

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



On the road ...



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

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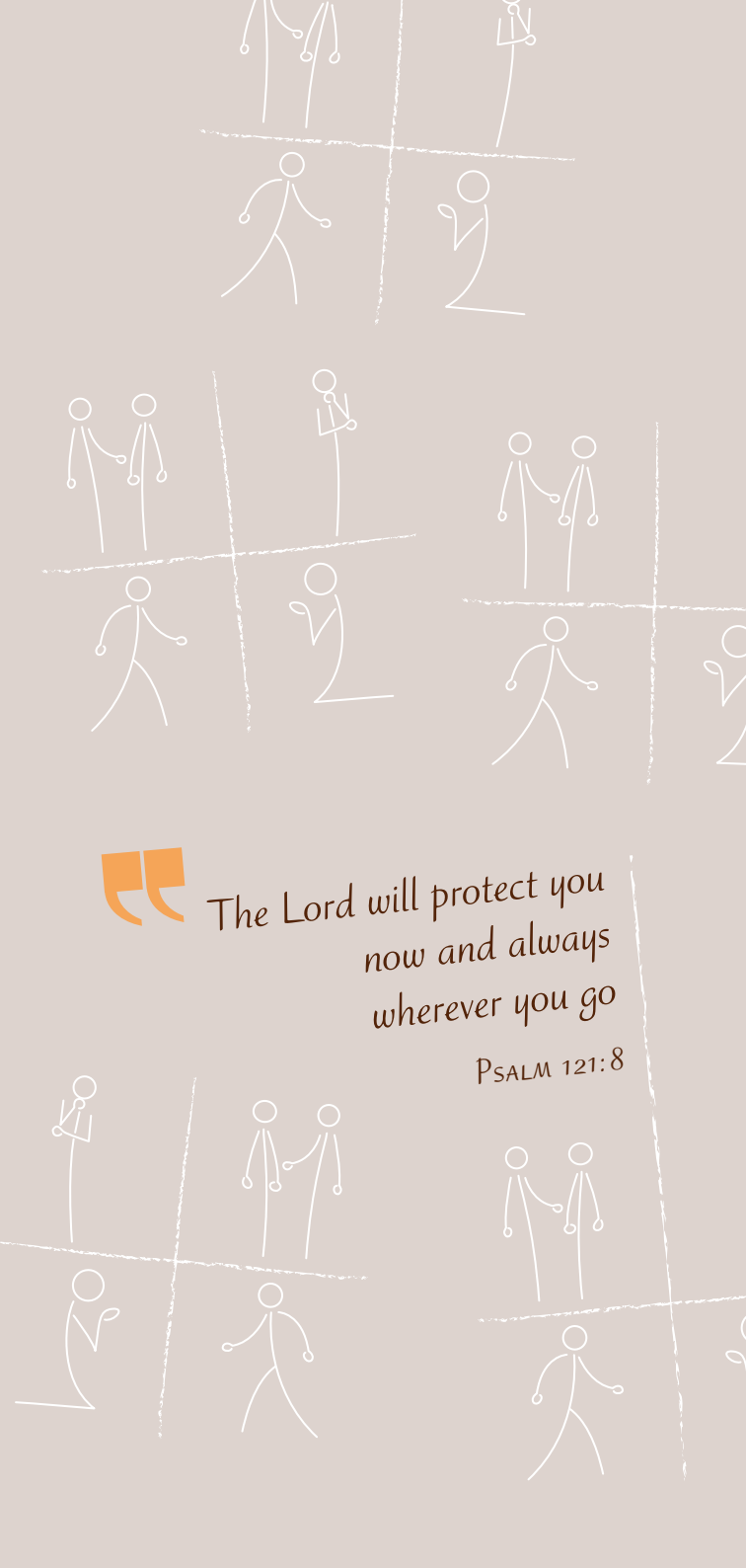
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The Lord will protect you
now and always
wherever you go

PSALM 121:8



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WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The 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?

Believers 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?

This 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:

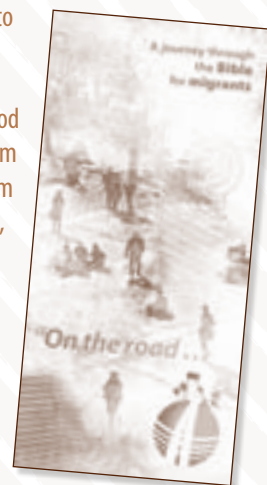
1° to **think about** the meaning of the passage, 2° to **discuss** possible applications of the passage, 3° to **pray** using a phrase (or verse) from the passage, 4° to **go a step further** by reading more from the Bible. These passages and questions can be studied alone or, even better, by discussing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



AT 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



Why leave?

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.*

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

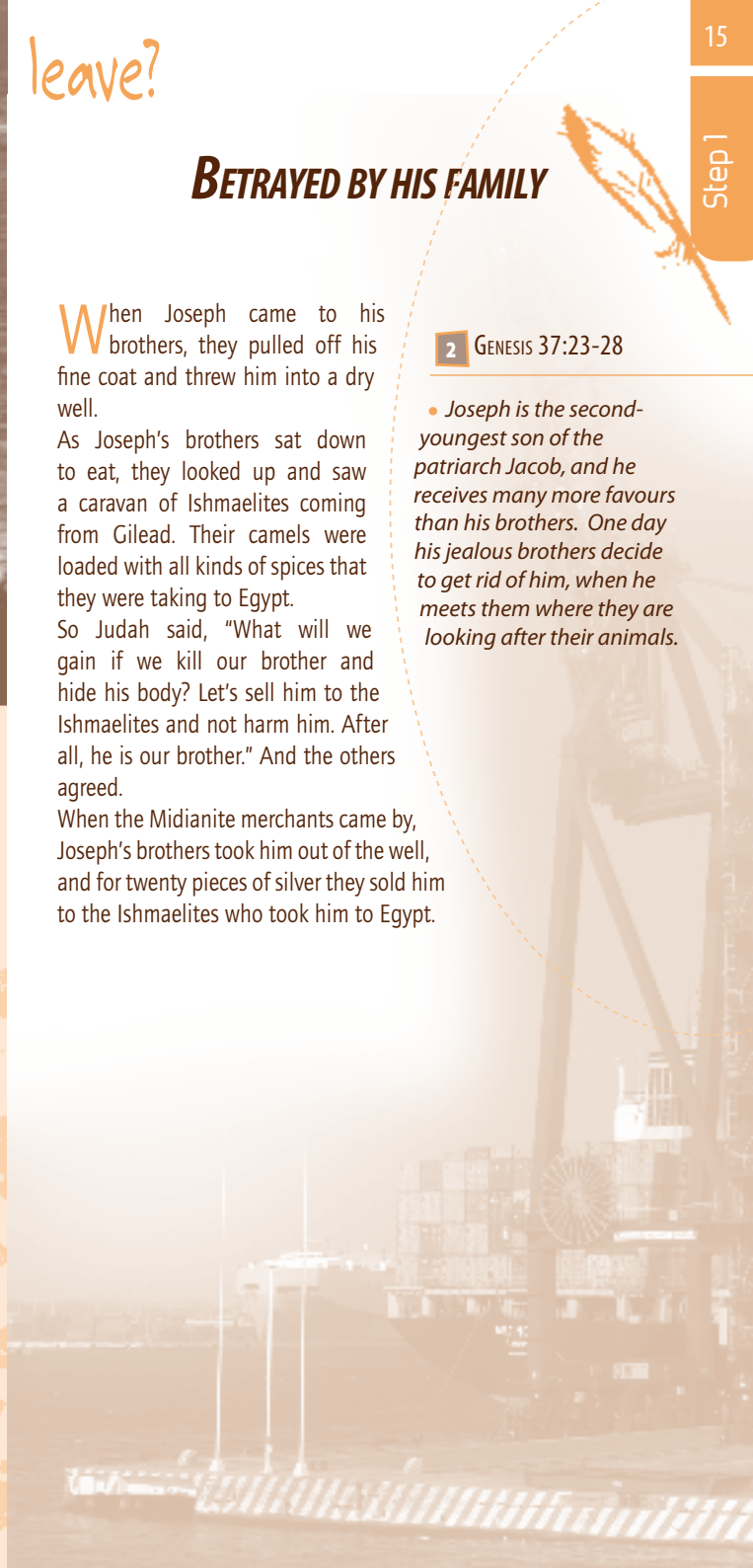
When Joseph came to his brothers, they pulled off his fine coat and threw him into a dry well.

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.

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.*



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

• *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.*

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.



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.

Why leave?

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."

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.*

I saw another angel come from heaven. This one had great power, and the earth was bright because of his glory. The angel shouted, "Fallen! Powerful Babylon has fallen and is now the home of demons. It is the den of every filthy spirit and of all unclean birds, and every dirty and hated animal. Babylon's evil and immoral wine has made all nations drunk. Every king on earth has slept with her, and every merchant on earth is rich because of her evil desires."

Then I heard another voice from heaven shout, "My people, you must escape from Babylon. Don't take part in her sins and share her punishment. Her sins are piled as high as heaven. God has remembered the evil she has done."

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."



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.*

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. ”



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

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."

“
*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

Behind these feelings of prejudice lie fear and a lack of trust towards the unknown.

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:

