
Unlocking “Locked in a Box” – A Study Guide

Introduction

Locked in a Box: Rediscovering our Humanity in Immigration Detention is a 24-minute film portraying the experience of people detained in the U.S. Immigration prison system and of those ministering with them. The film can be shown in a one-time session or as one segment of a study series. It might be shown in conjunction with a panel discussion.

This study guide provides several sections, each of which can stand alone or can be combined with other sections, depending on the group leader’s discernment and the purpose of the group gathered to view the film.

Study Guide Sections

1. Film discussion questions
2. Scriptures for devotions and/or Bible study
3. Call to action & resources
4. Suggested group formats
5. Participant Handouts
 - Discussion Questions
 - Scriptures
 - Detention Background Article

Film Discussion Questions

The leader may select one or more of the following questions, depending upon the purpose of the group and the time available, to encourage discussion of the film. If the group is large, dividing into smaller groups may be desirable.

1. What image or word from the film stays with you?
 - a. What is your primary feeling?
 - b. What thought is uppermost in your mind?
2. What did you learn that you hadn’t known before?
3. What questions does the film evoke? How will you seek answers?
4. What do you make of the rise of detention in recent years?

5. How do you react to detention as a business enterprise?
6. What do you want to do as a result of seeing this film?

Scriptures

Scriptures may be used for opening devotions or for more extensive Bible study before or after viewing the film.

One way to approach scripture as it relates to the experience of detainees in this country is to acknowledge that scripture confirms that God knows our story, and God knows the story of everyone we meet. Further, Biblical texts offer us the opportunity to enter into the experience of another from God's point of view. They invite us to stand with God with others.

With any of the passages included in this study a group could engage in the following process:

- Someone reads the passage out loud
- The group spends some time in extended silence (2-5 minutes, which could be stated and timed)
- During the silence, individuals note the word or phrase in the text that most stays with them or calls for their attention
- When the silence concludes, participants share this initial response to the passage
- The group may then continue to discuss the passage, using one or more of the discussion questions if desired

The handouts section includes a separate page for each scripture passage with suggested discussion questions. Unless otherwise noted, cited scriptures are from the New Revised Standard Version of *The Bible*. The scriptures included in this study guide are as follows:

- Genesis 21:8-20
- Exodus 10:17-22
- Matthew 2:13-22
- Matthew 15:21-28
- Matthew 25:31-40, 41-46
- Ephesians 2:11-22

Call to Action

There are many ways to become involved:

- Join or start a local visitation ministry
- Join an immigrant advocacy coalition
- Write your legislators
- Join with others to educate communities concerning immigration issues
- Pray regularly for all impacted by current immigration practices
- Contribute to immigrant advocacy agencies
- Volunteer with local agencies working with immigrants

Not sure where to begin? Consider possible next steps, such as:

- Request a group tour of the nearest immigration detention center
- Invite an immigrant group to come meet with you
- Invite a local organization to present on volunteer opportunities

Consider these policy recommendations from a 2015 report by Detention Watch Network (DWN) and the Center for Constitutional Rights:

There is a growing consensus that the mass detention of immigrants is unnecessary and inhumane . . . detention capacity and infrastructure must not be a determining factor in immigration enforcement and deportation policy. As immediate next steps, this report calls on:

- ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) to remove guaranteed minimums, tiered pricing or any other provisions that could function as a local lockup quota, from all detention contracts.
- ICE to make all information pertaining to detention contracts and the bidding process publicly accessible and transparent.
- ICE to stop contracting with private companies that lobby to pervert public policy via guaranteed minimums and other contractual giveaways.
- ICE to bar (1) the transfer of individuals between detention facilities; (2) the manipulation of bond or parole determinations; and (3) the initiation of enforcement actions based in whole or in part on empty detention beds, unmet guaranteed minimums, or tiered pricing.
- Congress to remove the national detention bed quota from the FY 2016 DHS Appropriations bill*.

* Detention Watch Network and Center for Constitutional Rights, **Banking On Detention: local lockup quotas & the immigrant dragnet**, 2015, p. 10. Available at: http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Banking_on_Detention_DWN.pdf

Resources for Action

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is a resource to “inspire, equip and connect the PC(USA) in its many expressions” to ministries with refugees and asylum seekers.

For basic information on refugee ministries, you can go to:

<http://pda.pcusa.org/page/refugee/> or contact us via email: pda@pcusa.org

The Immigration Issues Office of the PC(USA) provides educational resources on immigration issues and policies and reliable advice and counsel to presbyteries and pastors whose members have immigration questions or issues. They also offer immigration advocacy trainings through the Presbyterians for Just Immigration network. For more information, go to: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/> or follow them on Facebook -- Presbyterians for Just Immigration.

Bring the Sky: A Detention Visitation Guide, was specifically written for local congregations and is available for free from Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service.

There are 5 chapters, which can be downloaded individually at:

<http://lirs.org/act/visitation/launch-a-visitation-ministry/>

Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), based in California, provides a number of resources for visitation, including a national map of all the detention centers and established visitation programs, statistics and advocacy resources at:

<http://www.endisolation.org/>

Detention Watch Network (DWN) is a national coalition of organizations and individuals working to expose and challenge the injustices of the U.S. immigration detention and deportation system and advocate for profound change that promotes the rights and dignity of all persons. <http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/>

The non-profit organizations listed below provide a range of services for immigrants while in detention or upon their release. In partnership with LIRS, PDA has supported their development and expansion. Most of these actively engage congregations.

Arizona:

Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP) - <https://firrp.org/>

Tucson Restoration Project (Casa Mariposa)

<https://restorationproject340.wordpress.com/restoration-project/>

Illinois:

Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants (ICDI) - <http://www.icdichicago.org/>

Resources for Action, Continued

Massachusetts:

Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM) - <http://www.r-i-m.net/>
Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project (PAIR)
<http://www.pairproject.org/>

Minnesota:

Immigrant Law Center of MN (ILCM) - <https://www.ilcm.org/>
The Advocates for Human Rights (AHR) -
<http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/>
Conversations With Friends
<http://www.endisolation.org/conversations-with-friends/>

New Jersey:

First Friends of New Jersey and New York - <http://www.firstfriendsnjny.org/>

Texas:

American Gateways - <http://www.americangateways.org/>
Casa Marianella - <http://www.casamarianella.org/>
Center for Survivors of Torture - <http://cstnet.org/>

Washington:

Advocates for Immigrants in Detention Northwest (AID NW) - <http://aidnw.org/>
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) - <https://www.nwirp.org/>

Immigo is a new App just released by the Immigration Advocates Network. This comprehensive resource provides relevant and need-to-know information for practitioners working in the immigrant integration space, including an up-to-date directory of immigration legal service providers. It is made possible by the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) with support from Verizon and developed in partnership with the Immigration Advocates Network (IAN) and Pro Bono Net. It is available from iTunes.

Suggested Group Formats

A One-Time Session

If the purpose in showing the film is to introduce participants to the information about and experience of immigration detention, the following format could be used:

Welcome and opening

10 minutes

The leader may choose one of the scriptures in the handout section of this study guide. This or another opening prayer can be offered:

Opening Prayer

God of the citizen, God of the stranger,
you love each person,
and you are constantly at work to provide for all.
You call us to peace and to oneness.
We ask your wisdom and direction,
that we may know our place
in showing forth your justice to all the world.
As we spend this time together,
stir our hearts and minds according to your will.
We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

- If the group is not acquainted with one another and the group is relatively small, attendees may introduce themselves.
- ***Suggested Opening Question:*** What words or phrases come to mind when you hear the term "immigration?" Write the answers on a board or paper. Do not respond, define or discuss. Simply list them.

Showing the film

24 minutes

Discussion

20 minutes

There are several options for how the discussion of the film might unfold.

1. The leader can simply invite reactions to the film.
2. The leader can choose one or more of the discussion questions in this study guide, or questions of their own design, to initiate discussion.

3. The Film Discussion Questions handout can be shared with the group. The leader invites them to spend a few quiet moments reviewing and pondering the questions. After this brief silence, the group is invited to share responses to the questions.
4. The group can be divided into smaller groups to work through the Film Discussion Questions, returning to the whole group for brief sharing.

The film is intended to inspire viewers toward action, at the personal or systemic level. After a discussion of the film itself and any questions or issues that may arise, the discussion should be geared toward a response.

You may already have local organizations and groups that have been identified. If so, this is an opportunity to invite people to join in their efforts. If this is something new for the group, time should be given to brainstorming and discussing different types of responses and next steps.

It would be appropriate to begin with 2 minutes of quiet time for individual reflection on where God is calling each individual to act. If time is running out, you may wish to end here.

Closing Prayer

1 minute

This or another closing prayer may be offered:

Closing Prayer

God of love and of life,
sustain in us compassion and humility
as we seek our way in ministry with refugees.
Sustain in them endurance and hope.
Open before us paths to fresh understanding
and to communal commitment to your shalom.
We urgently ask a keen awareness
of your involvement in our lives,
in the lives of leaders and decision-makers,
and in the lives of those who suffer.
For Christ's sake, we pray. Amen.

Film and Panel Discussion

The showing of the film could be combined with a panel discussion including those working with local advocacy groups, a person who has experienced detention, those involved in ministering with detainees, an immigration lawyer, and/or others available in the local community.

It is recommended that the workshop be extended to 1.5 hours if including a panel led discussion.

The following format is suggested for a panel-led discussion after the film:

1. Introduce the panelists with a brief description of how they are connected to immigration detention.
2. Invite the panelists to share their reactions to the film and how it is similar or different to their own experience.
3. Invite the audience to ask clarifying questions of the panelists about immigration detention or about their work/experience.
4. Use selected questions from the discussion guide for both audience and panelists to respond.
5. Invite panelists to share ideas for how the group can respond individually or collectively.

A Multi-Session Class

Using the additional resources referenced in this study guide, *Locked In A Box* can become part of a longer educational series on refugees and refugee ministries. The scripture passages provided can be used over the course of 4 to 6 sessions. Here is an example of a possible Adult Education series:

Session I: Introductory class on refugees – global situation, definitions, and overview of how refugees get to the U.S.

Session II: Specific Refugee Situations (Syria, Central America, other)

Session III: Locked in a Box film & discussion

Session IV: Family Detention - Read Genesis 21:8-20, use the film “Families Held Captive” from Immigration Issues Office

Session V: How are churches involved in US Resettlement and Asylum?

Session VI: What do we do?



Handouts

Film Discussion Questions

Scriptures for Devotions and/or Bible Study

U.S. Immigration Detention Background

Film Discussion Questions

1. What image or word from the film stays with you?
 - a. What is your primary feeling?
 - b. What thought is uppermost in your mind?

2. What do you make of the rise of detention in recent years?

3. How do you react to detention as a business enterprise?

4. What did you learn that you hadn't known before?

5. What questions does the film evoke? How will you seek answers?

6. What do you want to do as a result of seeing this film?

Genesis 21:8-20

8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. ¹⁰So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.' ¹¹The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹²But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you. ¹³As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.' ¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow.

What do you know of the refugee/immigrant experience from this passage?

What feelings / thoughts / desires does this passage evoke in you?

What do you know of God from this passage?

Exodus 10:17-22

¹⁷For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, ¹⁸who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. ¹⁹You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²⁰You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. ²²Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in heaven.

What do you know of the refugee/immigrant experience from this passage?

What feelings / thoughts / desires does this passage evoke in you?

What do you know of God from this passage?

Matthew 2:13-22

13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt,

15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said,

20 "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead."

21 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee.

What do you know of the refugee/immigrant experience from this passage?

What feelings / thoughts / desires does this passage evoke in you?

What do you know of God from this passage?

Matthew 15:21-28

21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

22 Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

23 But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

26 He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

28 Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

What do you know of the refugee/immigrant experience from this passage?

What feelings / thoughts / desires does this passage evoke in you?

What do you know of God from this passage?

Matthew 25:31-40; 41-46

{The group might stop with v. 40 or continue through v. 46}

31 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,* you did it to me."

⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

What do you know of the refugee/immigrant experience from this passage?

What feelings / thoughts / desires does this passage evoke in you?

What do you know of God from this passage?

Ephesians 2:11-22

11 So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by those who are called ‘the circumcision’—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body*through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.* ¹⁷So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

What do you know of the refugee/immigrant experience from this passage?

What feelings / thoughts / desires does this passage evoke in you?

What do you know of God from this passage?

U.S. Immigration Detention Background

The United States has the largest immigration detention infrastructure in the world. The expansion of this system in recent years is partly due to the immigration detention bed quota, a policy passed by Congress under which 34,000 immigrants are held in Immigration Custom Enforcement (ICE) detention on any given day.

The average cost of \$159 per day is still cited by members of Congress in the debate about detention costs. Recent studies have shown that some locations cost twice that amount. The description of federal appropriations for the 2016 Immigration & Customs Enforcement budget includes:

\$3.3 billion for detention and removal programs – a decrease of \$172 million below the fiscal year 2015 level, which included construction, costs for a new ICE facility that was completed in February 2015. This funding level supports 34,040 detention beds and includes \$109.7 million for alternatives to detention.

(<http://appropriations.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=394301>)

In 2012, in partnership with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service launched the Community Support Network, a national service model to examine the efficiency of community-based services as an alternative to immigration detention. This initiative has funded non-profit service agencies to offer a continuum of care that facilitates immigrants' release from detention and provides immediate support and stabilization services, torture and trauma rehabilitation, legal assistance and eventually long term integration.

Community-based non-profits are best suited to build trust with migrant participants, identify the needs of individuals, address those needs with available resources, and build resilience in the individuals to face the range of potential outcomes in their legal cases. Non-governmental organizations are mission-driven and generate more community resources because of their ability to attract volunteers and donations of goods and services. The following are examples of effective community-based Alternative to Detention programs:

From *Unlocking Liberty: A Way Forward for U.S. Immigration Detention Policy* (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, October 27, 2011, available at www.lirs.org/dignity):

In 1999 the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) partnered with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to assist 25 Chinese asylum seekers released from detention. INS released the asylum seekers into open shelters around the country, where they received housing, food, medical care, and continuous case

management. Participants had a 96% appearance rate and the annual program costs were just 3% of what it would have cost to detain them.

From *A More Human System: Community-Based Alternatives to Immigration Detention* (Part 2) (Sue Weishar, Just South Quarterly):

In a project funded by the US Government, the Vera Institute of Justice studied over 500 participants in a supervised release and assistance program (1997-2000) in three groups: asylum seekers, people convicted of crimes and facing removal, and undocumented workers from detention facilities. The risk assessment instrument and case management used contributed to the program's success. The program saved taxpayers \$4,000 per participant and boasted a 91% appearance rate at required hearings, including a 93% appearance rate for asylum seekers. (The Appearance Assistance Program, *Attaining Compliance with Immigration Laws Through Community Supervision*, Vera Institute of Justice, 1998, www.vera.org/download?file+211/aap.pdf)

Congress can take action now by passing common-sense reforms that will keep ICE focused on their priorities—people who are human traffickers and dangers to our communities.

Congress should:

- Repeal or reform mandatory detention laws;
- End the appropriations mandate that 34,000 beds be filled each day;
- Increase appropriations for community-based alternatives to detention

The Administration can further limit needless detention. ICE should:

- remove guaranteed minimums, tiered pricing or any other provisions that could function as a local lockup quota, from all detention contracts.
- make all information pertaining to detention contracts and the bidding process publicly accessible and transparent.
- stop contracting with private companies that lobby to pervert public policy via guaranteed minimums and other contractual giveaways.
- Ibar (1) the transfer of individuals between detention facilities; (2) the manipulation of bond or parole determinations; and (3) the initiation of enforcement actions based in whole or in part on empty detention beds, unmet guaranteed minimums, or tiered pricing.