



a million stories

Refugee Week
Devotional



1. Welcoming the Stranger

Scripture: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt”

LEVITICUS 19:34A, NIV

There is something deeply human about wanting to belong. To be seen, known, and welcomed – not as an outsider, but as one of the family. Yet for people from refugee backgrounds, this longing is often unmet. They arrive carrying loss and uncertainty, stepping into cultures that feel unfamiliar and, at times, unwelcoming.

God’s command in Leviticus is striking. It is not simply to tolerate the foreigner, nor even to show occasional kindness. It is to treat them “as your native-born” and to “love them as yourself”. This is radical hospitality.

Why does God ground this command in Israel’s history? “...for you were foreigners in Egypt.” In other words, remember who you used to be. Remember that you were weak, needed help, and couldn’t save yourself. God wants his people to let those memories shape how they treat others.



The Gospel deepens this even further. Spiritually, every Christian was once a stranger – alienated from God, without hope, and in need of grace. Yet in Christ, we have been brought near. We have been welcomed, not as guests, but as sons and daughters.

Sara was born in Iran into a Muslim faith family. However, when she came to Australia in 2018, she became a follower of Jesus. This meant she could not return to Iran without facing serious risk to her life. “God had given me the opportunity to seek him, and as he says, he will be found. I found myself going to my first Christian Sunday service ever in a Salvation Army Farsi corps. The following two months were so exciting! I was taught about Christianity, and all the missing links in my mind about God were found.”

Sara was granted asylum here and now sees herself in the Samaritan woman at the well – welcomed by God. “I relate to her as we both were considered ‘Gentiles’ or ‘unbelievers’ in the eyes of others, but the Lord sees lost souls. We both had broken hearts and were outcasts, facing social pressures as divorced women. We both left our cities to attend to our own business, but Jesus approached us to save us and minister to us. Both of our lives were transformed by Jesus and the living water he offers.”¹

Caring for people from refugee backgrounds isn’t an optional add-on to our faith – it’s a natural response to God’s love for us. When we welcome the stranger, we reflect the heart of God.

1 <https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/resource/2259/download/14/>



But this kind of love is costly. It was costly for Jesus and so it will be costly for his followers. It requires time, patience and humility. It may stretch our comfort zones and challenge us to think about things differently. Yet it is in these moments that we see the love of Christ.

The question is not simply, *Do I feel compassion?* but *Am I willing to act?* Who is the ‘foreigner’ God has placed in your path? How might you move toward them with intentional love like Jesus did with people such as the Samaritan woman?²

The church has a unique opportunity in a world often divided by fear and suspicion. We can be a community where refugees are not just assisted but embraced – where they find dignity, friendship and hope.

To love the stranger is to remember grace. And when we remember grace, we cannot help but extend it.

Prayer: *God of grace, God of hope, thank you for welcoming me into your loving embrace. Help me and your church to love the stranger and to extend your grace and hope to others – especially as we remember the refugees that you have brought to our country. Show me how I can reach beyond my circle of loved ones to welcome the stranger and the outsider.*

2 John 4



2. Seeing Christ in the Displaced

Scripture: “I was a stranger and you invited me in”

MATTHEW 25:35B, NIV

In this passage, Jesus identifies himself with the most vulnerable: the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned, and the stranger. What is remarkable is not just that he cares for them, but that he so closely identifies with them – that to serve them is to serve him.

“I was a stranger and you invited me in.”

Refugees are often unseen, misunderstood, or reduced to statistics. But Jesus says that when we welcome people who are in need, we are welcoming him.

This reshapes everything. Compassion is not just an idea; it is deeply personal. It is a way of worshipping God.

Notice also how simple it is: “you invited me in”. It does not require lots of resources or skills. It begins with openness – a willingness to make space in our lives and hearts.

But why is this so difficult? Often, it is fear. Fear of things that are different, hard or unknown. Yet “perfect love casts out fear.”³ As we understand more of Christ’s love for us, we become braver to reach out and love others.

3 1 John 4:18 (NKJV)

There is also a temptation to distance ourselves, to assume that caring for refugees is someone else's responsibility – governments, organisations or 'experts'. But Jesus speaks to individuals. He speaks to us.

What would it look like to take this seriously? It might mean building friendships across cultural lines, supporting local refugee ministries, or simply listening to someone's story with empathy and respect.

Manrhing was born in 1970 and fled Myanmar in 2001. He lived as a refugee in India for a decade and experienced hardship, loss and rejection. He drifted away from faith into drugs and addiction. He was then allowed to migrate to Australia in 2013 and God has brought him back to faith, and life with a Salvation Army corps. He says, "I pray that, through offering care and hospitality, I can share the Gospel. I want others to know about Jesus' love, care and salvation."⁴

Importantly, Jesus does not say, "I was a stranger and you solved all my problems." He says, "you invited me in." Faithfulness is measured not by grand achievements but by loving presence. Manrhing wants to offer care and hospitality to others – a loving presence, just as he experienced.

According to Matthew 25, one day we will stand before Christ, and we may be surprised to discover that we met him in the faces of those we least expected.

4 <https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/resource/2259/download/7/>



Refugees are not interruptions to our lives; they are invitations – to encounter Christ, to reflect his love and to participate in his redemptive work.

Prayer: *God of love, God of compassion, help me to see your face in the lives of those around me – especially in those who are vulnerable in our community. Help me to see all people as made in your image, and to open my heart and home to others – remembering that to serve them is to serve you. Let me show others the love and compassion you have shown me.*



3. God's Heart for the Vulnerable

Scripture: "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing"

DEUTERONOMY 10:18, NIV

God's character is revealed in his actions. Here, we see something unmistakable: God defends, God loves, God provides.

Among those God highlights for his love and care are "the foreigner residing among you." People with refugee experience fall within this category – those who are far from home, often without protection or provision.

This verse tells us that not only does God notice them, he actively cares for them. He defends their cause. He meets their needs. He loves them.

Tresor Bikorimana came to Australia in 2018. He tells of his father being shot twice in the stomach in the civil war in his home country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His father was taken by helicopter to a hospital in neighbouring Burundi. After being healed his father prayed, "God, by your will, help me pay the bills of my treatment." God answered his prayer by sending someone who gave his father a cheque that was equal to the entire bill, saying that God told them to do so.



God then brought Tresor's mother to a refugee camp in Burundi where the family was reunited. They then travelled safely to Australia where Tresor found work with The Salvation Army. He is very conscious of God's love, provision and care for his family.⁵

When we follow Jesus, we want to care about the things he cares about. So, the question is not just, "Is refugee care important?" but "How central is it to the heart of God?"

Too often, we put our faith in boxes and separate belief from action. But Scripture consistently brings them together. To know God is to become like him. To love God is to love what he loves. We are to be his body on Earth, reflecting his love and care to the world.

And who does he love? The vulnerable.
The overlooked. The displaced.

There is also a challenge here. It is possible to be deeply engaged in religious activity while remaining indifferent to the needs of others. Yet God's concern for the foreigner suggests that true spirituality cannot be separated from compassion.

At the same time, this is not a call to guilt, but to grace-filled participation. We are invited to join in what God is already doing. He is already at work in the lives of people with refugee experience, and we are called to be his hands and feet, bringing practical help to those in need.

5 <https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/resource/2259/download/10/>



This might involve learning about the challenges faced by people from refugee backgrounds, correcting misinformation, or befriending people with a refugee experience.

But at its core, it begins with seeing. Seeing refugees not as problems to be managed, but as people to be loved. Seeing them as God sees them. When we align our hearts with God's heart, something changes. Compassion grows. And our lives begin to reflect the beauty of his character.

You might not be feeling that compassion today. You may be overwhelmed by the challenges of your own life. We all have those days. But God is at work in you and, over time, he will deepen your concern for others. He loves and cares for you, too – about the things that are happening in your life.

Prayer: *God of grace, God of mercy, who loves and cares for the vulnerable and weak. Help me in my own weakness. Come and help me to trust you and open my heart to the needs of others in our world. Help me to reflect your character and concern. Please protect the refugees of this world and help them to know they are loved by you.*



4. Remembering Our True Citizenship

Scripture: “But our citizenship is in heaven”

PHILIPPIANS 3:20A, NIV

In the book of Philippians, Paul reminds us that our ultimate citizenship is not in a country on Earth, but in Heaven. He encourages us to focus on our identity as citizens of God’s kingdom and reminds us that we are just passing through – on a journey toward our true home.

When we forget where our true citizenship is, we can become closed off, protective and resistant to those who are different to us, but when we remember it, we are free to love more openly.

Our heavenly citizenship calls us to reflect the values of God’s kingdom – a kingdom marked by justice, mercy and love.

The early church embodied this in remarkable ways. They crossed cultural and social boundaries, forming communities where diverse people found unity in Christ.

Today, we are called to do the same. In a world often divided by nationality and fear, the church can be different – a place where refugees are welcomed as brothers and sisters.



This does not mean ignoring the things that are complex or difficult, but it does mean that we bring love rather than fear.

Ultimately, our identity in Christ reshapes how we see others. We no longer define people by where they come from but by their shared humanity and their place in God's redemptive story.

To remember our heavenly citizenship is to live with humility, generosity and hope – and to extend those gifts to those who need them most.

As Christians, we can learn much from our Christian brothers and sisters who are refugees – who know their true citizenship is in a better home. They know what it is to be on a journey towards a better home – to live with hope, looking forward.

One way Christians can put these values into practice today is through programs that support refugees, like The Salvation Army's New Beginnings Project (NBP). NBP is a community refugee sponsorship program that enables everyday Salvos to sponsor a refugee family to settle in Australia.

If you feel God is calling you and/or your faith community to get involved, you can find information on MySalvos Toolkit: [New Beginnings Project](#).

Refugees are not outsiders to be kept at a distance but fellow travellers in a world that is not yet as it should be.



This perspective also challenges the way we think about security and belonging. If our ultimate security is in Christ, we do not need to cling tightly to comfort or control. We can risk loving others, even when it feels costly.

Prayer: *God of generosity, God of hope, help me to remember that our true home is with you. Transform my heart and shape my life to be more like Jesus – to show the values of your kingdom. May I live with humility, generosity and hope, and welcome others. May all those who have lost their homeland on Earth, find their true citizenship with you in Heaven.*



5. Acting Justly, Loving Mercy

Scripture: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”

MICAH 6:8, NIV

This well-known verse shows the heart of faithful living in three simple yet profound calls: justice, mercy and humility. Each of these speaks directly to us about our role in caring for refugees.

To “act justly” means to treat people fairly and do what is right. Refugees often face problems, are treated unfairly, and are taken advantage of. When we act justly, we speak up and stand up for them, making sure they are treated with fairness and respect.

To “love mercy” means something deeper. It’s not just about being kind sometimes – it’s about us becoming people who love showing compassion to others. It means looking past what you see on the outside to understand people’s stories.

And to “walk humbly with your God” anchors everything. We must remember that we have received grace, too. Humility keeps us grounded, teachable and dependent on God.



These three things work hand in hand. Justice without mercy can become harsh. Mercy without justice can become shallow. And without humility, both can become self-serving.

As we care for refugees, we can live these three things out.

Lope was born in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and came to Australia in 2010. “I started volunteering at a Salvation Army Family Store. I prayed and told the store manager that I needed a job. In 2020, I got a job as a shop supervisor. The store manager often invited me to events in the community and at the Cairns Corps.

I thank this amazing woman for her effective leadership in the community and caring for people like me. I call her ‘Boss Meri’, which is PNG Pidgin language for ‘Boss Lady’. I felt a sense of belonging at The Salvation Army Corps and became a soldier in 2023.”⁶

The store manager at the Salvation Army Family Store demonstrated mercy, justice and humility. She acted with practical wisdom and looked for ways to support and make a difference in Lope’s life – economically, relationally and spiritually. Caring for refugees involves responding to lots of different needs, some of them complex. But Micah 6:8 provides a compass. It does not give all the answers, but it guides us.

Are we seeking justice? Are we growing in mercy? Are we walking humbly?

6 <https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/resource/2259/download/13/>



Ultimately, this verse points us back to the character of God himself. He is just, merciful, and humble in his dealings with us. And as we walk with him, we are transformed to reflect his heart.

Refugees are not to be overlooked; we can live out the call of Micah 6:8 by welcoming them.

In a world that needs fairness and kindness, the church can show both. And by doing this, we show people God – who is perfectly fair and kind.

You may not know any refugees or know of any in your local community. If so, perhaps you could step out in your faith, contact a refugee association (like [Refugee Council of Australia](#)), and ask if you could help in any way.

Prayer: *God of justice, God of mercy, I confess that in a world longing for justice and mercy, at times I have failed to respond to the needs of others. I have too easily looked to my own needs. Grant me forgiveness and the grace to walk humbly with you. Help my heart to be tender and help it grow so that I can show more of your love and mercy for others.*