Introduction Sheet: **My Home Away from Home**

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Matthew 25:35-36

The Bible is filled with stories that show how God wants us to care for the earth, other people, and ourselves. And he has a special heart for those in great need, such as refugees. The story of the Israelites, of Jesus, of Noah, Abraham and Moses, and so many others in the Bible were all people who had to leave their homes and were considered strangers in foreign lands - wanderers, and refugees. The Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt then wandered in the desert for forty years. Baby Jesus and his parents left their home and fled to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath, and more importantly, Jesus left his home in heaven in order to be with us on earth, in order to save humanity. The early church believers in the book of Acts spread out from and left Jerusalem in order to save their lives, but as a result the Good News travelled to new corners of the world. All fled their homeland for different reasons. But each time God has taken these difficulties and used them for His purposes, by taking a special interest in those who are on the fringes of society.

God still takes special care of people like that today. Today, there are 59.5 million people in the world who are forcibly displaced due to persecution and conflict, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014). They include people running for their lives and fleeing from their homes. Many even have to leave their country. There are also people in our own cities who do not have a place to live in, who must survive on the streets or other dangerous places. God is working out His plans and purposes, and that includes teaching us as His people, how we are to take care of these people that are so dear to Him.

Matthew 25:35-36 is a verse that highlights God's heart for the stranger, the outsider, and the refugee. Many biblical passages like this one describe how God wants us to treat and protect those in our midst. We are all part of God's family, and together we are all children of God – that's why we have to look after each other. In these lessons, we will learn more about how we can respect and care for each other. It starts by listening to each other's stories, thinking about what we can do to show God's love, and reflecting on the great love that God has for all of us!

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