter-in-law Ruth, who is also a widow. Having absolutely nothing, they must do whatever they can to feed themselves.

One day, Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me see if I can find someone who will let me pick up the grain left in the fields by the harvest workers." Naomi answered, "Go ahead, my daughter." So straight away, Ruth went out to pick up grain in a field owned by Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's husband Elimelech, as well as a rich and important man. When Boaz left Bethlehem and went out to his field, he said to the harvest workers, "The Lord bless you!" They replied, "And may the Lord bless you!" Then Boaz asked the man in charge of the harvest workers, "Who is that young woman?"

The man answered, "She is the one who came back from Moab with Naomi. She asked if she could pick up grain left by the harvest workers, and she has been working all morning without a moment's rest."

Boaz went over to Ruth and said, "I think it would be best for you not to pick up grain in anyone else's field. Stay here with the women and follow along behind them, as they gather up what the men have cut. I have warned the men not to bother you, and whenever you are thirsty, you can drink from the water jars they have filled." Ruth bowed down to the ground and said, "You know I come from another country. Why are you so good to me?"

Boaz answered, "I've heard how you've helped your mother-in-law ever since your husband died. You even left your own father and mother to come and live in a foreign land among people you don't know. I pray that the Lord God of Israel will reward you for what you have done. And now that you have come to him for protection, I pray that he will bless you."

Ruth replied, "Sir, it's good of you to speak kindly to me and make me feel so welcome. I'm not even one of your servants."

**Think about**

- What does Ruth do to survive in a foreign country?
- Is her presence accepted? Why?
- Would she have been able to survive without Boaz?

**Discuss**

- Think back to your arrival in your host country: does Ruth's story remind you of anything in your own experience?
- Were there any people who helped you?

**Pray, using verse 10**

"You know I come from another country. Why are you so good to me?"  
May God place kind people along my path!

**Go a step further**

- Read the book of Ruth.
- See also passages 4 and 19 in this brochure.

## EXPLOITED AND DECEIVED

Jacob heard that Laban's sons were complaining, "Jacob is now a rich man, and he got everything he owns from our father." Jacob also noticed that Laban was not as friendly as he had been before. One day the Lord said, "Jacob, go back to your relatives in the land of your ancestors, and I will bless you." Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to meet

him in the field where he kept his sheep, and he told them:

Your father isn't as friendly with me as he used to be, but the God my ancestors worshipped has been on my side. You know that I have worked hard for your father and that he keeps cheating me by changing my wages time after time. But God has protected me.



### Think about

- How is Jacob treated by his father-in-law and his brothers-in-law?
- Why does he decide to go back to his own country?



### Discuss

- How do you react if you are mistreated or exploited by an employer?
- Do you feel like fighting to make a place for yourself, or do you feel like leaving?



### Pray, using verse 7

*"...he keeps cheating me by changing my wages time after time. But God has protected me."*  
Refuse to suffer in justice. Rely on God's help.



### Go a step further

- Read Genesis 25 to 36.
- See also passages 5 and 28 in this brochure.

# Seeking

# a place

15 GENESIS 31:1-7

- Jacob, who fled the anger of his brother Esau after having deceived him, then himself faces the harsh experience of being deceived and exploited by a relative.

16 MATTHEW 5:43-48

- Referring back to traditional teaching, Jesus invites his listeners to discover a new way of living with and loving others.

## REJECT HATRED

You have heard people say, "Love your neighbours and hate your enemies." But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who illtreats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both good and bad people. And he sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong. If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that? Even tax collectors love their friends. If you greet only your friends, what's so great about that? Don't even unbelievers do that? But you must always act like your Father in heaven.



### Think about

- What is new in the teaching that Jesus gives?
- What argument does He use to encourage love for our enemies?



### Discuss

- In your situation, have you come across people who cause you to suffer?
- Is Jesus' teaching really applicable when we are confronted by rejection, racism, threats of expulsion, and so on?



### Pray, using verse 44

*"...pray for anyone who ill-treats you."*  
God's love can transform the life of any human being, even those who hurt me and who seem impossible to love!



### Go a step further

- Read Matthew 5 to 7 and Romans 12:14-21.



## BEHAVE PROPERLY

17 1 PETER 2:11-12

- The apostle Peter encourages believers to be careful about their behaviour.

Dear friends, you are foreigners and strangers on this earth. So I beg you not to surrender to those desires that fight against you. Always let others see you behaving properly, even though they may still accuse you of doing wrong. Then on the day of judgment, they will honour God by telling the good things they saw you do.



### Think about

- Who are the foreigners and strangers?
- What causes them to suffer?
- What behaviour is recommended when we face unkind words or accusations?



### Discuss

- Have you ever been subjected to insults or unkind words? How did you react?
- Have you suffered rejection or persecution because of your religious practices?
- What does it mean to you to "behave properly" in the society where you live?



### Pray, using verse 12

"Always let others see you behaving properly..."  
God can help me be a good witness, wherever I live.



### Go a step further

- Read 1 Peter 2:11-25 and Daniel 1 to 3.

Seeking

a place

## PRAYER

Lord God,  
I believe that you gave us this world  
To share with one another.  
I believe

That there is room for everyone in this world,  
Black or white, strong or weak,  
Tall or small, clever or not-so-clever.  
In the torment of exile,  
In the weakness of hardship,  
In the uncertainty of tomorrow,  
I am still the child you love  
And whom you placed here on earth,  
Just where you want me to be.  
You helped me find rest after my long journey,  
You gave me somewhere to live.  
My feet are treading on new ground,  
I'm discovering a different people,  
With their different ways and customs.  
A new life is beginning for me,  
And according to your promise,  
You will be my strength and my shield.  
Yes, Lord, you watch over my comings and goings,  
And I thank you for all your blessings.

Rodrigo, Brazil

Lord of Heaven and Earth,  
God of all nations,  
Let this country you've sent us to be kind to us.  
Help us to accomplish  
Everything you sent us here to do.  
May this land be a source of blessing to us,  
And may we be a blessing to this land in return.  
And may all the glory be to You,  
The only master of time and circumstances.

Laurence, Gabon



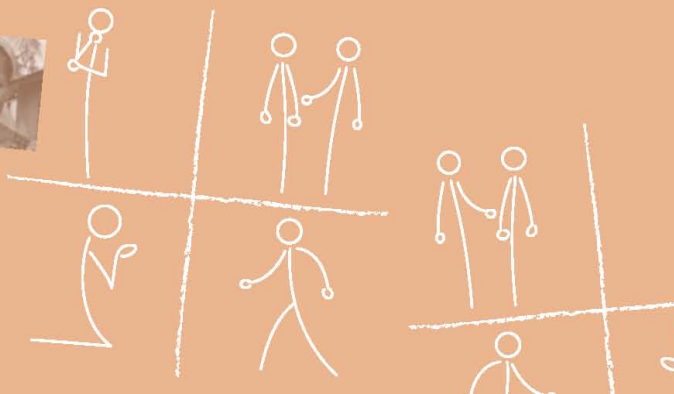


## STEP 4

# ARE ALL MEANS ACCEPTABLE?



**H**ow do we start a new life? Ruth sought a husband who could protect her; Abraham was tempted to lie when threatened. In his teaching, Jesus seems to encourage us to use our wits. But what He is really advising is to rely on God's help, and also to take other people into consideration.



**S**INCE I LEFT MY COUNTRY TEN YEARS AGO I've been through many difficulties and suffered much deception. I had hoped for a better life in Europe, for freedom and security. Instead, I've had to face all the challenges of the life of a refugee. Where can I sleep? What can I eat? Every day was a struggle.

When I was refused asylum the problems got worse. I hadn't eaten for days and I had nowhere to live. As a refugee I was not allowed to work even though I needed money. I was really desperate in this society where no-one showed me any pity. I could see no solution other than to become a drug dealer or to steal, but I didn't want to do that.

One day someone asked me if I wanted to sell drugs for him. So I started to deal. I felt guilty before God and before my 'clients', because I knew these drugs would destroy the lives of these young people. But the money I earned allowed me to live. I would have preferred to find any other job, even the most degrading...

Back home I had vowed never to take drugs. At that time my Christian faith was very strong. But in Europe, my spiritual life went downhill, because of all the daily difficulties.

I felt that I was not myself any more. Sometimes I smoked drugs to forget the hardships of this life. How could I change and get out of all that? Thanks to God, one day I found some people who helped me and I stopped dealing with drugs. I got back on the straight and narrow road of faith.

In the detention centre where I spent six months, I now share my experience with other refugees. My situation is still precarious and problematic, but I know my limits now, what I can do and what I can't do.

*Telor, Liberia*

**A**FTER A LONG JOURNEY ON FOOT, BY BUS, AND BY PLANE, we finally arrive at our destination. But alas! Nothing is straightforward. As soon as you start to unpack your belongings, a letter comes to tell you that there's no room for you here. You can't sleep, you lose your appetite, and homesickness eats away at your heart.

You end up forgetting family warmth, the safety of your own home, the goodness of a hot meal. You ask yourself, where is our God? He who is love, who is all-powerful, seems absent from the scene. But in spite of his silence, he is there at our side, to encourage and uplift us when sorrow overwhelms us.

*Yvonne, Rwanda*



## LYING OUT OF NECESSITY?

18 GENESIS 12:10-20

• **When Abraham (Abram) goes to Egypt with his wife Sarah (Sarai), he chooses to lie because he is afraid for his life.**

The crops failed, and there was no food anywhere in the land. So Abram and his wife Sarai went to live in Egypt for a while. But just before they got there, he said, "Sarai, you are really beautiful! When the Egyptians see how lovely you are, they will murder me because I am your husband. But they won't kill you. Please save my life by saying that you are my sister."

As soon as Abram and Sarai arrived in Egypt, the Egyptians noticed how beautiful she was. The king's officials told him about her, and she was taken to his house. The king was good to Abram because of Sarai, and Abram was given sheep, cattle, donkeys, slaves, and camels.

Because of Sarai, the Lord struck the king and everyone in his palace with terrible diseases. Finally, the king sent for Abram and said to him, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me Sarai was your wife? Why did you make me

believe she was your sister? Now I've married her. Take her and go! She's your wife."

So the king told his men to let Abram and Sarai take their possessions and leave.



### Think about

- Why does Abraham lie to Pharaoh about his wife? Does he have a choice?
- Imagine what Sarah must have thought: what is the woman's place in this story?
- Why was Abraham sent out of the country?



### Discuss

- On your journey, did you ever lie or hide things because you felt you had no choice?
- Were other people involved?
- What were the results, positive or negative?



### Pray, using verse 18

"What have you done to me?"

Think about those who have been misled or hurt because of my attitudes, or my words.



### Go a step further

- Read Genesis 12 to 25 (especially 20:1-11). See also passages 1 and 9 in this brochure.

## 19 RUTH 3:1-13

- *Ruth is a widow and a foreigner in Israel. Her mother-in-law Naomi encourages her to approach Boaz in the hope that he may become her protector.*

## FINDING A SPOUSE AND PROTECTOR

One day, Naomi said to Ruth: It's time I found you a husband, who will give you a home and take care of you. You have been picking up grain beside the women who work for Boaz, and you know he is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be threshing the grain. Now take a bath and put on some perfume, then dress in your best clothes. Go where he is working, but don't let him see you until he has finished eating and drinking. Watch where he goes to spend the night, then when he is asleep, lift the cover and lie down at his feet. He will tell you what to do.

Ruth answered, "I'll do whatever you say." She went out to the place where Boaz was working and did what Naomi had told her. After Boaz finished eating and drinking and was feeling happy, he went over and fell asleep near the pile of grain. Ruth slipped over quietly. She lifted the cover and lay down near his feet.

In the middle of the night, Boaz suddenly woke up and was shocked to see a woman lying at his feet. "Who are you?" he asked.

"Sir, I am Ruth," she answered, "and you are the relative who is supposed to take care of me. So spread the edge of your cover over me."

Boaz replied: "The Lord bless you! This shows how truly loyal you are to your family. You could have looked for a younger man, either rich or poor, but you didn't. Don't worry, I'll do what you have asked. You are respected by everyone in town. It's true that

I am one of the relatives who is supposed to take care of you, but there is someone who is an even closer relative. Stay here until morning, then I will find out if he is willing to look after you. If he isn't, I promise by the living God to do it myself. Now go back to sleep until morning."



### Think about

- *Why does Ruth look for a husband?*
- *How does she go about it?*
- *Why is Boaz attracted to Ruth?*



### Discuss

- *Many men and women think they can solve their residency problems through marriage, sometimes encouraged by their family. Can Ruth's story help us to think about this question?*
- *Think also about situations with which you are familiar.*
- *Evaluate the pros and cons. Put yourself in the position of the spouse.*



### Pray, using verse 12

*"You are respected by everyone in town. It's true that I am one of the relatives who is supposed to take care of you..." A respected person? This is someone who does not betray someone else's trust: with God's help!*



### Go a step further

- *Read the book of Ruth.*
- *See also passages 4 and 14 in this brochure.*



## ACT SHREWDLY

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Step 4

20 LUKE 16:1-8

• In this surprising story, Jesus encourages his disciples to show intelligence and even shrewdness in their relationships with others.

Jesus said to his disciples: A rich man once had a manager to take care of his business. But he was told that his manager was wasting money. So the rich man called him in and said, "What is this I hear about you? Tell me what you have done! You are no longer going to work for me." The manager said to himself, "What shall I do now that my master is going to fire me? I can't dig ditches, and I'm ashamed to beg. I know what I'll do, so that people will welcome me into their homes after I've lost my job."

Then one by one he called in the people who were in debt to his master. He asked the first one, "How much do you owe my master?" "A hundred barrels of olive oil," the man answered. So the manager said, "Take your bill and sit down and quickly write 'fifty'." The manager asked someone else who was in debt to his master, "How much do you owe?" "A thousand sacks of wheat," the man replied. The manager said, "Take your bill and write 'eight hundred'." The master praised his dishonest manager for looking out for himself so well. That's how it is! The people of this world look out for themselves better than the people who belong to the light.

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Step 4



### Think about

- What threat does the dishonest servant face?
- What solution does he find?
- Why does the master commend him?



### Discuss

- How can this story be useful in your situation?
- Does it remind you of situations that you have faced?
- What is the difference between shrewdness and dishonesty?



### Pray, using verse 8

*"The people of this world look out for themselves better than the people who belong to the light."  
Let me be as clever and intelligent in serving others as I am in taking care of myself!*



### Go a step further

- Read Luke 16 to 19.





Are all means acceptable?

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Step 4

21 MATTHEW 7:7-14

- Jesus recommends seeking God's help and trusting in His goodness. He also invites everyone to think about their choices in life.

## KNOCK AT THE RIGHT DOOR

Jesus continued: Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. Everyone who asks will receive. Everyone who searches will find. And the door will be opened for everyone who knocks. Would any of you give your hungry child a stone, if the child asked for some bread? Would you give your child a snake if the child asked for a fish? As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give good things to people who ask. Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about.

Jesus continued: Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it.

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Step 4



### Think about

- When Jesus says to ask or to knock at the door, what is he referring to?
- Why does he use the example of parents and their children?
- What is the connection between asking for yourself and acting on behalf of others?
- What are the two paths that Jesus describes?



### Discuss

- When you arrived in a new place, what doors did you knock on?
- Have you received any answers to your prayers?
- In your situation, who are the "others"?
- What do these two paths, the easy one and the difficult one, represent to you?



### Pray, using verse 7

"Knock, and the door will be opened for you."  
God hears me when I knock at His door.



### Go a step further

- Read Matthew 5 to 7 (especially 7:21-29).



Are all means

acceptable?

58

Step 4



“ I look to the hills!  
Where will I find help?  
It will come from the Lord,  
Who created the heavens and the earth.  
The Lord is your protector,  
And he won't go to sleep.  
On let you stumble.  
The protector of Israel doesn't doze  
On even get drowsy.  
The Lord is your protector,  
There at your right side  
To shade you from the sun.  
You won't be harmed  
By the sun during the day  
On by the moon at night.  
The Lord will protect you  
And keep you safe from all dangers.  
The Lord will protect you  
Now and always whenever you go.”

Psalm 121

59

Step 4

## PRAYER

**A**ll our hope has crumbled,  
We have lost our savings,  
Even human life is worth nothing.  
What is your response to that, oh God?

Now!

Tell us, God, what you intend to do with all that!

*P. Mookan, Sri Lanka*

**O**h God my Father,  
I come to you  
Through your Son Jesus Christ,  
He who was a foreigner like me,  
tempted like me, but who overcame evil.  
I beg for your mercy and forgiveness. All these  
years I've been searching for success, using all  
means possible to satisfy my own pride and  
lustful greed and to make a name for myself.  
Touch me with your grace today, and make me an  
instrument of your peace.  
Where I used to plant thorns of wickedness and  
despair, give me the strength to sew flowers of  
goodness and hope.  
Where selfishness took root, may I cultivate  
kindness and tolerance.  
Consume my hypocrisy and my lies,  
Make me humble and be my protector!

*Xavier, Madagascar*

## STEP 5

# FINDING A PLACE TO SETTLE

**E**ven after arriving in a new country, we still have to find a place to settle. The Bible gives several indications of how to integrate successfully.

We are all asked to be concerned for the good of the country where we live: to act for the good of all and not just in our own interests; pray for the authorities and for the whole of society.

It is important to remain faithful to God, and to try to meet with other believers.

**H**ERE I AM, AT YOUR DOOR,  
My brother and my sister,  
Friend of all people of every race and every tongue,  
You who rub shoulders with Timour, Kofi and Nguyen,  
You who love Fanta and the music and flavours of his country,  
Oh you my brother  
Who have perhaps known the joys and sorrows of exile,  
Here I am, at your door.  
Just like Mary, Joseph and Jesus fled the massacre ordered by Herod,  
I have come to hide my life in the tender towns of your country:  
Where I come from, the doors had all closed,  
I had become a stranger in the land where I was born...  
So I've come to find shelter in the land where you grew up  
To start a new life, along with my family:  
Over there, in the land of my ancestors,  
My only outlook was misery...  
And now here I am, at your door.  
Like Ruth who left her country  
To start a new life elsewhere,  
Please allow me to glean a few husks,  
Just enough to feed my family.  
Here I am at your door, my brother, my sister:  
Neither you nor I wanted it to be this way,  
But here we are, given to one another...  
Just as Joseph, when he was a slave in Egypt,  
Used his wisdom to serve the country of his adoption,  
I want to use all my talents to serve the country that has accepted me.  
Let me give you all that I am.  
Let me become your brother, your sister.

*Ruth, Congo*



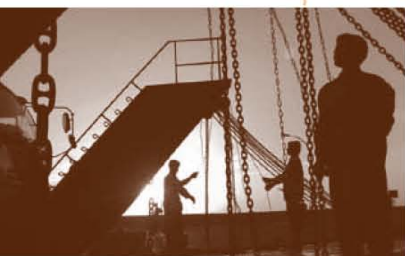
## PARTICIPATE IN THE COUNTRY'S PROSPERITY

62

22 JEREMIAH 29:4-7

• *The prophet Jeremiah, who remained in Israel, sent a letter to the Jewish people who had been exiled to Babylon by their enemies.*

In the letter, I wrote that the Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, had said: I had you taken from Jerusalem to Babylonia. Now I tell you to settle there and build houses. Plant gardens and eat what you grow in them. Get married and have children, then help your sons find wives and help your daughters find husbands, so they can have children as well. I want your numbers to grow, not to get smaller. Pray for peace in Babylonia and work hard to make it prosperous. The more successful that nation is, the better off you will be.



### Think about

- In this letter, what are the different things that the prophet, on behalf of God, suggests doing?
- Do you think that this message surprised those who received it? Why?



### Discuss

- Do you feel well established in your new country?
- We usually think first of our own happiness: how can you also contribute to the happiness of the country where you live?



### Pray, using verse 7

*"Pray for peace in Babylonia and work hard to make it prosperous. The more successful that nation is, the better off you will be."*

*Let me contribute to the well-being of my city and its inhabitants, and pray for them.*



### Go a step further

- Read Jeremiah 29 to 31.

## PRAY FOR EVERYONE AND FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY

63

23 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

• *In his recommendations to his student Timothy, the apostle Paul gives reasons to pray for others.*

First of all, I ask you to pray for everyone. Ask God to help and bless them all, and tell God how thankful you are for each of them. Pray for kings and others in power, so that we may live quiet and peaceful lives as we worship and honour God. This kind of prayer is good, and it pleases God our Saviour. God wants everyone to be saved and to know the whole truth.



### Think about

- What different kinds of prayers does the apostle Paul suggest praying?
- Is the goal of prayer only to make sure that our own life is peaceful and safe?
- What more does God expect?



### Discuss

- Why pray for others, and what can we ask on their behalf?
- Who are the "authorities" that we should be praying for?
- Do we sometimes find this difficult to do? Why?



### Pray, using verse 4

*"God wants everyone to be saved and to know the whole truth."*

*God's love is limitless: many others are still being called to discover it!*



### Go a step further

- Read Romans 13:1-10.



## JOIN A FAITH COMMUNITY

They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.

Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.

• *This passage describes the very first group of Christians, who had received the Holy Spirit. It shows how they lived together as believers, based on the principle of sharing everything.*



### Think about

- What different activities do these Christians practise?
- What does "breaking bread" mean?
- Why do you think that everyone likes them?

### Discuss

- In the country where you live, are the praying communities that you are familiar with active and appreciated?
- What can you receive by gathering to pray there?
- What can you contribute to other believers?

### Pray, using verse 42

"...they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together." Experience fellowship with other believers: each one can both give and receive.



### Go a step further

- Read Acts 1 and 2.

## BE ACTIVE AND FAITHFUL TO GOD

Then on the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to a place by the river, where we thought there would be a Jewish meeting place for prayer. We sat down and talked with the women who came. One of them was Lydia, who was from the city of Thyatira and sold expensive purple cloth. She was a worshipper of the Lord God, and he made her willing to accept what Paul was saying. Then after she and her family were baptized, she kept on begging us, "If you think I really do have faith in the Lord, come and stay in my home." Finally, we accepted her invitation.

25 Acts 16:13-15

• *This story takes place in the city of Philippi, an important Roman colony. The apostle Paul stopped by there and met Lydia, a foreigner who had settled there.*



### Think about

- What does the passage teach us about this woman, Lydia: her work, her background, her religion, her personality?
- What does Lydia receive from Paul? What does Paul receive from Lydia?
- Do you think that Lydia is well integrated into the society where she lives?

### Discuss

- Does the story of Lydia bring to mind any women that you know?
- Is there a connection between our faith in God and our success in life?

### Pray, using verse 15

"Then after she and her family were baptized, she kept on begging us, 'If you think I really do have faith in the Lord, come and stay in my home.'" Stay close to the Lord, and practise hospitality.

### Go a step further

- Read Acts 15:36 to 18:23.



## SUCCESS IN SPITE OF DIFFICULTIES

66

26 GENESIS 39:1-12, 19-23

• *Joseph has an eventful life: sold into slavery by his brothers, he is able to integrate into Egyptian society and serves in increasingly important positions. He also faces false accusations. Later, Joseph becomes Pharaoh's highest counsellor.*

The Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, the king's official in charge of the palace guard. So Joseph lived in the home of Potiphar, his Egyptian owner. Soon Potiphar realized that the Lord was helping Joseph to be successful in whatever he did. Potiphar liked Joseph and made him his personal assistant, putting him in charge of his house and all his property. Because of Joseph, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's family and fields. Potiphar left everything up to Joseph, and with Joseph there, the only decision he had to make was what he wanted to eat.

Joseph was well-built and handsome, and Potiphar's wife soon noticed him. She asked him to make love to her, but he refused and said, "My master isn't worried about anything in his house, because he has placed me in charge of everything he owns. No one in my master's house is more important than I am. The only thing he hasn't given me is you, and that's because you are his wife. I won't sin against God by doing such a terrible thing as this." She kept begging Joseph day after day, but he refused to do what she wanted or even to go near her.

One day, Joseph went to Potiphar's house to do his work, and none of the other servants were there. Potiphar's wife grabbed hold of his coat and said, "Make love to me!" Joseph ran out of the house, leaving her hanging on to his coat.

*After this, Potiphar's wife takes her revenge by making false accusations to her husband concerning Joseph.*

67



### Think about

- What are Joseph's successes? What difficulties does he go through?
- How does he react?
- What are the signs indicating that the Lord is with him?
- Why do Joseph's superiors trust him?



### Discuss

- When we face difficulties, does that mean that God is not with us?
- How do we react?
- Should we seek success? How can our success also be used to serve others?



### Pray, using verse 21

*"...the Lord helped him and was good to him."  
True success: experiencing God's goodness in my life.*



### Go a step further

- Read Genesis 37 to 41.
- See also passages 2 and 28 in this brochure.



Potiphar became very angry and threw Joseph in the same prison where the king's prisoners were kept.

While Joseph was in prison, the Lord helped him and was good to him. He even made the jailer like Joseph so much that he put him in charge of the other prisoners and of everything that was done in the jail. The jailer did not worry about anything, because the Lord was with Joseph and made him successful in all that he did.

**F**rom this foreign land I call to you,  
 Lord.  
 You are the one  
 Who led me to leave my country;  
 You guided me towards another people,  
 Taking care of me every step of the way.  
 You led me far away from the noise of war,  
 And kept me safe,  
 You dried my tears and gave me rest.  
 Far away from my family and my homeland,  
 I thought I'd never find peace...  
 But you came and comforted me,  
 And took away my fears.  
 You are the same God in every country,  
 You are the faithful friend of exiles  
 And those who are suffering,  
 You showed me your love  
 Through those who were kind to me.  
 Even though I'm far away from home,  
 I found a new family and a new life  
 Under your watchful eye and loving care.  
 So from this foreign land,  
 Which has become my country,  
 I call to you, my God, and give you thanks.

*Ruth, Congo*

“You led me far away  
 From the noise of war,  
 And kept me safe,  
 You dried my tears  
 And gave me rest.”



**D**ear Lord, every morning I place the day in your hands.  
 I ask you to show me someone with whom I can share your love.

I pray for my family, my neighbours, and for the country where I now live, especially for the young people here. I pray too for my country, and for those who stayed behind: my brother, my sister, and my father. I know you're protecting them over there, just as you've protected me here. We left our country six years ago. The promise you made to Joshua is still true for us today: "I will give you every piece of ground you walk on." (Joshua 1:3)

Lord, you know why I'm here, and you're taking care of me. You've blessed me with two wonderful children. We have a house to live in, and we're free to meet new people and share your love with them.

Nevertheless, there are many problems in my life and in the lives of those around me. Help me, Lord, not to be overcome by them. Help me to keep my eyes on you and to trust you completely.

Lord God, I thank you for everything. You are good, and you welcome everyone who comes to you.

*Nasit, Ivory Coast*





## STEP 6

# IS A RETURN POSSIBLE?

**W**e never forget our country of birth; nor our family, whom we always miss when we're far away. Forgetting would mean denying a whole part of our life and roots. This attachment still leads many people to want to be buried near their loved ones. Sometimes the problems that arise in the new country force a return. At other times, people choose to return voluntarily. Returning home can also be motivated by the desire to be part of our country's development, by offering our resources.

**F**ROM FAR AWAY, WE SAW EUROPE as a "land of milk and honey" and as a safe haven against the plagues that tormented our beloved country. We came to work as cleaners in your homes, labourers on your farms, and workers in your factories and hospitals. We provide the workforce for your shipping industry. Our work is exhausting, often dangerous, dirty, degrading, discrediting and inhumane. Many of us are ill-treated, mainly because we are immigrants and our skin is a different colour from yours. But poverty, injustice, civil war, persecution, and the will to survive, forced us to leave our country and our people.

Unfortunately, we did not experience a warm Christian welcome. Instead, we are blamed for the economic crisis that your profit-driven society is experiencing. We are regarded as a plague that must be driven back and brought under control. So now we tremble in fear, not knowing what the future holds for us.

The only thing that keeps us going is the satisfaction of knowing that the money we earn helps our families to survive, and that one day soon we will be able to go home – although this idea seems more of an illusion than a dream as time goes by...

Deep inside, we burn with anger, pain and humiliation. Anger at our helplessness, pain from loneliness, and humiliation at having lost our self-respect. Many of us are caught up in the vicious circle of kneeling in front of toilets to clean them, and then kneeling in prayer to ask for the strength to continue doing so.

*Cesar, Philippines*

## HOMESICK

Beside the rivers of Babylon we thought about Jerusalem, and we sat down and cried. We hung our small harps on the willow trees. Our enemies had brought us here as their prisoners, and now they wanted us to sing and entertain them. They insulted us and shouted, "Sing about Zion!"

Here in a foreign land, how can we sing about the Lord? Jerusalem, if I forget you, let my right hand go limp. Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I don't think about you above all else.

Our Lord, punish the Edomites! Because the day Jerusalem fell, they shouted, "Completely destroy the city! Tear down every building!" Babylone, you are doomed! I pray the Lord's blessings on anyone who punishes you for what you did to us. May the Lord bless everyone who beats your children against the rocks!

27 PSALM 137

• This psalm is sung by Jews exiled to Babylon. In a country that they had not chosen, they proclaim their unflinching attachment to Jerusalem, which symbolises both their homeland and their religion.



### Think about

- How does the author express his nostalgia for his homeland? What is he afraid of?
- How does he feel about the country where he is living?
- Do you think he is still in exile?
- How do we interpret the angry outburst at the end of this Psalm?



### Discuss

- In facing difficulties in the country where you live, do you have negative feelings? What kind?
- If you miss your homeland, why is that?
- Do your memories correspond to the reality of the situation?



### Pray, using verse 4

"Here in a foreign land, how can we sing about the Lord?"  
Keep the faith, and sing for God even in exile.



### Go a step further

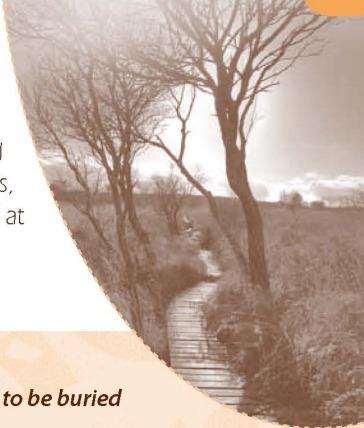
- Read Isaiah 60 to 62.

## WHERE SHOULD WE BURY THE DEAD?

The people of Israel made their home in the land of Goshen, where they became prosperous and had large families. Jacob himself lived there for seventeen years, before dying at the age of one hundred and forty-seven. When Jacob knew he did not have long to live, he called in Joseph and said, "If you really love me, you must make a solemn promise not to bury me in Egypt. Instead, bury me in the place where my ancestors are buried." "I will do what you have asked," Joseph answered. "Will you give me your word?" Jacob asked. "Yes, I will," Joseph promised. After this, Jacob bowed down and prayed at the head of his bed.

28 GENESIS 47:27-31

• Jacob emigrated to Egypt with his sons and their families. He was helped to settle there by his son Joseph, Pharaoh's highest counsellor.



### Think about

- Why does Jacob not want to be buried in Egypt?
- What responsibility is Joseph asked to take on?



### Discuss

- Is the place where you or your family will be buried important to you? Why?
- Does this choice have implications for others?



### Pray, using verse 29

"If you really love me, you must make a solemn promise not to bury me in Egypt."  
Respect the deep desires of each individual concerning death.



### Go a step further

- Read Genesis 49 to 50.  
See also passages 2 and 26 in this brochure.



## REBUILDING A COUNTRY

74

29 NEHEMIAH 1:1-5 &amp; 2:1-5

**Step 6**

• *Nehemiah is a well-placed Jew, an important civil servant of the king of Persia. He lives in Susa, far from his homeland. But the dramatic situation in Jerusalem leads him to return to his homeland.*

I am Nehemiah son of Hacaliah, and in this book I tell what I have done. During the month of Chislev in the twentieth year that Artaxerxes ruled Persia, I was in his fortress city of Susa, when my brother Hanani came with some men from Judah. So I asked them about the Jews who had escaped from being captives in Babylonia. I also asked them about the city of Jerusalem. They told me, "Those captives who have come back are having all kinds of troubles. They are terribly disgraced, Jerusalem's walls are broken down, and its gates have been burnt." When I heard this, I sat down and cried. Then for several days, I mourned; I went without eating to show my sorrow, and I prayed: Lord God of heaven, you are great and fearsome. And you faithfully keep your promises to everyone who loves you and obeys your commands.

During the month of Nisan in the twentieth year that Artaxerxes was king, I served him his wine, as I had done before. But this was the first time I had ever looked depressed. So the king said, "Why do you look so sad? You're not sick. Something must be bothering you."

Even though I was frightened, I answered, "Your Majesty, I hope you live for ever! I feel sad because the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and its gates have been burnt down." The king asked, "What do you want me to do?" I prayed to the God who rules from heaven. Then I told the king, "Sir, if it's all right with you, please send me back to Judah, so that I can rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."



75

Step 6



### Think about

- How does Nehemiah react to the news from his homeland?
- What worries him more: the living conditions of the population or the condition of Jerusalem?
- Why does he hesitate to speak to the king?
- What does the passage reveal about Nehemiah's personality?



### Discuss

- Do you feel concerned by what is happening in your homeland?
- Do you want to participate in its development?
- What is more important to you or your family: staying in your adopted country or returning to your homeland?



### Pray, using verse 5 from chapter 2

"Please send me back to Judah, so that I can rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."  
Let me be ready to help my homeland, and also the country where I live now.



### Go a step further

- Read the book of Nehemiah.



## GOING BACK TO OUR FAMILY

76

30 LUKE 15:11-32

Step 6

• *It gives God great joy when anyone comes back to Him. In order to show this, Jesus tells the story of a broken family, two brothers and their father: a story that ends in reunion.*



Jesus also told them another story: Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat. He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing. Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son." But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate.

The elder son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?" The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." The elder brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house. His father came out and

begged him to go in. But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

77

Step 6



### Think about

- What do you find surprising in this story?
- Why did the son leave his father's home?
- What events pushed him to return home?
- How is he welcomed: by his father, by his older brother?



### Discuss

- Do you think that this story is just talking about God's love, or also about family relationships?
- How does this story of the father and his two sons reflect your own experience? Where are you in it?
- Sometimes it is difficult to return to our family: how will our parents react, and our brothers and sisters who stayed behind?



**Pray, using verse 20:** "...his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him." Family ties can continue in spite of difficulties and tensions. God's love is even stronger!



### Go a step further

- Read Luke 14 and 15.



**M**y Lord, I think of those I've left behind in a troubled land. For now, it's too dangerous for me to go back. When I watch the news on television, I pray for my country and for the whole continent: that the people may live in peace.

I don't feel homesick... I know that wherever you lead me, I will make it my home. I think of the prophet Jeremiah, who encouraged those who had been deported to settle in and pray for the country where they were foreigners. Lord God, I know you are preparing me for the future – just as you prepared Joseph during his time of exile in Egypt. I'm not afraid to go back to my country. I've been through so many trials here in this foreign land, where I don't understand the language. Lord, I am willing to go wherever you send me and my family. You know what is best for me.

*Nanacee, Ivory Coast*



**F**ar away from you, my beloved country, my heart longs to come home. I pray night and day that one day all your children will be able to come home.

When I left you, you were covered in corpses, and the blood of the innocent flowed like rivers. These images haunt me, torment me, and I'm afraid to come back. How could I not be frightened, when you didn't even spare the children, the young people or the elderly? Their screams still echo in my ears.

Yet I'm sure that you will rise up again, and recover your charm and your dignity. Then you will welcome your children home with open arms.

All-powerful God, you who delivered the Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians, deliver my people from the hands of the devil. Give them pure hearts, filled with love for their neighbours.

I miss the beautiful hills, the birds that sing in different seasons, and the hospitality. I hope and pray that one day, things will be as they were before that fateful, murderous night that left so many orphans crying.

May peace, serenity and security return to your borders.

*Yvonne, Rwanda*

“When I left you, you were covered in corpses, and the blood of the innocent flowed like rivers. These images haunt me, torment me, and I'm afraid to come back.”



## STEP 7

# GOD IS CLOSE TO EVERYONE

**T**he Gospels tell the story of Jesus Christ. He lived like a foreigner in his own country. He had neither comfort nor security; and “no place to rest” (Luke 9:58). To help people know God, Jesus taught with words, but also by the way that He lived. He died as a condemned man, judged and nailed to a cross, even though He was innocent. The Bible affirms that God raised Him from the dead. For all who believe in Him, Jesus is the greatest sign of God’s love for humanity. Jesus not only offers everyone God’s forgiveness and salvation, but the Bible also says: “Jesus isn’t ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.” (Hebrews 2:11)

**I WAS BORN IN SOUTH VIETNAM**, and brought up in a Christian family by two wonderful parents who taught me to love and respect God. Following a terrible war in my country, the communists seized power, and my family suffered persecution as a result. I was eight years old when my parents decided to send me away. They put me on a boat with three of my sisters, and placed our lives in the hands of God, just as the baby Moses was placed in basket made of reeds (Exodus 2).

I was the youngest aboard this small boat. The crew had decided to set out in a storm so as not to arouse the suspicion of the authorities. We were lost at sea, thrown about by the huge waves. Supplies started to run out. And I could sense the panic rising among my fellow travellers. One child cried incessantly, and I remember trying to comfort him. But during that journey I never felt anxious or afraid, because I knew that God was with me.

Miraculously, we were rescued by a Thai fishing boat that wasn’t supposed to be in that area at all! We arrived in Thailand safe and sound and were placed in a refugee camp. Six months later we were granted permission to come to France.

I knew nothing about this new country or its language, and I was so far away from my parents I felt completely lost. The only hope I had left was God. I prayed every evening before going to sleep, and I cried a lot because I missed my parents desperately. I often had the same dream: about going home and finding the house empty. That reminds me of the story of Joseph when he was sold by his brothers.

One night I remembered a lesson I had been taught at catechism class: they told us that Jesus loved all children and wanted to be their friend. That’s when I started talking to Jesus and wanting to be his friend. I hardly ever missed one of those meetings with him. I also started reading the Bible. And in spite of all the pain and suffering, I had peace and hope in my heart. Jesus comforted me every day.

Today, as an adult, I still have the same free and easy access to my Father through his son Jesus Christ. His love and his presence have comforted, strengthened and made me who I am. I am married and I have a son. And the only thing I wish for him is that he comes to know Jesus Christ – because then, whatever he has to face in life, I know that he will be more than a conqueror in His name.

*Quoc Anh, Vietnam*



God is close

to everyone

## THE WORD BECAME A MAN

In the beginning was the one who is called the Word. The Word was with God and was truly God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. And with this Word, God created all things. Nothing was made without the Word. Everything that was created received its life from him, and his life gave light to everyone. The light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out. God sent a man named John, who came to tell about the light and to lead all people to have faith. John wasn't that light. He came only to tell about the light.

The true light that shines on everyone was coming into the world.

The Word was in the world, but no one knew him, though God had made the world with his Word. He came into his own world, but his own nation did not welcome him.

Yet some people accepted him and put their faith in him. So he gave them the right to be the children of God. They were not God's children by nature or because of any human desires. God himself was the one who made them his children. The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us.

### Think about

- How is Jesus described in this passage?
- Is he welcomed?
- What does he bring to mankind?

### Discuss

- Christians believe that Jesus was more than just a man. Through Jesus, God associated Himself with all mankind by coming to live our life. What do you think about this?
- Does Jesus' coming only concern Christians, or all of humanity?
- What does the title given to Jesus, "the Word", mean to you?

"Christ was truly God. But he did not try to remain equal with God. Instead he gave up everything and became a slave, when he became like one of us. Christ was humble. He obeyed God and even died on a cross. Then God gave Christ the highest place and honoured his name above all others. So at the name of Jesus everyone will bow down, those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And to the glory of God the Father everyone will openly agree, 'Jesus Christ is Lord!'"

• PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11

### Pray, using verse 14

"The Word became a human being and lived here with us." Jesus shared the life of humans: He understands all that I experience, deeply.

### Go a step further

- Read John 1 to 3 and Hebrews 4:14-16.

## JESUS IDENTIFIES WITH THOSE WHO ARE REJECTED

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32 MATTHEW 25:31-46

• *Jesus talks about a great judgment that is to come. We will all be judged on how we have treated those who are considered to be the least important.*

Jesus continued: When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all his angels, he will sit on his royal throne. The people of all nations will be brought before him, and he will separate them, as shepherds separate their sheep from their goats.

He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, "My father has blessed you! Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created. When I was hungry, you



gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick, you took care of me, and when I was in jail, you visited me."

Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, "When did we give you something to eat or drink? When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear or visit you while you were sick or in jail?" The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."

Then the king will say to those on his left, "Get away from me! You are under God's curse. Go into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! I was hungry, but you did not give me anything to eat, and I was thirsty, but you did not give me anything to drink. I was a stranger, but you did not welcome me, and I was naked, but you did not give me any clothes to wear. I was sick and in jail, but you did not take care of me."

Then the people will ask, "Lord, when did we fail to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in jail?" The king will say to them, "Whenever you failed to help any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do it for me."

Then Jesus said, "Those people will be punished for ever. But the ones who pleased God will have eternal life."

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### Think about

- Who is affected by this judgment?
- Make a list of the different behaviours that are praised by the King.
- Why are those who are affected by the judgement surprised?



### Discuss

- What can we learn about Jesus from this passage?
- Can this story help you change how you live with God and with others?



### Pray, using verse 40

**"Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."**  
**Jesus is the brother of those whose life is hard: He identifies with them and defends them!**



### Go a step further

- Read Matthew 25 to 28.



God is close

to everyone

## YOU ARE NO LONGER FOREIGNERS

You were living in this world without hope and without God, and you were far from God. But Christ offered his life's blood as a sacrifice and brought you near God.

Christ has made peace between Jews and Gentiles, and he has united us by breaking down the wall of hatred that separated us. Christ gave his own body to destroy the Law of Moses with all its rules and commands. He even brought Jews and Gentiles together as though we were only one person, when he united us in peace.

On the cross Christ did away with our hatred for each other. He also made peace between us and God by uniting Jews and Gentiles in one body. Christ came and preached peace to you Gentiles, who were far from God, and peace to us Jews, who were near God. And because of Christ, all of us can come to the Father by the same Spirit.

You Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners.

You are citizens with everyone else who belongs to the

family of God.

*In the early church, the new Christians, coming from different backgrounds, found it difficult to live together. For example, the Jews thought they were superior to others because they were God's chosen people. Today, there are still high walls that separate even those who believe in Jesus Christ.*

### Think about

- What were the differences between the Jews and the non-Jews?
- Why do you think there was a "wall of hatred" between them?
- Why does Paul put so much emphasis on the cross?
- What does he say about Jesus' death?

### Discuss

- Today, do you feel far from God, or close to Him?
- In your experience, have you ever felt a "wall of hatred" between you and others?
- How can faith in Jesus help destroy this wall?
- Who are the members of God's family?

### Pray, using verse 14

*"Christ ... has united us by breaking down the wall of hatred that separated us. Christ gave his own body..."*

*Only Jesus Christ can destroy the hate that is anchored in our hearts.*

### Go a step further

- Read Ephesians 1 to 3.



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33 EPHESIANS 2:13-19

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Step 2

Step 2





God is close

to everyone

## PRAYER

**L**ord, it's true that you are close to everyone. I worship and bless you, from this foreign land where you had already prepared a place for me. I thank you for sustaining me at all times and in every situation.

When I look back and see how you helped me cross valleys, mountains and rivers, I can truly say that you are Emmanuel "God with us". And my prayer is that my children, their children, and everyone who reads this letter, will know that there is no other God like you, who takes care after everyone who comes to you in need.

You placed generous people along my journey; you protected me from danger; you changed circumstances in my favour. You fed me even though I hadn't planted anything, and you clothed me even though I spent no money. In all my times of worry, fear and discouragement, you were always there and your gentle voice whispered these words: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:6)

You are totally trustworthy. You became man even though you were God, so that you could come close to your people. You live in exile when you were still in your mother's arms; you knew what it was to be hungry; you suffered injustice, betrayal, and death on the Cross. Thank you for making this incredible sacrifice so that we could come close to you.

I bless you my God, because I'm no longer a stranger, I've found a place to settle among your people. Teach me, Lord, to help the poor, to share, to love, to forgive. Bless all those who have opened their arms, their homes and their pockets to help those in need.

“ You became man even though you were God, so that you could come close to your people. You live in exile when you were still in your mother's arms; you knew what it was to be hungry; you suffered injustice, betrayal, and death on the Cross. ”

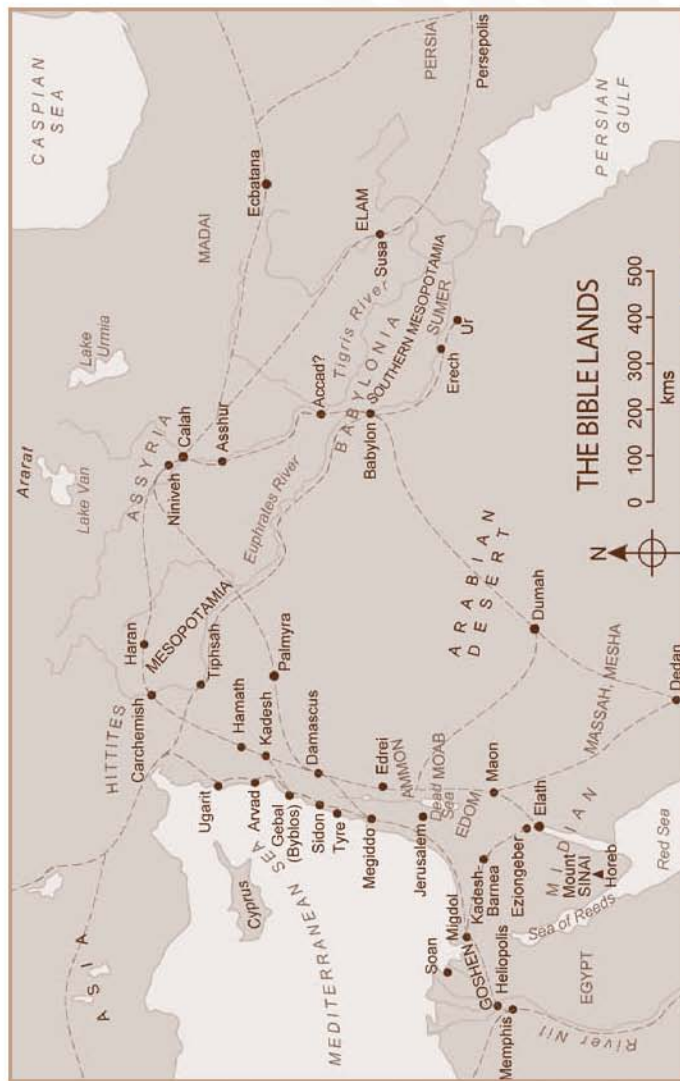




**So, rejoice!**

You are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens with everyone else who belongs to the family of God.

EPHESIANS 2:19



## A FEW WORDS OF ADVICE...

We hope this journey through the Bible has been an encouragement to you whatever your personal circumstances.

### Sharing with others

If you would like to deepen your knowledge of the Bible, we recommend that you get in touch with other Christians who will be able to help you.

Through reading the Bible you will discover God's desire to draw near to human beings, to show us his love and to be our guide. God's plan was completed in the coming of Jesus Christ. The Gospels show that Jesus reaches out to people from all walks of life, without ever rejecting anyone. He forgives sins, he heals the sick, and he teaches a new way of living. Christians believe that Jesus is alive today and that he continues to work through the Holy Spirit. He changes the lives of those who will receive him and brings them closer to God. When we become followers of Jesus we discover a new bond with fellow believers, who are now our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are no longer alone with our doubts and difficulties. We can share our problems and pray together, helping and encouraging one another.

### Combating prejudice

There may be many people in the country where you now live who are prejudiced against foreigners. This happens in all societies, including your home country. Prejudices of this kind often cause feelings of rejection.

Here are some examples of things you may hear: "Foreigners are invading our country and taking all our jobs"; "foreigners are given too many rights and they take advantage of our social support"; "foreigners are all delinquents"; "foreigners are too different from us to be able to adapt to our culture."

New arrivals can also be prejudiced: "The people here are racist"; "material wealth makes them selfish"; "they have no respect for God in this

“ When I saw him  
from a distance,  
I thought he was my enemy.  
When he came closer,  
I recognised a human being.  
When I shook his hand,  
I found a brother. ”

Tunisian proverb

society"; "elderly people are neglected, and children disobey their parents".

Behind these feelings of prejudice lie fear and a lack of trust towards people we don't know.

The best way to combat these prejudices is to go out and talk to each other, being ready to

enter into dialogue with an open mind.

Settling in a new country doesn't mean forgetting your identity or your culture. It means learning to know and respect another culture, other ways of living and thinking.

A migrant brings their labour skills to the prosperity of the host country, and they also bring the riches of their culture.

### Contacting specialist organisations for migrants

There are many problems when it comes to integration, and depending on the host country, the laws concerning immigrants can be very restricting.

If you are finding it difficult to legalise your situation or obtain your papers, or if you are experiencing problems in the areas of accommodation, health or work, we advise you to contact organisations that specialise in migrant issues. There is one in every major town. The counsellors will take the time to listen to you. They will then be able to explain to you what your rights are and help you

For further information,  
please contact us at the  
following address:







