



# REFUGEE BIBLE STUDIES

THIS 19 DAY SERIES OF  
BIBLE STUDIES EXPLORES  
OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO  
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS



Uniting Church. **Uniting People.**



# INTRO

## / SHELTER FROM THE STORM

### BACKGROUND

This study was created in light of the below resolution and purposes to aid the church in our fulfillment of our resolution. In these studies, originally designed to take us from January 8th to Australia Day, but suitable for any 19 day period, we use the Scriptures and "Shelter from the Storm" to consider our Christian response to those seeking refuge in Australia.

These studies will consist of a piece of Scripture followed by a paragraph from "Shelter from the Storm" and a reflection upon what has been read. They will take you around 5-20 minutes to complete depending on your reading speed and how much time you spend in reflection and prayer.

You will need a Bible to look up the readings for each day and we suggest that you use a notebook or a journal to engage with the questions and to write any reflections you might have. We suggest that if you do not have a copy of "Shelter from the Storm" you download the PDF from here: <http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/uca-statements/item/1105-shelterfrom-the-storm>.

### RESOLUTION

At the Presbytery and Synod Meeting of the Uniting Church in South Australia in November 2016 we resolved that the Synod:

1. Adopt the following statement:

"The Uniting Church in South Australia responds to the grace proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who himself was a refugee.

We are called to work with all our hearts and minds to love this refugee God.

We are called to express love and generosity of spirit to the world for whom Christ died, including the most marginalized people. We seek to love the neighbour who is different and welcome the stranger in our midst.



## RESOLUTION CONTINUED

1. (Continued) We implore civic leaders to reflect the deep values of South Australians, shaped by different nations and cultures, who seek to live in a world characterized by peace and goodwill. We therefore ask those leaders to embrace a spirit of compassion and concern for human dignity in their considerations with regards to Refugee and Asylum-seeker policy development."

2. REQUEST the Moderator, on behalf of the SA Presbytery and Synod, to make representations to the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader and South Australian members of Federal Parliament (both in the House of Representatives and Senate) expressing grave concern that the proposal (announced by the Prime Minister on 30th October, 2016) to ban refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru from ever coming to Australia and banning any refugee and asylum seeker arriving by boat to ever be granted an Australian visa, will result in:

- a. Increased likelihood of refoulement (return to place of danger and risk),
- b. Increased psychological stress on those refugee and asylum seekers currently awaiting processing and assessment of status,  
Increased distress to migrant communities in Australia, including members of the Uniting Church in South Australia, recovering from refugee experiences and associated trauma,
- c. Australia breaching Article 31 of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and subsequent recommendations by the UNHCR,
- d. Further punishment of victims of persecution and oppression.

3. AFFIRM the Uniting Justice document, "Shelter from the Storm" and commend it to Congregations and Mission Networks for further study and reflection.



# STUDY 1

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Isaiah 42:5-9; Luke 4: 16-21

## SHELTER FROM THE STORM

"Detention Centers" pages 33-34.

## REFLECTION

This passage from Isaiah is a beautiful one, showing God the creator who calls the people to righteousness, calling them to be a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind and to free the prisoners. Jesus takes this on as part of his personal "mission statement" in Luke 4. In our world today there are many people who are imprisoned, but often it is those who are wrongly convicted who truly stir our conscience. It is this issue that has stirred the hearts of many of those in Australia as we hear about the people, and in particular the children, who are in detention centers on Nauru and Manus Island.



# STUDY 1

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What most captures your interest from the Bible readings today? From Shelter from the Storm?

As we begin these studies, what do you know of the worldwide refugee situation and Australia's part within it? What do you think about refugees and asylum seekers coming to Australia?

What is on your heart and mind after the reading today? Spend some time in prayer for those things.



# STUDY 2

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:26-27

## SHELTER FROM THE STORM

See pages 22-24 for more detail.

## REFLECTION

In the Old Testament the Jewish people were commanded not to make any graven images of God. In fact, God had already made images. The creation of humans in God's "image and likeness" is the reason that other graven images were unnecessary and superfluous. They may lead to worship of these images rather than of the God who is creator of all. Yet it is after God's image that we humans are made, within the Christian tradition this image and likeness is the root of human dignity and worth. Every person in our world is made in the image and likeness of God, every human person holds worth and shows us a little of what God is like.

Each person is precious to our God, in whose image they are created, because of this the life and rights of each human person must be respected and each person must be treated with dignity, compassion and respect.



# STUDY 2

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What does it mean for you to recognize your own creation in the image and likeness of God?

What does the creation of all people in the image and likeness of God mean for how you might go about relating with other people today?

What do you know of the treatment of those seeking asylum in Australia? Would you say that they are treated as those created in the "image and likeness of God" ought to be treated?



# STUDY 3

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 42:1-5, 45:4-11

## REFLECTION

The story of the arrival of the Israelites to Egypt is often focused upon the relationship of Joseph and his brothers. While this is an important element of the narrative, there are also other factors that play a role. One of these comes in verse 2 of chapter 42. Due to a severe famine throughout the entire region there was no food. Joseph's family heard that there was grain in Egypt and plan to go to Egypt to get food and avoid starvation. They go to Egypt, get some food and then run out of food again as the famine continues. So they, once again, go to Egypt to buy grain. This is where Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers who sold him into slavery. He then invites them to bring the whole family to Egypt as there will be another five years of famine to come.

While this is often told as a story of God reuniting a family this is only one element, God has also taken Joseph and his family into a land that is new to them, a land that they have had to come into in order to escape starvation. They were invited to Egypt, yes, but they also had very limited options in the circumstances.





# STUDY 3

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What do you think were the choices that Jacob and his family had when they were faced with the famine?

Was it right for Jacob and his family to go to Egypt?

What would you say to those who seek to come to Australia because of similar circumstances?

Would you consider Jacob and his family to be “economic refugees”?



# STUDY 4

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Exodus 1: 1-14

## REFLECTION

When the Israelites first arrived in Egypt they were welcomed, but this changed after a time. The passage says that the Egyptians “became ruthless in imposing tasks upon the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field of labour. They were ruthless in all tasks that they imposed upon them.” The Israelites position in Egypt changed greatly, to the point that the sons of Israelites were commanded to be killed at birth, today this would be considered genocide. The Israelites are oppressed in the Egypt, which is the land in which each of them was born.



# STUDY 4

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

Imagine that you are one of the Israelites in Egypt at this time. How might you feel?

Would the conditions that the Israelites were under in Egypt make you want to escape that place?

What kind of distress might you be in if you were able to escape to a place of safety?



# STUDY 5

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Exodus 14:1-25

## SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Point 10, page 15.

## REFLECTION

When the Israelites are finally given permission to leave Egypt Pharaoh changes his mind and sends his forces out after them. The Israelites flee for their lives from Pharaoh's army and God delivers them. But where are they to go at this point? They cannot go back to Egypt, though many will want to over the next few years. They do not have a state in which they are citizens, they do not have a home. For the next forty years the Israelites will be homeless, wandering in the desert. In our world today there are many who experience statelessness, a homelessness of nation. While the Israelites did not need to worry about health cover or drivers licenses many stateless people struggle to gain access to identity documents or health care because they are not considered to be citizens of any particular nation.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states that each person has the right to a nationality. In Australia children born to parents who are asylum seekers are not given Australian citizenship, this policy leaves these children stateless. While their parents have fled, like the Israelites, they are now in detention in Australia and the new child is born into a place of uncertainty, detained with their parents with no citizenship in any nation, and, as such, without the protection provided by the government of a nation to its citizens.



# STUDY 5

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

Have you ever thought about the Israelites as being "stateless" before? How does this change or add to your understanding of the Exodus story?

Have you ever felt as though you had no permanent place to call home? How did it feel? (or how do you imagine that it might feel?)

Imagine what it might be like to be stateless and without the benefits you currently have. How would today be different for you if you did not have access to a bank account, government issued identification or Medicare benefits?



# STUDY 6

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

## REFLECTION

As Christians we are in the habit of giving. Each Sunday we engage in giving as we have our offertory within the service, it is how churches function, how we survive. But here Paul is speaking about a generosity that goes beyond the survival of our local church to caring for those who are in need. Paul reminds us of the incarnation, where God, in Jesus, became human. We are encouraged, as Christians to be generous in our giving. However, Paul points out that this does not equate to those who are giving putting themselves in the situation where they need help and relief because they have given so much, what he is arguing for is an equality. Oxfam report that in our world today 50% of the wealth is held by only 1% of people and the 80 richest people in the world have more wealth than the 3.5 billion people who make up the worlds poorest 50%. Equality is still a long way off. Often when we think of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers into Australia we consider what it might do for our lifestyle, we may need to give up some things in order to help others, yet this offering is one that we are called to make as Christians. We are called to give generously, so that there might be equality.



# STUDY 6

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

For some in Europe this generosity is shown by giving up part of their house in order to have refugees welcomed into the household. What might that generosity look like in your life?

What would equality look like for you and your family?

Australians have traditionally valued the concept of a "fair go." How would a sense of equality and generosity impact upon the way that Australians give refugees and asylum seekers a "fair go"?

How can you be generous today?



# STUDY 7

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 10:25-37

## REFLECTION

I heard the story of a minister who was preaching on this passage. He arrived at church and realized that he had left his sermon at home. Quickly he got into his car and drove home to pick it up. On the way back to the church he witnessed a car accident, not having time to stop he continued driving to church. As the passage was read before his sermon he realized what he had done, he had ignored a neighbor in need so that he could preach on helping a neighbor in need. When something horrific is happening our role is not to continue past, but to help where possible. Jesus calls upon us to love God and to love our neighbor. The neighbor to the Good Samaritan was "the one who showed him mercy" and Jesus tells the lawyer to whom he has told this story to "go and do likewise."





# STUDY 7

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What would it mean for you to consider refugees and asylum seekers to be your neighbor?

Jesus said that the neighbor of the Samaritan was "the one who had mercy on him." What would it mean for you to "go and do likewise" as a neighbor to refugees and asylum seekers?

What are you prompted to pray for in response to today's reading? Lift up your prayers to God.



# STUDY 8

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

John 1:35-42

## REFLECTION

Today our reflection is a little different. As Jesus walks past John the Baptist John exclaims "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" Two of John's disciples hear him say this and promptly follow Jesus, when Jesus realizes that there is someone behind him he turns to them and asks them what they are looking for. To which they ask him where he is staying. It seems to be a strange question doesn't it? It probably would not be your response if a person was to ask you what you were doing.

The fact is, where we stay is important. When we first invite a new friend into our home they are able to see a side to us that they may not have seen before, we invite them to look at where we stay and who we are. Sometimes we are embarrassed at the state of our homes; perhaps they are not as big as other people's homes, maybe they are messy or old. It is hard when the place we are staying is not a place that we have control over, perhaps you are renting and unable to properly hang pictures, or you live with a family member and cannot decorate as you would prefer. Where we stay is important to who we are. The ability to make a home is a primary aspect of being human. Many refugees and asylum seekers struggle to find a home in Australia, others are in detention and unable to make any sense of home within those facilities. Our home is often our refuge, but those struggling as refugees and asylum seekers to find refuge are often unable to find a home, a refuge, the very thing for which they seek.



# STUDY 8

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What is it that makes you feel "at home" in a new place?

Imagine that you are living in a refugee camp or a detention centre. How would that affect your sense of home?

Spend some time in prayer for those who, for whatever reason, have no home.



# STUDY 9

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Hebrews 13:1-3

## REFLECTION

Hospitality is not always easy. Some of us love to extend hospitality, to cook, to have people in our homes. Others find this experience very difficult. Hospitality can be especially difficult when we get to the point where we are just tired, if you have had friends or family staying with you for the Christmas season one year you can probably relate to this, at some point, you just want your house back. Here, Christians are called not only to show hospitality to those that we know and love, but also to strangers. Some in Australia, and many in Europe are hosting both individual refugees and families of refugees, they are extending God's hospitality in a very practical way, sharing their lives, their food and their homes. When we show hospitality like this we need to change the way in which we live for the sake of others, it is not an easy thing to do.

The author of Hebrews reminds the readers that of stories such as that of Abraham, who showed hospitality to those who turned out to be angels. Jesus reminded us last week, in our reading from Matthew, that it may be he that we entertain unknowingly



# STUDY 9

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

Do you enjoy showing hospitality? What do you enjoy, or not enjoy, about it?

People in Europe have had to make decision about inviting refugees to live with them, is this something that you might consider? Why or why not? What changes might you need to make in your lifestyle to allow this?

In Europe hospitality has happened both at the national and at the household level. What might you say to your local member to encourage them to show hospitality to refugees at a national level? Why not write this in a letter and send it to them?



# STUDY 10

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Ruth 1:1-5

## SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Point 7 – Page 13; page35.

## REFLECTION

Naomi and her husband, Elimelech left the land of Judah and went to live in Moab during a severe famine. Once again, in our Biblical narrative, people are forced to leave their land because they risk starvation if they stay. In their new home they raise two children who then marry local women. The uncertainty many of those on Temporary Protection Visas have makes settling down in a new location very difficult. Often they are unable to access housing support or participate in the workforce to support themselves and their families, this uncertainty can have significant impact upon the mental health of those people holding Temporary Protection Visas.



# STUDY 10

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What might have been different about Naomi's story if she had been holding a Temporary Protection Visa while in Moab?

Have you had to deal with times of great uncertainty in your life? How did it impact upon you?

Are there people that you know, or that your church is aware of, who are currently holding Temporary Protection Visas in Australia? Can you think of a way that you might be able to encourage and support them?

Spend some time in prayer for those facing times of upheaval and uncertainty.



# STUDY 11

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Leviticus 19:33-34

## SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Point 1, page 6-7.

## REFLECTION

God is one who hates hypocrisy. Here God tells the people of Israel to be sure not oppress foreigners who reside in the land but to love them as the love themselves and to remember that they were slaves in Egypt. This is not only about how we engage with those who seek to enter our land, but about how we treat those who are in it. How do we go about making sure that we are not oppressing those who have already entered Australia as refugees and asylum seekers in order to make it a more welcoming place? Many refugees who are granted residency in Australia have previous experience in vastly different industries to the ones in which they are able to find work here in Australia, many others find that they are subject to racist remarks and comments.





# STUDY 11

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

Have you ever been in a situation where you have been oppressed in some way? What was it  
How would it make you feel to oppress another person in a similar manner?

Can you see any hypocrisy in your own life that you need to repent of?

Is there anything that you can do, in your life today, to help a person who may be suffering  
oppression on the basis of their race?



# STUDY 12

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

James 1:26-27

## REFLECTION

Have you ever met a religious person who spoke badly of others? Perhaps it was gossip, perhaps it was just a nastiness. Often the way that religious people are portrayed in the media is a like this, it is not a flattering portrait. In Micah 6:8 the prophet says "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." James takes much the same line in our short passage today. He encourages a religion that is pure and authentic, not saying one thing and doing another, but rather, caring for orphans and widows. James calls Christians to care for those who cannot care for themselves. In the ancient world widows and orphans had no way to care for themselves, women did not work outside the home and had no way to earn an income, orphans were not looked after by the government and had no place within the society. Caring for orphans and widows was costly to those who cared for them, but it was the only way for them to survive.

As of December 2016 the UNHCR reported that there were 4,810,710 Syrian refugees, refugees from only one nation. Of these Syrian refugees three quarters are women and children.



# STUDY 12

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

Have you ever met anyone who was a child refugee? If so, how did they describe the experience? If not, what do you imagine it might be like for a child to leave their home and live in a refugee camp?

Have you ever been in a position where you have been unable to support yourself and needed to seek help and support from others in order to meet basic living requirements? What might it be like for refugees who have come from middle class backgrounds at home to suddenly need to rely on others for their most basic needs?

There are children being held within offshore detention centers at the present time. What do you think that James might say to us about caring for these children?

Spend some time in prayer bringing before God those seeking asylum or living in refugee camps.



# STUDY 13

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 25:31-46

## REFLECTION

It is a common plot twist – the character says something to a person not realizing their true identity. Perhaps it is the young girls angry words to a man she later realizes is a prince, or the man who hits on a woman only to discover that she is his new boss. Mistaken identity is a common theme, perhaps it is something that you have been through yourself. Here Jesus is reminding us that we never know who we might be welcoming or entertaining. We have already said that each human is precious, made in God's image and likeness. The way that we welcome people who we do not consider to be important shows who we truly are, rather than the face that we put on around those with influence. It is in caring for those who we are needing our care and love, we show how we are, loving our neighbours as we love ourselves.



# STUDY 13

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What are your initial thoughts when you read this passage?

Have you even suffered from a case of mistaken identity? What happened?

One of the ways in which Jesus is cared for is in welcoming the stranger. How might the idea of welcoming the stranger relate to the way in which we think about welcoming refugees and asylum seekers as a nation, but also as churches and individuals?



# STUDY 14

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 18:1-4

## REFLECTION

Priscilla and Aquila were friends of Paul and also worked as tentmakers. They are mentioned in a number of Paul's letters and were prominent Christians amongst the early Church. What we often forget is that Priscilla and Aquila were not travelling on missionary journeys in the same way as Paul, they had a home which they were compelled to leave. The Emperor Claudius ordered all Jews from the city of Rome, those who had made Rome their home were compelled to leave the city. Priscilla and Aquila were Jews and therefore left the city, they went to Corinth and met up with Paul.



# STUDY 14

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

In our present world we hear of people being forced to leave their homes or face violence because they are a religious or ethnic minority. What do you think is a good response to helping people facing these circumstances?

While there are many Christians facing persecution in our world today, there are also many other groups – cultural, religious and ethnic – who face similar persecution. What, in your opinion, is the appropriate Christian response for these different groups?

Many minority groups within Australia face racism and other kinds of discrimination on a daily basis. How do you go about relating with people who are different to you?

Spend some time in prayer asking God to reveal to you ways that you can have God's heart for people and see other people through God's eyes.



# STUDY 15

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Isaiah 9:1-7

## SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Assembly Resolution, pages 18-21

## REFLECTION

This is a beautiful passage that we tend to read in advent and around Christmas, but part of the joy within this passage is the justice that this Wonderful Counselor will bring to the nations. This child will one day break the rod of the oppressors and bring justice and righteousness forevermore. As ambassadors of Christ we echo the call for justice and righteousness and look forward to the reign of God in the world.

It is in this spirit that the Assembly resolution can be read – as the call of those who long for the coming of the Prince of Peace who brings justice and righteousness.





# STUDY 15

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What part of the Assembly resolution stood out to you? Why?

Were there any parts of the resolution that you disagreed with or found difficult?

What do you think that God's justice might look like within this situation?

Spend some time in prayer for God's justice and righteousness to be shown in the area of refugees and asylum seekers.



# STUDY 16

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 2:1-12

## REFLECTION

The arrival of the Magi to meet the new king of the Jews reminds us that this new king of the Jews, the baby for whom they seek, is not only special to the Jews but to people of all nations. Within his ministry Jesus did not tend to seek out gentiles, sometimes he ran into them and they spoke but at other times, such as in this passage, it is the gentiles who seek him out. Here it is the gentiles who see and follow a star, it is the gentiles who go in search of the new king and bring him gifts, and it is the gentiles to whom God gives a dream of guidance. For the Jews in that time this would have been an unexpected and surprising turn of events, but it shows us that God cares for all those in the world, not merely those who are in a special group.

As these men arrive and go to Herod's palace, the logical place to find a new king, Herod is afraid that his throne is going to be usurped. He pretends that he also wants to worship this new king when, in reality, he wants to stop any threat to his own power. Within our world the search for power and the quest to hold on to power causes any number of problems. Yet here is Jesus, the new king of the Jews, only a small child, no great powerful force that we can see – sometimes power and authority are found in surprising packages.



# STUDY 16

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What is your favourite part of this passage?

What do you think of Herod's conversation with the Magi?

Have you ever had a dream (or other experience) in which God spoke to you?

What does the arrival of the Magi mean to you?



# STUDY 17

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 2:13-15

## REFLECTION

Have you ever had to run away from something? It is an action that many people in our world have had to take, whether it is running away to flee domestic violence or abuse or perhaps running away, as Mary, Joseph, and Jesus did, in fear for their lives because of a king who wants to hurt them.

If you have not had to run away from something you may have heard stories of those who have. It all seems to happen very quickly for Joseph and his family. He awakes in the night from a dream, packs up his family and flees that same night. To flee is one thing, but to do it under cover of night, in the darkness shows us the level of fear that this family must have felt, the desire to leave quickly and to not be seen doing so.



# STUDY 17

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

Can you think of anything that might make you flee in the middle of the night?

How do you think that Mary and Joseph would have felt as they left Bethlehem that night?

Do you know any people who have made a journey like this? Have you ever asked them about it?



# STUDY 18

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 2:16-18

## SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Point 4, page 9

## REFLECTION

This is the less lovely part of the Christmas story. If we left this part out then Christmas could just be a wonderful time of year, but this passage reminds us that in struggles for power it is often the innocent who are hurt. Perhaps you remember the picture of young Alan Kurdi who drowned in the Mediterranean on September 2, 2015. The picture of his young body made headlines and brought international attention and response to the needs of refugees. Of perhaps you have seen more recent photographs and videos of children in Aleppo, Syria who are suffering the effects of bombings and the release of chlorine gas. It seems that when war affects children we are no longer able to ignore the issue. The birth of Jesus, the nature of his kingship over the Jews caused Herod to fear that he would lose his power and in his fear and anger he killed all of those under two in the town of Bethlehem; a horrendous and terrible part of the Christmas narrative.

Many children, like Alan Kurdish, flee with their families from the situations such as that which we see in Aleppo. After they have escaped from that danger Australia's current refugee policy places children in detention. As of August 31, 2016 ChilOut ([chilout.org](http://chilout.org)) reported that there were 49 children held in detention centers on Nauru with another 150 living on Nauru out of the detention centre. These children are subject to the same indefinite detention as their parents and, like their parents, under new laws will never be allowed to come to Australia.



# STUDY 18

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

What strikes you about this passage?

Did you learn anything new from Shelter from the Storm?

What is on your heart after the study this morning? Pray about it.



# STUDY 19

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 2:19-23

## REFLECTION

The story of the flight to Egypt and the return of Mary, Joseph and Jesus ought to bring to mind the story of the people of Israel and their time in Egypt. Once again, God's chosen people, albeit less of them, spent time in Egypt before returning to the Promised Land. Yet, while Mary, Joseph and Jesus were able to come back from Egypt after Herod's death this did not mean that they were able to go home, though Mary was originally from Nazareth the family had likely been in Bethlehem for a few years after the birth of Jesus, and set up a home of some kind there. The situation with Herod and his family now meant going back further into their past, and returning to Nazareth.





# STUDY 19

/ SHELTER FROM  
THE STORM

## PERSONAL REFLECTION/QUESTIONS

Have you ever had to move back to the place where you grew up? How was it? What was easy/hard about it?

How do you think it might have felt for Mary and Joseph to have to travel with a young child and set up new houses and networks in Bethlehem, Egypt and then once again, in Nazareth?

What do you think it might be like for people who are arriving in Australia for the first time to settle in and build a home? Is there anything that you might be able to do to help?

