

# ishah

exploring issues for Christian women

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*What's Your Mindset?*



*Dealing with  
Mental Health Issues*

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Leng Te



# ishah

Woman (Hebrew *ishah*). Woman, with man, was made in the image of God. 'Male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27).

## welcome...

*The topic of mental illness has long been a taboo subject in both society and the church. It is theologically, emotionally, intellectually and socially complex, and in so many ways it's easier and more 'comfortable' just to 'leave the lid' on it. But as with everything related to our human condition, the Bible has plenty to say about God's grace and redemption brought to bear on this aspect of our need; that grace and redemption bought for us all through the death and resurrection of His own Son.*

*Jesus clearly showed, by his words and actions during His earthly ministry, that people suffering all kinds of illness should be mercifully cared for. His gracious response, in addition to addressing an individual's heart needs, not only healed their immediate problem, but their whole person.*

*ishah's editorial committee felt it was time to discuss some issues related to mental health, particularly for us as women, and has sought to gather together a range of different approaches to the topic. We hope these articles prompt you to think about your own attitudes and responses to people whose journeys include the challenges of mental illness; and we hope that if you are struggling with such a challenge, you will find encouragement and strength within these pages to persevere, to know that you are not alone, and perhaps even to take new steps to seek support.*

*Our Starting Point this edition also invites us to consider the hardships of a different sort of journey, as Leng Te shares part of her family's story in seeking asylum in Australia. Once again it is a challenge to us as members of the body of Christ to consider how we welcome and care for the 'outsiders' God brings among us.*

*We hope that all the articles in this edition of our magazine prompt much thought and promote healthier relationships and communities.*

Amanda Coverdale for the *ishah* team

*P.S. The ishah team is taking a short production break. ishah has been in publication for about seven years, and has changed and grown in that time, and has reached the end of funds currently available for production. The Editorial Committee feel we need to pause and think hard about what we are trying to achieve and how we should go about doing that. If you have any ideas for ishah, now would be a great time to let us know about them. Please keep us in your prayers, and look out for the next issue of ishah in about six months.*



## OUR AIMS

1. To value the Bible as God's inspired Word to us and the ultimate authority on matters of faith and practice, through thinking hard about how the Bible applies to our everyday lives.
2. To encourage women to grow in godliness and maturity in Christ.
3. To equip Christian women to be creative, confident and effective in communicating the gospel.
4. To give women in a variety of roles and situations the forum to think about contemporary issues from a framework of Biblical theology and to articulate their thinking in a manner that stimulates themselves and others to live lives that are more faithful to God's Word.

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Mail: c/- 56 Collier Cres,  
Brunswick West, VIC 3055  
Web: [www.ishah.org](http://www.ishah.org)

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The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the *ishah* editorial committee.

THINKING  
*Biblically*  
ABOUT  
*Mental Health*

BY NATASHA GODFREY

Each year, one in five Australians will experience some kind of mental illness or disorder (statistic from SANE Australia). As Christians, we have no magical immunity to illness, and within our church communities there are many people struggling with mental illness. Yet in spite of their prevalence, we don't always respond appropriately to those suffering from these conditions. We often find such illnesses bewildering, frightening or even embarrassing: a broken leg is much easier to chat openly about during fellowship time than psychotic episodes, panic attacks, or profound and unremitting feelings of worthlessness.

Christians are commanded to care for and honour those among us who are sick and weak, which includes people suffering mental illness (1 Corinthians 12:22-26; Matthew 25:31-46). To do this we need to view mental illness as God does. This article aims to provide a small window into this, through examining how the overarching themes of Scripture, as well as specific Bible passages, address the issue.

A great place to begin this exploration is where the Bible begins, with creation. God made the world for us to enjoy. He isn't just interested in practicalities—He makes plants which are not only useful for food, they are beautiful to look at as well (Genesis 2:9). As human beings we're the pinnacle of God's good creation, the bearers of His own image (Genesis 1:26-28). Mental illness can wreak havoc with a person's sense of self, so it's vital to know that we are God's wonderfully designed handiwork. We must acknowledge the effects of the Fall, but in doing so we mustn't disregard the God-given dignity that we all have as His special creatures.

God has made a beautiful creation, but the very existence of mental illness indicates that things are not as they should be. The workings of our minds,

including our emotions, are subject to illness and decay, just like everything else that has been created. This chaos and suffering can be traced to sin in the following three ways:

- All too frequently, people suffer because of the sins of others. There is a strong correlation between neglect, abuse and trauma in childhood, and mental illness later in life. God knows everything, and He cares about the wrongs that have been done to us. They are so serious to Him that He sent His own Son to die, so that He could forgive the sins of believers, and He will send His Son again to judge unbelievers (Acts 17:31; 1 Peter 3:18). Ultimately we will all rejoice in God's judgements (Revelation 6:9-10; 15:1-4). This is not cause for us to be proud or unforgiving in this life—we have been saved by Jesus' death, not by our own goodness. An awareness of God's costly mercy and justice is a great source of comfort to those who have been grievously harmed in the past.

- Sometimes we suffer because of our own wrongdoings, or we suffer more than we need to because we add our own sins to the sins of others. However, we get into difficulty when we try to draw clearer lines between individual sin and suffering than the Bible allows. Usually, we don't have the information or insight necessary to make an accurate judgement. In John 5:1-15; and 9:1-3, Jesus lets us in on a connection between sin and illness. These two instances show that individual sin can play a role in suffering, but sometimes it doesn't. Christians often deliver and receive unhelpful advice, such as 'read the Bible and pray more' or 'repent of your hidden unforgiven sin and you will be made well'. However, God cannot be controlled by our decisions, and mental illness usually can't be traced to specific sins.

Most people who have experienced depression attest to profound feelings of guilt, which are usually the product

of their illness rather than the result of anything they have done wrong. Mental illness can also severely hamper a person's ability to be involved in Christian activities. Our ministries to those suffering from these illnesses must be soaked in God's grace. All Christians are valuable to God because they have been purchased with the blood of Jesus, not because of their activities or achievements (Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Ephesians 2:8-9). Christian teaching should not only address those who have a strong sense of assurance and need a swift kick to get going with living out their Christian lives, but also those who are frail and need constant reminders of the grace of God.

- Mental illness can be triggered by genetic or biological factors. Sadly the more severe of these currently have no known cure. These kinds of illnesses are not traceable to any particular individual sin; they occur because creation is not operating as it should. This chaos exists in the natural order because all of humanity has chosen to turn their backs on God (Genesis 3; Romans 8:18-25). Thankfully, God has rescued us from the predicament our sin brings, and we can look forward to Christ's return when he will reverse the effects of the Fall (Revelation 22:3).

Whatever the severity or cause of the illness is, it is comforting to know that God is not ignorant concerning our suffering. We have the words of God's people going through unspeakable emotional and physical pain recorded for us in the Psalms. Psalm 88 is one of the most bleak and poignant of them. God has also experienced our suffering first hand. He entered into our world in Christ, experiencing the frailty of human existence and suffering to the point of death, so that we might be reconciled with God (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 3:18). Jesus' death means that we are now God's dearly loved children, and can bring all of our pain and suffering to Him (1 Peter 5:7; 1 John 3:1).

Given the powerful effects of sin, what hope is there of healing in this present life? Therapies that effectively treat people with mental illness are good gifts from God, even when they are devised by people who do not acknowledge Him. This is because all good things come from God, and all truth belongs to Him (James 1:17). A skilled non-Christian psychologist, who helps a depressed patient discern between the distortions of their depression and the reality of their life, would be an example of this. Another example is in the field of medication: effective and safe anti-depressants and anti-psychotics are good gifts from God.

God uses health professionals, medications and the body of Christ as His healing instruments in many cases of mental illness, but does He ever supernaturally 'zap' people and make them well again, as Christ did in his earthly ministry? While there are plenty of examples of miraculous healings in the Bible, and Paul even lists healing as a spiritual gift, there are also examples of people who are not healed. Paul himself had a 'thorn' which God was not willing to remove (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). The healings Jesus performed are snapshots of a future reality, which he will bring

about when He returns. Sometimes this future reality breaks into our everyday when people are healed, but most of the time we simply have to go on living with suffering, wrong and difficulty.

In biblical stories of suffering, we see that God is powerful to take away suffering, but He doesn't always do so. This can be distressing because we don't understand why God allows us to suffer. However, we do know that He loves His children, and that He never intends evil (Hebrews 12:4-13; James 1:13-18). Our sovereign God is able to bring about His good purposes through even the worst of our experiences (Genesis 50:20-21; Romans 5:3-5).

Given that we don't always understand why God acts as He does in the world, it is essential for us to know God's plan for us after we die, the hope that all Christians have of life together with Christ in the renewed heavens and earth (Revelation 21-22). This will be a wonderful heavenly future living with Him, where there is no more mourning, crying or pain. This future has been guaranteed for us by the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Corinthians 15; 1 Peter 1:3-5). Christians are commanded to remind each other of this future now (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

and to set our hearts on our future together with Christ. Sometimes we may not be able to feel or acknowledge the reality of these glorious truths. It is a great gift when there are brothers and sisters in the body of Christ who can be firm in these truths and remind us of them in love! One day we will all feel the joy of salvation in Christ together, when we stand together praising God in perfect, healed and renewed bodies (Revelation 7:9-17).

■ *Natasha Godfrey works with the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students at Melbourne University and attends Melbourne Chinese Bible Church in West Footscray, where her husband Andrew is the English Pastor. Natasha has wrestled with depression and anxiety for over a decade, which has fuelled her interest in pastoral theology—looking at how God's word addresses our lives in all their complexity and brokenness. You're welcome to contact Natasha through ishah at ishahmag@ishah.org*

## Christian books and resources:

*Why Do Christians Shoot Their Wounded?*

Dwight L Carlson, Intervarsity Press, USA, 1994

*The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers*

Gary Collins, Navpress, 1997

*The Anxiety Cure*

Archibald Hart, Thomas Nelson, 2001

*Unveiling Depression in Women*

Archibald Hart and Catherine Hart Weber, Baker Book House Co, Michigan USA, 2002

*A Practical Workbook for the Depressed Christian*

Dr John Lockley, Authentic Lifestyle, UK, 2002

*I'm not supposed to feel like this—a Christian self help approach to depression and anxiety*

Chris Williams, Ingrid Whitton and Paul Richards, Hodder Faith, London, 2002

Accompanying website: [www.feelinglikethis.com](http://www.feelinglikethis.com)

## Useful secular resources:

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

The Beyond Blue website is a goldmine of information for people suffering from depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and postnatal depression.

[www.adavic.org.au](http://www.adavic.org.au)

The Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria has many useful resources for those with anxiety disorders.

[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

Sane Australia: information and advocacy for sufferers of mental illness.

*Taming the Black Dog*

Bev Aisbett, HarperCollins Publishers, Australia, 2000

*Living with it—A survivor's guide to panic attacks*

Bev Aisbett, HarperCollins Publishers, Australia, 1999

*I Had A Black Dog*

Written & illustrated by Matthew Johnstone, Pan MacMillan, Australia, 2005

# Uncomfortableness OF Mental Illness

BY CLARISSA WILSON

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What is it about the term ‘mental illness’ that leaves us feeling so uncomfortable? Often we don’t know why we feel this way, we just do.

Sometimes we don’t know what to say to someone who has a mental illness because we aren’t sure what their response will be. Will what we say upset them and make them feel worse? Sometimes we think that it’s best if we don’t say or do anything and leave the relating to someone who is trained in this area. May I suggest that while this may appear to be a caring, non-hurtful response, often we are the only ones who feel better from this approach!

So what is behind this uncomfortable feeling? While there are many reasons, let me suggest two possibilities:

## **Fear and Uncertainty**

Mental illness is not a concrete, observable illness that has a beginning and an end. It’s not like when we have a cold, where we can take some medicine, rest, and get better. It’s not like

relationships with other believers (Romans 12:9-10)—not hope that someone else will do it for us and go on ignoring our uncomfortable feelings.

Our church community will suffer if the way we exercise our ministry is limited by partiality toward those we feel comfortable with. By spending time at church and outside church only with these people, and ignoring those whose hardships make us feel uncomfortable, we risk alienating these fellow believers struggling with mental illness. Our attitudes and behaviours can foster their feelings of inferiority and inability to contribute to the life of the body of Christ.

Having examined our own hearts before God, we are then free to seek some strategies to help alleviate our uncertainties and fears. We can make time to read and learn about mental illness, and to gain some understanding of the nature and difficulties associated with these conditions. With accurate information, we can adjust our expectations about the long-term nature of mental illness, and cultivate patience in care and support,

*“...it’s not like when we have a cold, where we can take some medicine, rest, and get better...”*

when we have a toothache, see the dentist, and, with a course of treatment, get better. These are short-term illnesses that can be understood and controlled. Some people suffer ‘episodes’ of mental illness for only a short phase of their lives. However, for most this is a long-term illness with many ‘ups’ and ‘downs’, requiring ongoing support. It’s often when we don’t understand and can’t control something that we feel afraid.

## **Guilt**

Sometimes when we say or do something and it’s not helpful, we feel guilty for what we’ve done. As a response, in the future we choose to do nothing and then still feel guilty for not loving our neighbour. So it’s easy to get into a cycle of guilt. Whether we do something or nothing we still feel guilty.

What, then, is a way forward? Bring the situation before God. God desires a relationship with all His people and as Christians we are to respond to each other because of what Christ has done for us on the cross, not because it feels comfortable. This means praying and asking God to show us the cause of our discomfort and to give us wisdom and discernment to be able to see what needs to be changed. It may be necessary to repent and ask for forgiveness, so that we can live as faithful servants of Jesus Christ in this regard. Paul tells us that as Christians we are to pursue sincere love and to do good in our

seeing this as an opportunity to grow in grace as we practise being other-person centred (Philippians 2:4).

Caring for people with mental illness takes ongoing commitment. Are we prepared to offer patient love over months or even years to someone who is not family? Are we prepared in our busy lives to change how we use our time? People with a mental illness may be fragile, but they are still God’s gift to us. Many are effective leaders and teachers, clergy, bus drivers, managers, people skilled in pastoral care, and machine operators. They are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, and single men and women. They have feelings and needs just like every human being. They too are made in the image of God.

Our brothers and sisters with mental illness need our acceptance, affirmation and encouragement to help complete the race that has been set before them. My closing question is, ‘What part will you play in caring for those with a mental illness who come across your path?’

---

■ Clarissa Wilson is married with three adult children. She spends her time caring for her family, being a Pastoral Worker at St Jude’s Carlton, and studying part-time at Ridley College. She enjoys doing jigsaw puzzles. She can be contacted at [cwilson@stjudes.org.au](mailto:cwilson@stjudes.org.au)

# Perfect Love

## CASTS OUT FEAR...

AUTHOR'S NAME WITHHELD

I was twenty-nine when I was diagnosed with bi-polar mood disorder. My diagnosis came after a prolonged period of personal, familial and financial stress, and as far as diagnoses of mental disorders go, it was a relief. It meant that at last something could be done to interrupt the hideous cycle of mood swings, erratic behaviours, personal endangerment and suicidal thoughts that had me in its grasp.

The process of commencing treatment, however, was shattering. During my manic episode I believed myself indomitable, indestructible, and invincible. Add to this my Christian faith, and I was wide open to the notion that I was 'on a mission from God!' I didn't have a particular crusade in mind, but I did have a passionate generalised belief that God was using me for His purposes and speaking through me, and I was speaking out in any and every context where I felt so moved. It was a lofty mountain from which to fall. Treatment initially focused on controlling the symptoms of this manic cycle. Later, when the inevitable 'swing of the pendulum' occurred and I plunged into an equally savage depression, anti-depressants were also prescribed.

I no longer knew myself at any level. I struggled to put one foot in front of the other at the start of a day, to respond to my loved ones, to get out of my own front door. My knowledge and understanding of myself and the world I lived in was shattered. I had to re-build an identity based on this new information about myself. It was like trying to do a jigsaw puzzle with no picture on the box and no border pieces to start off with. I wasn't re-making a familiar picture that had become jumbled; I had to make a completely new one, and accept that the old was gone forever.

For many months I was too numb to ask questions. When I did begin to question and try to understand what had happened to me, I struggled as a Christian to comprehend how and why I had come to such a pass.

I feel my diagnosis very keenly, as a reflection on my personhood, my personality, my will, my character. Intellectually, I acknowledge that I have a legitimate biochemical imbalance, a medical condition which responds to medication. Emotionally I feel it as a personal failure in myself and my sanctification. And therein of course lies a crippling guilt. Why aren't I a better Christian? What is it in me that falls short—my faith, my conscience, my will? Why have so many prayers for healing 'failed'? Why does God often feel so distant? Why am I so weary, yet so often reject the very things that I know will strengthen me? Why am I complaining when so many people are much worse off than I am? Why do I feel so sorry for myself? Why can't I change? *Why me?*

There is nothing new in any of these questions; they are the common lot of suffering humanity—ask Job or Jeremiah, the Psalmists or Paul (Romans 7)! The Bible promises too that God will equip us with all we need by way of encouragement, rebuke and comfort, to enable us to withstand in times of trouble, whatever their nature. We can pray, read our Bibles,

meet together as believers, and seek support from trusted Christian friends. But mental illness largely remains a taboo subject in our society and in our church. So I have believed it necessary to maintain a deep level of privacy about my condition. Consequently I have often cut myself off from help, or perceived myself cut off because of the inherent risks of disclosing my particular needs, fearing the reactions I would encounter if I chose to be frank in a setting that proved unsafe. Perhaps my fears are ill founded; mostly I have had unstinting support and love from the members of my church family I have taken into my confidence. But sadly, I have had enough negative encounters with fellow believers to foster my wariness, and so—rightly or wrongly—I have often deemed the risk too great to speak up, even when my experiences could encourage others, or when I have an opinion to express that could advance a discussion.

And so I find myself reflecting on the taboos surrounding mental illness within the church—the very place which should be the refuge of the broken, but is instead often feared as a source of misunderstanding or judgement. Fear is the basis of taboo—fear of the unknown among the 'uninitiated', fear of judgement among the 'sufferers'. Yet perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). This is the love we have in Christ—and the love he wants us to offer to each other.

### Psalm 13

*For the director of music. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?
- <sup>2</sup> How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and every day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
- <sup>3</sup> Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;
- <sup>4</sup> my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
- <sup>5</sup> But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
- <sup>6</sup> I will sing to the LORD,  
for he has been good to me.

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®  
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# A GREAT CONVERSATION STARTER

## Book and Film Review:

Book: *Atonement* by Ian McEwan  
Published by Jonathan Cape Publishers, London, 2001

Film: *Atonement* (2007)

Directed by Joe Wright and starring Saoirse Ronan, James McAvoy and Keira Knightley

BY RUTH CHAMBERS

Ian McEwan's 2001 novel, *Atonement*, and its cinematic counterpart are a goldmine for conversational evangelists. How often do you get a Hollywood film asking the question, 'Is it possible to make up for past wrongdoings, especially when they've had terrible and irreversible consequences?' And the title itself, *Atonement*—a word so rich, so laden with theological meaning—certainly doesn't pop up in everyday speech very often.

The central character of *Atonement*—Briony Tallis, played by Saoirse Ronan, Romola Garai and Vanessa Redgrave—is a 13-year-old aspiring writer when we are first introduced to her. Much of what is happening in her world perplexes her: her older sister Cecilia's (Keira Knightley) odd behaviour toward their childhood friend, Robbie (James McAvoy); his evident desire for her; and Briony's own bewildering feelings for Robbie. There is confusion and ambiguity in her world, visually reinforced by the haze of a stifling summer; yet there is also clarity. This languorous summer is interrupted by the false, and desperately serious claim Briony makes about Robbie.

The novel describes in detail the process of hiding the truth, how we persuade ourselves of lies, and wilfully erase what we know to be true. This exploration stood out to me as a reminder of how deceiving, powerful, and destructive our sin can be. Sadly, the development of these ideas is absent in the film version.

Both the film and the book offer profound reflections on death and mortality (though the book examines these ideas more comprehensively).

How does *Atonement* answer the question it poses—how can one atone for wrong one has done? More specifically, how does Briony Tallis negotiate these issues in her later life? *Atonement's* answer to this question is ambiguous and it is here that the Christian worldview substantially differs from that of the filmmakers and novelist. *Atonement's* ending suggests that one can construct an alternate reality, and that this is somehow kind and generous. At the same time, however, this solution is only a suggestion. We're still left with the

question: is Briony Tallis a coward? It's clear that from Briony's perspective she cannot atone for what she has done; that as she approaches the end of her life she remains unforgiven.

What she thought about herself as a young nurse—'However well or hard she did it (the work) ... she would never undo the damage: she was unforgivable'—has only shifted slightly by the end of the film. The elderly Briony does not speak of herself as harshly as she did in her youth, but her status as an unpardoned, unforgiven woman continues.

This is in sharp contrast to the forgiveness we know in Christ. There is no ambiguity for us who believe; we can have absolute assurance that our wrongdoings have been dealt with. Not so for Briony. She will eke out the rest of her days wanting, but not knowing how to achieve, final atonement.

I would have no issue wholeheartedly recommending both the book and the film were it not for some strong sexual undertones and a rather explicit sex scene in the film. Personally, I found this scene more bizarre than erotic (Keira Knightley looks like a squashed fly), but it hardly fits within the 'pure, lovely, praiseworthy' framework of Philippians 4. Apart from that, a great film to watch and discuss with a not yet believing friend.

■ *Ruth is a fourth year Media and Communications student at the University of Melbourne. She says, 'I love studying at Melbourne, largely because it houses Christian Union, an evangelical Christian group which has encouraged me no end during my time at Uni, as well as giving me opportunities to serve'. In her spare time Ruth enjoys running, reading magazines, cooking and shopping at markets. She can be contacted at r.chambers@ugrad.unimelb.edu.au*

## write of reply

*ishah* welcomes reader responses to topics dealt with in previous issues. These should be no more than 200 words long and can be emailed to [ishahmag@ishah.org](mailto:ishahmag@ishah.org) or posted to *ishah*, c/-56 Collier Cres, Brunswick West, Vic, 3056.

## Where to go from here...

If you think you might be suffering from mental illness it is very important that you visit a trusted General Practitioner (GP) to discuss your symptoms and options for treatment. The Beyond Blue website has a locality-based list of GPs who specialise in the field of mental illness.

Find A Doctor: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) (Click on 'Get Help' and go to 'Find a Doctor')

SANE Australia provides a Helpline service on 1800 18 SANE (7263), Monday to Friday 9:00am–5:00pm EST, and their free Infopack can be requested 24 hours a day. The Helpline provides information and referral services only.

If you urgently need to speak to someone after hours, call Lifeline 13 11 14 or Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 (for children and young people from 5–18 years). These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Starting Point is a regular column that aims to encourage readers to engage with a contemporary issue in the media.*

## Seeking Asylum in Australia

I was born in a refugee camp along the Thai-Cambodian border. My family survived the cruel Pol Pot regime and fled the politically unstable country with hopes for safety and the opportunity of a better life. By the grace of God we were given passage to Australia when I was three months old. I'm Aussie, and proud to be.

So I have been horrified by recent Australian policies on asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Mandatory detention (at one stage including children) and the Pacific Solution, with its offshore processing and indefinite waiting periods, have caused the world to look at Australia differently. These policies violate international human rights conventions. I believe they offend the heart of God.

In the Old Testament God often reminded the Israelites of their identity as aliens living in a foreign land. He did this with the instruction to pass on this compassion: 'Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt' (Exodus 22:21, NIV). A survey of Old Testament usage of the word 'alien' reveals the heart of God on the matter: 'When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him' (Leviticus 19:33).

Thankfully, the Pacific Solution is coming to an end under the new government. The Nauru processing centre is due to be shut down, hopefully in a way that ensures Nauru's precarious economy will not topple.

As Christians seeking to mirror the heart of God, we must keep a keen and watchful eye on government policies. We must remain informed to ensure policies such as the Pacific Solution won't be repeated or repackaged by future governments. We must keep the government accountable to its promises, watch carefully as it revisits the current asylum seeker policies, and be prepared to be a voice where one is needed.

■ *Leng Te is a part-time Ministry and Theology student at Tabor Victoria and calls Cornerstone Community Church, Oakleigh her home church. She is the youngest of five children and the self-appointed 'favourite' aunt of ten nieces and nephews. Email: ll\_te@yahoo.com*

