

# Jesus the Refugee

## Small Group Study and Action Guide

Thank you for taking the time to read *Jesus the Refugee* as a church, small group, or in another community setting. I appreciate you considering my words and arguments in this book, but even more I appreciate your taking the time to consider the international refugee regime and how you might respond in solidarity with refugees. To facilitate your progress through the book, I have provided suggested discussion questions for each chapter, online sources of data for you to look at firsthand, and possible opportunities for involvement in solidarity with refugees. I hope that these resources help you to improve your engagement with the book.

Glenn Butner

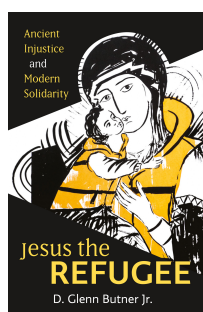


## How to Use This Study and Action Guide

Every group setting is different, so this guide serves as a jumping-off point for conversations and action after reading *Jesus the Refugee*.

If you are reading this book together over several weeks, then you will want to decide which questions you'll discuss on which nights. But if you are discussing the book in one meeting, then you might choose instead to pick a handful of questions from this guide instead of trying to go through the entire selection. The questions are divided by chapter to help you organize how you will discuss the book as a group.

If you print this document for group participants, be sure to also have Internet access through your phone or other device to review the links provided for further action.



Buy *Jesus the Refugee: Ancient Injustice and Modern Solidarity* by D. Glenn Butner Jr.



## Chapter 1: Jesus the Refugee?

### Discussion Questions

Have you considered the possibility that Jesus is a refugee? Do you consider this an appropriate title for Christ?

What experiences have you had with refugees and other immigrant populations?

What criteria do you suspect are used in international and/or U.S. law to identify who qualifies as a refugee?

What would ideal church ministry to refugees look like?

### Examine the Data

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees keeps data on the total number of refugees. This link provides basic information.

[Refugee Data Finder](#)

### Get Involved

One helpful way to get involved is to begin to be informed about refugee issues. These stories demonstrate refugee issues.

[Stories from Refugees](#)

## Chapter 2: A Day in Court

### Discussion Questions

What do we learn from the holy family's flight that may help inform our understanding of refugees?

Were you surprised by any groups that were excluded from refugee protections? Why or why not?

Is it justifiable to restrict refugee protection in international law to those facing persecution? Why or why not?

What is your opinion regarding the shorter humanitarian solutions for nonconvention refugees that are explained on pp. 21–22?

### Examine the Data

TRAC Immigration, through Syracuse University, keeps data on asylum rates through U.S. immigration courts.

#### Asylum Decisions in Immigration Courts

The Christian nonprofit Open Doors USA releases an annual report regarding where Christians face religious persecution. Notice that several leading refugee-producing countries are included in the report.

#### World Watch List 2023

### Get Involved

One of the larger nonconvention refugee crises today is occurring in Ukraine. The U.S. government has provided a unique way for individuals to sponsor Ukrainians seeking to enter the United States. A similar program now exists for Venezuelans. Both groups are nonconvention refugees who would not normally receive legal protection. Government

information is available at [welcome.us](http://welcome.us), and Church World Services is one of several organizations that can help guide you through the sponsorship process.

[Uniting for Ukraine](#)

[Ukrainian Sponsorship](#)

[Venezuelan Sponsorship](#)

## Chapter 3: The Route to Safety

### Discussion Questions

How was the situation for forced migrants different in the first century than it is today?

If you were a modern refugee, where would you go? Did you choose a location with connections similar to those that the holy family would likely have in Egypt?

Where do you see the factors discussed in migration systems theory (pp. 46–49) at work among refugees in your community?

What do you make of the fact that international and domestic refugee law expects refugees to make border crossings without the permission of the nation into which they are entering?

### Examine the Data

The International Organization on Migration (a branch of the United Nations) has developed maps that represent major world migratory routes.

#### Migration Routes

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, a subdivision of the Norwegian Refugee Council, provides interactive maps and updated information regarding current locations of Internally Displaced Persons.

#### Global Displacement Map

### Get Involved

Several organizations offer groups the opportunity to sponsor refugees. Besides the Uniting for Ukraine program (link in chapter 2) for nonconvention refugees, several groups are now providing the opportunity for direct sponsorship of refugees. Direct sponsorship is one of the best ways to help increase refugee resettlement rates.

[Episcopal Migration Ministries](#)

[How Can My Group Sponsor a Refugee?](#)

## Chapter 4: Crossing Dangerous Borders

### Discussion Questions

Which destination did you choose when asked after chapter 3 where you would flee as a refugee? Given what you now know about crossing borders, how would you try to reach your destination? Do you think you would succeed?

Which measure of immigration deterrence did you find most concerning from this chapter? Why?

As you imagine the holy family trying to gain entry into a safe haven, does your understanding of the international refugee regime change?

How do the United States and Europe measure up against the biblical standards for how to treat a refugee (see pp. 95–96)?

### Examine the Data

The International Organization on Migration keeps records on missing migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean and taking land and sea routes in the Americas. Records of known deaths and missing migrants are updated regularly.

[Missing Migrants – Mediterranean](#)

[Missing Migrants – The Americas](#)

The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative keeps records of known human trafficking incidents on this interactive website.

[Global Data on Human Trafficking](#)

### Get Involved

It is challenging for many immigrants to navigate the complicated legal processes required for refugee resettlement. These organizations provide free legal support to detained refugees and other immigrants while seeking funding through private donations.

[The Florence Project](#)

[Kids in Need of Defense](#)



## Chapter 5: Unfounded Fears

### Discussion Questions

What preconceptions about refugees and other immigrants do you tend to hold? Where might these preconceptions be inaccurate?

Where might people in your community face the same kinds of prejudices as those Jews—like the holy family—faced in Egypt (see pp. 97–99)?

Is the economic impact of refugee arrival an acceptable cost given the benefits of welcoming refugees? Why or why not?

What role might your church play in the community to address unfounded fears about refugees?

### Examine the Data

U.S. Customs and Border Protection keeps records of their interactions with immigrants. These sites record total crimes committed by non-citizens as well as total U.S. CBP encounters with immigrants.

[USBP Nationwide Encounters](#)

[USBP Enforcement Statistics](#)

### Get Involved

Several nonprofits offer opportunities to be employment sponsors for refugees, including these.

[Lutheran Family Services](#)

[Upwardly Global](#)

## Chapter 6: Duty, Solidarity, and Jesus the Refugee

### Discussion Questions

Are you convinced by this chapter's interpretation of Matthew 25:41–46 (see pp. 148–52)?

Where might the principle or relationship establish a natural avenue for your community to help with refugees?

What would it look like to practice solidarity in your community?

Did you find the responses to potential objections on pp. 152–65 compelling? Why or why not?

### Get Involved

Refugee Council USA, a coalition of U.S. nonprofits supporting refugees and asylum seekers, has compiled this list of refugee-supporting organizations' state offices. Contacting such organizations would undoubtedly uncover volunteer and other support opportunities.

[Refugee Resettlement Locations](#)

## Chapter 7: Solidarity in Practice

### Discussion Questions

How might you or your church community practice incarnational solidarity, institutional solidarity, and/or conflictual solidarity?

When, if ever, have you allowed the ideology of humanitarianism to marginalize refugees or to perpetuate the stereotype of the helplessness of refugees (see pp. 170–71)?

Where are immigrants already contributing positively to your community?

How has your view of refugees changed after having read this book? How has your understanding of the holy family changed?

### Get Involved

Various Christian organizations are involved in political advocacy in refugee policy. Included here are links to organizations with varied policy positions and denominational affiliations to help readers identify issues that they would support as part of their institutional and conflictual solidarity.

[Episcopal Migration Ministries](#)

[Evangelical Immigration Table](#)

[Jesuit Refugee Service](#)

[Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service](#)