

Cultivating Christ-honoring transformation

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# GOD OUR PROVIDER

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Guided Bible Stories to Connect Women Refugees with the Gospel

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## A Bible Study Guide to Connect Women Refugees with the Gospel

All women have needs, but refugee women carry additional burdens that arise from their unique experiences. In order to effectively share the hope we have in Jesus Christ, it is important to talk with and listen to our refugee friends to learn where they are emotionally, relationally and spiritually. The intent of this curriculum is to provide tools to help you engage with refugee women about their needs using simple Bible stories that build bridges toward the gospel.

Refugee women have faced an enormous and often traumatic life change. Meeting them in their place of need with the Word of God offers them true hope in the midst of intense vulnerability and transition. Stories are a simple, easy and natural way to share information over a cup of tea or lunch. Most importantly, these stories can open opportunities to talk about Jesus Christ and lead women into a relationship with the triune God, the fullest and truest answer to all their needs. The Word of God is powerful and effective (2 Timothy 3:16). A woman's response to God's Word is a good way to measure how God is working in her life. This study offers a small collection of Bible stories that relate to some of the needs that refugee women face.

**This is a teacher's guide to help you, not a workbook for women you are sharing with.** The study is intended to help you steer conversations with your refugee friends toward spiritual things, particularly when they are opening up about their difficulties. We hope this resource will help you to minister to their needs and offer them new life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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**Notes:**

## This study covers four common refugee needs:

### Need for Community

- Ruth Ruth and Naomi
- Mark 5 Demon-Possessed Man

### Need for Security

- Genesis 3 The Fall
- 1 Samuel 17 David and Goliath
- Mark 4 The Storm

### Need for Stability

- Genesis 12 Abraham's Call
- Matthew 14 Peter on the Water

### Need for Healing

- 2 Kings 5 Naaman and the River
- John 11 Lazarus' Resurrection

Each section gives a brief summary of how the Bible addresses the need and provides two or three relevant Bible stories, selected from both the Old and New Testaments.

Each story has four parts:

- The **Bible Passage** reference for the story helps you quickly look up the passage as you prepare for your time to share with your friend.
- The **Basics** section gives an example of how to tell the story in simple language. You can use this as a template or simply read it to your friend. Using the example for preparation and then telling the story in your own words will more naturally build into conversation.
- The **Bridge** section provides theological reflection on how the story relates to a refugee's need and how the gospel can be shared through it. Keep this information in mind as you guide the discussion.
- **Bridge-building Questions** help direct your conversation toward the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Be prepared to ask questions like these to help your friend consider how the Bible story might be relevant to their situation.

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# Need for Community

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A pivotal part of a refugee woman's experience is her connection to community. We're made in God's image, and the need for community is a part of our DNA. But many refugee women are lonely and isolated. They suffer quietly while their basic emotional needs go unmet.

Therefore, bringing refugee women into a relationship with the triune God through Jesus Christ and into a new spiritual community actually meets their greatest need.

The Bible demonstrates that God doesn't want people to be alone. Through the incarnation God took on flesh to live in community with His creation. His name, "Emmanuel" (God with us), speaks of His relationship with His people. Ultimately, every answer to a refugee's need is based upon this primary relationship. True community is found in communion with the triune God and through the fellowship of believers.

*True community is found in RELATIONSHIP with God through Jesus Christ and in belonging to His family.*

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## Ruth and Naomi

**Bible Passage** Ruth 1:1-4:22

### Basics

Once there was a woman named Naomi. She had a husband, two sons and two daughters-in-law. Naomi was originally from the country called Israel, but she lived in a place called Moab because of a famine in Israel. Then great sadness came upon her family.

First, her husband died. Then, her two sons died. She was left with nothing. In that time, being a widow with no sons to take care of her made her the most vulnerable of all people. Naomi suffered greatly. When she heard that God had provided food in Israel, she decided to go back to her home country to see if she could survive there. She told her two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab where they could remarry and live among their own people. One of the girls did, but the other girl clung to Naomi and refused to leave her. This girl's name was Ruth.

When Naomi and Ruth came back to Israel, people couldn't believe it. Although she had returned to her homeland, Naomi was not happy. She told everyone to call her Mara, which meant "bitter." She and Ruth were very poor, and they needed food. God knew the needs of Naomi and

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Ruth. God cares for the poor. God already had a plan to help them. He would give them another family and restore their dignity among the people.

One day, Ruth went to the fields to pick up grain left behind from the harvest. The field Ruth came to was owned by one of Naomi's relatives. This man could help them, and could also marry Ruth and bring honor back to the family of Naomi. This man's name was Boaz. There were several obstacles to Ruth and Boaz getting married, but God worked through it all. They were wed and had a son, who was the grandfather of the future king of God's people, David, and an ancestor of Jesus.

God took care of the lonely widow Naomi by providing her with a new family through her widowed daughter-in-law. God took care of both widows by bringing them back into a community. God takes care of the lonely and oppressed and desires to bring them into a family: the richest family of all, the community of believers.

## Bridge

The story of Ruth reveals more about God's heart for the refugee and stranger than almost any story in Scripture. God places immeasurable value upon all people, as demonstrated by his care for the widow Naomi and the foreigner Ruth. God delights in providing for the lonely and oppressed. Most importantly, God sees the needs of refugees and desires to take care of them through the community of believers. God wants people to be restored to community. He loves and cares for those who have no one to love and care for them. As he did for Naomi and Ruth, He longs to redeem and usher them into a community marked by joy. When the Church is loving God and neighbors as it should, the truest form of this community is found in the family of believers.

## Bridge-building Questions

- When you are lonely, who do you turn to?
- How have you seen God provide for you?
- How do you define family?
- How do you become part of God's family?

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## Notes:

# The Demon-Possessed Man

**Bible Passage** Mark 5:1-20

## Basics

One day Jesus and His disciples arrived on the shore of a lake. Among the rocks lived a man possessed by a demon. The demon was very violent and tormented the man. Not even chains could hold him down! Eventually the demon drove the man away from everyone: his family, his friends, his community. He lived a lonely life among the tombs.

When Jesus came to the shore and saw the man, He commanded the demon to come out of the man. But the demon yelled at Jesus to leave him alone. He begged Jesus not to torture him. The demon said, "What do you want with me, Son of the Most High God?" Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" The demon replied, "Legion, for we are many."

There were pigs nearby, so the demons said, "Send us into the pigs." Jesus gave them permission, so the demons left the man and went into the pigs. Then the pigs ran down the side of a cliff into the lake. The pigs drowned, but the man was now himself again!

But when the townspeople saw what happened, they didn't care that the man was better. They cared only about their lost pigs. They wanted Jesus to go. But Jesus cared for the man. When the man asked if he could come with Jesus and the disciples, Jesus told him to return to his family and tell the whole town what Jesus had done for him. So the man returned home. Jesus had restored him to his family, and the man made Jesus famous throughout the whole town.

## Bridge

This story is relevant to the need for community because it demonstrates God's heart for the oppressed, the vulnerable and the lonely. In this case, Jesus restored a man who had been shut out of his community because of the demons that tortured him. God is able to transform brokenness, and this includes bringing people back into healed and healthy relationships.

Jesus also healed this man so that Jesus' name would be made known within the man's community. God restores the lonely for the sake of His glory. This man went from a solitary life to one lived in community and full of purpose as a witness of Jesus' power to deliver. When our refugee friends feel isolated and alone, we can remind them that Jesus sees them. We can remind them that by bringing people into their lives to love them, God is already meeting their need. This provides a great opportunity to share why you think God brought you into their lives.

## Bridge-building Questions

- How do you see God taking care of you through relationships right now?
- Why does God love the lonely?
- How does God show His love to us?

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**Notes:**

# Need for Security

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Refugee women have often endured severe and life-threatening situations. They may be left feeling unsafe, unprotected and exposed. Many still carry deep-seated fear or suffer from PTSD. The lack of security they have experienced, whether through war or abuse, makes them some of the most vulnerable people on the planet. The Bible speaks of an abundance of men and women whose lives were at risk. But the Bible also demonstrates that while security in this life is not guaranteed, we are always guaranteed a secure and caring God and a strong future hope.

*True community is found in RELATIONSHIP with God.*

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## The Fall

**Bible Passage** Genesis 3:1-24

### Basics

In the garden of Eden, when God first created the world, there was peace. There was pure security. Adam and Eve lived their lives in the very presence of our loving God, the most secure place mankind has ever dwelled. But Adam and Eve were tempted by the evil one in the form of a snake. They rejected God's command and ate of the fruit of the tree they had been told not to eat. Everything changed.

The sin they committed completely destroyed the peace and security that they had known. Their honor as God's image-bearers was entirely lost, and they were ashamed. They became guilty of sin and unable to pay the punishment for their crime. They became hostile toward one another and were cast out of the immediate presence of God. All of their relationships were shattered. A world once marked by trust and love became a world marked by fear and blame. Adam and Eve hid from God and were afraid of Him for the first time in their lives. Their marital relationship broke down as well. Adam blamed Eve for his actions. Eve blamed the snake for tempting her into disobedience. Sin changed them and destroyed the security they once enjoyed.

Because of this sin and the broken world that has come from it, there is no security in our world today. Many people ask, "Why?" Why is there evil? Why is there suffering?

Since Genesis 3, the world has been thrown into chaos by people trying to rule over their own lives, ignoring and hating God and using others to cover their own shame, guilt and powerlessness. Insecurity isn't only caused by corrupt governments or evil people. It begins in the heart of each person.

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**Notes:**

What if there were an answer to this lack of security? What if something, or someone, could give you real and lasting peace? What if brokenness could be restored and honor returned?

## Bridge

The story of Genesis 3 engages the need of security because it explains the base reason WHY the world is an incredibly insecure and oppressive place. It allows us as Christians to demonstrate to our refugee friends that there is a reason for their lack of security. It provides a point of personal identification, because every one of us as humans lacks and craves the security that was lost. It sets the stage to demonstrate that the answer is found in a relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ, not in personal circumstances.

## Bridge-building Questions

- Is it possible to be totally physically secure in this world? Why or why not?
- Is a true sense of security found only in the absence of danger? What other things provide a sense of security?
- Are there things you do that add to the world's insecurity? Why or why not?
- How can we have security in the midst of an insecure world?

## David and Goliath

**Bible Passage** | 1 Samuel 17:1-58

### Basics

Security was lost on every side. The nation was at war. God's people found themselves in the middle of a long battle against a dreaded enemy with no success. Danger and fear surrounded them on every side. Their fate rested on defeating one gigantic man, the Philistine warrior named Goliath. If they lost to him, the whole nation would be enslaved by the Philistine army. But no one could overpower him. The threat upon their lives and their future stood right at their doorstep.

But there was one boy who could make a difference, not because he was more powerful, or stronger, or in better circumstances than everyone else. In fact, he may have been the smallest and youngest of all the men on the battlefield. His name was David. David could make the difference in the battle because his security rested in knowing his God, Yahweh, the God of the Bible. The strength of David's relationship with Yahweh was the foundation for his peace and courage. But others who did not trust God tried to keep David from fighting. The king of Israel told David that he couldn't defeat the Philistine giant because he was too young. But David knew his personal security and the security of God's people rested in the strength of his God, not the size of the army.

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Security, both in life and in death, is rooted and grounded in the person of Jesus.

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**Notes:**



With only a sling and a handful of stones, David went out onto the battle field. He destroyed the giant with one strike to the head. God delivered His people through David. David wasn't promised success. But he believed in the strength and power of his God. The confidence he had in the character of God is what made him secure.

## Bridge

The story of David and Goliath demonstrates a significant truth for all of us, but particularly for refugees: Our ultimate security and true safety is found in knowing and trusting a secure and safe God. Our relationship with God determines our peace and our rest, even in the face of terrible danger and fear. God does not promise that He will always keep us from danger (Daniel 3:17-18). But our relationship with Him, and a perspective that is rooted in His character, gives us true security and an ability to face chaos—and even the threat of death—with peace in our hearts.

## Bridge-building Questions

- How do you know you can trust someone?
- Is the God you worship trustworthy?
- How can you be certain you have a relationship with God?
- Can we look beyond our present circumstances and have security for the afterlife? How?

## The Storm

**Bible Passage** Mark 4:35-41

### Basics

The group of men who followed Jesus, known as His disciples, were traveling with Him in a boat. As they crossed the lake, a fierce storm quickly came upon them. They were very afraid. They thought they were about to die! But were they? One person in their boat was not afraid. He wasn't even worried about the situation. That was Jesus, who was asleep in the bottom of the boat.

The disciples could not believe that their master was sleeping at a time like this! Believing that Jesus didn't care about their situation, they woke him and asked, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" But Jesus did care. Jesus rose and spoke to the wind and sea, and the storm and the waves were calm.

Jesus knew why the disciples had been so terrified. It was not that the storm was so great or that their lives were in danger, but that they didn't truly believe Jesus was who He said He was. As He proved that He had the power

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of God by calming the storm, Jesus showed that He was both all-powerful and all-loving. Jesus cared deeply for His disciples. He wanted them to know that because He was God, with Him they had nothing to fear.

## Bridge

The disciples' relationship with Jesus demonstrates an important reality. When we are with Jesus, in a trusting relationship with the God of creation, our lives are secure no matter what dangers come our way. Security, both in life and in death, is rooted and grounded in the person of Jesus. His presence meant security in the middle of a storm. The disciples could also have slept while the storm raged, because they were in the presence of the living God. It is important to stress that while Jesus tells us we will face many dangers and times of pain, He also provides peace and true security in the midst of our troubles. John 16:33 says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." The answer is in Himself.

Our hope as Christians is found in the person of Jesus, who overcame both the world and death. We wait in hope of His second coming, the resurrection of the dead, the renewal of all things and life in the world to come.

## Bridge-building Questions

- When have you been afraid or anxious about a situation? What or who brought you comfort?
- Did that comfort last? Why or why not?
- Does peace depend on our circumstances? Why or why not?
- Where do you look for peace in the middle of danger and insecurity?
- Do you know God is with you? How?

**Notes:**

# Need for Stability

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Refugee women have undergone an enormous transition. Some have lived in three or more places before you ever met them. The process of relocating, especially across an ocean, puts a massive amount of pressure on the family, both financially and relationally. Refugee women crave a sense of normalcy, routine and stability for themselves, their husbands and their children.

The Bible is loaded with stories of people on the move. Instability is not an uncommon experience for humanity or for the people of God. God proves that He alone provides the sure foundation for our lives, now and for eternity.

*True stability is built on the strongest foundation: God Himself.*

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## Abraham's Call

**Bible Passage** Genesis 12:1-6, Hebrews 11:8-10

### Basics

There once was a man named Abraham. When Abraham was 75 years old, God told him to take his family and set out for a completely unfamiliar land that God would show him. God had a plan. He called Abraham to leave his home in order to create an entirely new nation and new kingdom that would be set apart to bring God glory among all the peoples of the earth. Abraham obeyed God. He became a man on the move, traveling all the way down to Egypt before he eventually settled in the land of Canaan, where God had called him to live. Life was not easy. He and his family were known as foreigners and strangers. But, amid the difficulty of living a nomadic life, Abraham kept his eyes on something greater than himself. He knew that God had an eternal purpose for his family and for the world. They had moved from one place to another in order to participate in God's greater promise: blessing the whole world through this one man, Abraham.

### Bridge

The story of Abraham shows that God is not afraid of changing people's lives in order to accomplish His greater plan. His greatest plan is that people from every nation would live in relationship with Him through Jesus. His gracious provision of salvation is the ultimate blessing given to the world through Abraham's family. God will use or allow instability in our lives so that we learn to rest upon the only strong foundation for our lives here and in eternity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Abraham kept his eyes on something greater than himself.

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**Notes:**

## Bridge-building Questions

- What are some ways that your life is in transition? How do you see God working in the midst of transition?
- What bigger purpose could God be accomplishing in your life through your move to a new place?
- When you think about your life now, is it stable?
- How can you have certainty and hope for your eternal life?

## Peter on the Water

**Bible Passage** Matthew 14:22-36

### Basics

One day, Jesus commanded His disciples to go across the lake without Him. As evening came, the winds blew hard, and strong waves tossed their boat violently. In the middle of the night, as they fought the waves, they saw something they did not expect. Through the darkness, through the waves and the wind, they saw Jesus walking on the water! At first they could not believe what they were seeing and thought that He was a ghost! They were terrified. But Jesus spoke words of comfort to them. He said, "Be courageous! It's Me, don't be afraid."

One disciple named Peter wanted to know for certain that this was Jesus. "If it is you," Peter said, "command me to come to You on the water." Jesus told him, "Come." Stepping out of the boat and onto the shifting waves, Peter began to walk toward Jesus! This was no illusion. Peter walked on the water! But when he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked around at the wind and the waves, he became terrified, began to sink and cried out for Jesus to save him. Jesus did not wait to help him. He grabbed Peter's hand right away and lifted him from the water. Jesus asked Peter one question: "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

When they returned to the boat, the wind stopped. The disciples knew that Jesus was no ordinary man. Only God could do what they had just experienced. Only God could walk on water, save Peter and settle the violent sea.

### Bridge

A trusting relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ brings stability to any situation. When we know Jesus, we know the living God who is both powerful enough and willing to keep us from drowning. But He does not promise to make our lives easy. Rather, He asks us to trust Him despite our circumstances. Jesus did not ask Peter to trust Him to stop the waves, but to trust that He would not let him drown in the midst of the storm.

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**Notes:**

A relationship of trust with the God who is able and willing to meet us in our needs is what brings us stability. When life is uncertain, unstable or thrown into chaos, the presence of Jesus offers the stability we seek. Like Peter, we can walk out onto the stormy seas of our lives, not because we are able on our own, but because Jesus' powerful presence gives us true stability.

### **Bridge-building Questions**

- When life is uncertain and unstable, what do you want the most? How do you get this?
- Who do you turn to when you need help? How do they meet your needs?
- Can you trust someone who does not have the power or the desire to help you? Why or why not? (Jesus has both the power and desire to save.)

**Notes:**

# Need for Healing

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The process of becoming a refugee—beginning with leaving an unlivable situation in a home country and ending with an enormous transition to a new home—makes emotional, relational, spiritual and sometimes physical healing primary needs. Women carry the burden of their family's transition heavily upon their shoulders, and often, they bear this alone. This need for healing is integrally tied to their need for community. The Bible is full of healings of various kinds: God meeting people in their greatest needs in order to restore their quality of life within a loving community, first in Himself and secondly with God's people. But the Bible also promises ultimate emotional, relational and physical healing with our future bodily resurrection and in the coming of the new earth. Present healing is powerful, but only a reflection of the future healing that will last for eternity.

*True healing is found through the resurrection power of God and the transforming work of His Spirit.*

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## Naaman and the River

**Bible Passage** 2 Kings 5:1-27

### Basics

There once lived a man named Naaman. He was a great warrior and well respected in ancient Syria. But he was sick with leprosy. One day he heard from a young girl that he could be healed if he went to see the prophet in Israel. With permission and a letter from his king, Naaman set out to find this prophet and be healed. First he went to the king of Israel, but the king did not know where to send him for healing. But when the prophet Elisha heard of Naaman's situation, he sent a letter to the king and asked that the man be sent to him.

When Naaman and his servants arrived at the prophet's house, Elisha sent out a messenger who told Naaman to wash himself in the Jordan River seven times, and his flesh would be made like new. Naaman was furious. This seemed too simple. He had expected to see the prophet come out and call upon the God of Israel to perform this miraculous healing. Why should he go to the Jordan River to be healed? We have better rivers in Syria, he thought.

But Naaman's servants approached him. "If the prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would have done it. Why not do this simple thing?" they asked. So Naaman went to the river and dipped himself in seven times.

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His flesh was fully and completely healed, and smooth like that of a child. The God of Israel had worked His power through the water to heal him. Though Naaman was a foreigner, Yahweh, the God of Israel, had worked on his behalf. Naaman knew that no other god could have renewed his flesh. He went back to Elisha and worshipped the God of Israel as the one and only true God.

## Bridge

The story of Naaman shows that we can only experience true healing when we come to the right source. Naaman needed to be healed physically, but he also needed to come to the right source for his healing: Yahweh, the God of Israel. In the same way, the source of our healing is always found in the living God. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He demonstrated that He always works for the life, light and ultimate healing of His people.

We're not promised that in this life we will not face hardships, or sickness, or famine or death. In fact, we may face all these things. But God does promise eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual healing and the hope of eternal life is only a taste of the fullness of healing that is promised in the future.

## Bridge-building Questions

- What do you hope for?
- How do you seek healing for the ways that you have suffered or are suffering?
- If you could be healed emotionally and physically forever, would you want to be?
- What do you think about eternal life?

## Lazarus' Resurrection

**Bible Passage** John 11:1-44

### Basics

During Jesus' life on earth, there was a family that He dearly loved. There were two sisters named Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus. One day, while he was traveling with His disciples, Jesus found out that Lazarus was terribly sick. Jesus waited two days before He went to the family. In the meantime, Lazarus died.

When Jesus eventually arrived in their city, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. The people were still mourning, and the sisters were overwhelmed by grief. Jesus came to Mary and Martha and comforted both of them in different ways.

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The source of our healing is always found in the living God.

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**Notes:**

Martha was the first to see Jesus. She told Him plainly, "If You had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die." Jesus comforted Martha by encouraging her faith in His power and reminding her who He is.

When Mary saw Jesus, she ran to Him and fell at his feet. She said the same thing as Martha: "If You had been here, my brother would not have died." Mary was crying, and everyone who came with her was crying. When Jesus saw this, His heart was deeply moved. Jesus cried. Everyone knew how much Jesus loved Lazarus. Requesting to see the tomb, Jesus came to the place where Lazarus was buried. No one could have known what He was about to do. "Open the tomb," He said. Martha responded with concern, "He has been dead for four days! There will be a bad smell." But Jesus insisted. As they took away the stone, Jesus prayed so that everyone who was watching would know that He was heard by God and sent from God. Then Jesus said in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come!" And the man who had been dead for four days came out of the tomb.

## Bridge

The story of Lazarus is a picture of what Jesus can do, and promises to do, for all of us. First, He offers us comfort when we are faced with tragedy. Second, He brings the promise of resurrection life in the future. The good news of the gospel is based on the fact that Jesus has power over death. He defeated death for us all when He died and was raised to life. Though we will all still die (unless Jesus returns first), there will be a day when those who are forgiven in Christ will be raised to life, whole, complete, without pain and without suffering. As Revelation 21:4 says of life in the new heavens and the new earth, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This is the hope we can offer refugees who are suffering from lasting scars, deep rivers of loss, grief, trauma and pain. Here and now, Jesus' words can sustain and comfort them. In the future, in the physical presence of God Himself, they will no longer suffer. They can take hold of this hope through Jesus Christ.

## Bridge-building Questions

- When do you feel the most pain?
- Who do you turn to when you are in pain?
- How do they comfort you?
- What do you hope for the future? Do you know that Jesus promises eternal life?

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The good news of the gospel is based on the fact that Jesus has power over death.

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