



**WORLD RELIEF**

**Welcoming the Stranger through  
Action and Education**

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**WORLD RELIEF** *Advocacy Speaking Up for the Least of These*

## **Thinking Biblically About Immigration**

While the Bible does not provide a specific prescription for a U.S. immigration policy—or for any other particular policy decision—there are certainly principles that guide us as we consider the immigration dilemma and seek a policy that reflects God’s love, compassion, and justice.

When we read the Bible as a sacred narrative of God’s interaction with humanity, we find that immigrants and refugees play many of the most important roles in the story. We see throughout Scripture how God has used the movement of people to accomplish His greater purposes. Like immigrants and refugees today, the protagonists of the Old Testament left their homelands and migrated to other lands for a variety of different reasons.

Abram, later Abraham, is introduced in Genesis 11 as an immigrant from Ur to Haran. Abram’s journeys did not stop there: this Ur-born immigrant later journeyed on to Canaan, with a stay in Egypt as well. Abram’s decision to leave Haran and bring his family to Canaan parallels the stories of many historical and contemporary immigrants, who leave the lands that they know and cross borders in pursuit of a promise—in this case a divine promise that God would bless him, make of him a great nation, and bless all nations through him (Gen 12:1-5).

Scripture suggests that all of us, as followers of Christ, whatever our nationality, have become aliens in this world, as our allegiances are to lie not primarily with any nation state but with the Kingdom of God. Paul reminds the believers at Philippi that their citizenship is in heaven, while both Peter and the author of Hebrews refer to believers as “aliens and strangers” in the world (Phil 3:20, 1 Pet 2:11, Heb 11:13).

God used migration throughout Scripture to accomplish his purposes and bring his people to a greater understanding of his will for creation. We can assume that the God who used migration so vividly throughout the Bible is the same God who works today to move his people from one place to another. Since so many of the characters of the biblical story were migrants of one sort or another, it is not surprising that God gives us a great deal of guidance as to how to interact with immigrants.

God reminds the Israelites early on of their own history as aliens in a foreign land, commanding them that, given their own experience, they should welcome the immigrant among them.

In Leviticus 19:33-34, God commands the Israelites, “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” In fact,

Israel's very identity was tied to how they treated the foreign-born, as it was a reflection of Israel's trust in God to provide and of their willingness to follow his commandments.

Over and over again, God admonishes Israel that the foreigner must receive equal treatment to the native born, without discrimination. The words of Exodus 12:49, which are repeated throughout the Pentateuch in nearly identical words many times, make clear that the same law is to be applied without prejudice to both the Israelite and the immigrant living amongst them: "The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you." This mandate for impartial treatment has both a positive and a negative connotation: immigrants should receive all the same rights and protections as the native born citizen, but they also should be subject to the same rules and restrictions.

At the same time, immigrants are recognized as being particularly vulnerable, and God therefore commands the Israelites to take special concern for them. The term usually translated as *alien* or *sojourner* appears repeatedly in conjunction with two other categories of people of special concern to God: the fatherless and the widow. For example, Deuteronomy 10:18 says that God "defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing." Psalm 146:9 echoes this concern: "The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked." The same linkage extends throughout the Old Testament, such as in Ezekiel, where the evil rulers of Israel are condemned for having "oppressed the alien and mistreated the fatherless and the widow," and in Zechariah, where we are commanded, "Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor" (Ezek 22:7, Zech 7:10).

While the Bible does not specifically state to support one piece of legislation or another today, general Biblical principles of welcome and concern for the stranger can help us form policies that are inclusive and welcoming of the immigrants in our communities.



## Statement in Support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform<sup>a</sup>

World Relief is actively engaged in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform in Congress. This document explains why we believe advocacy on this issue is important, and encourages other Evangelicals to support comprehensive immigration reform. World Relief has a long history of resettling refugees in the United States and providing immigration legal services, English classes, and other assistance to refugees and other immigrants. We are compelled to speak from our experience by engaging the Evangelical community on the issue of immigration reform.

### How Can We Expand God’s Kingdom by Accepting and Ministering to Immigrants?

The Bible commands us to welcome the stranger. Modern reality also requires us to embrace the immigrant population, many of whom are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and a growing force in the church. Through immigration, God is bringing citizens of many closed and un-reached countries into contact with American Christians. We therefore welcome the opportunity to share our faith with people who might otherwise have no opportunity to hear the Good News. The immigrant Evangelical church is growing rapidly in the U.S. and around the world. Among Evangelicals in the United States, “the fastest growing are found among the Independent immigrant churches. . . . In 20 years, African, Asian, and Latin American Evangelicals . . . will likely be at the forefront of . . . global movements as well as their manifestations in the USA.”<sup>b</sup>

In the Bible, God repeatedly calls us to show love and compassion to “aliens,” or immigrants. In Deuteronomy 10:18 – 19,<sup>c</sup> we are told that “[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.” Leviticus 19:33-34 teaches us that, “[w]hen an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

Love in the Christian tradition requires specific acts of care and respect. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus answers the question of “who is my neighbor?” with the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:29-37) Part of what makes the Good Samaritan parable so compelling is that the Samaritan, who was a stranger or alien himself, was the one who stopped to help the Jewish man. This and other parables remind us that “we are all aliens sent out to help

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<sup>a</sup> © World Relief, February 27, 2006. This statement may be reproduced and distributed, with attribution to World Relief. World Relief is the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals USA. In the United States and 24 countries around the world, World Relief works with local churches to create sustainable solutions that help the desperately poor. World Relief’s programs include refugee and immigrant assistance, disaster relief, AIDS ministries, community health, agricultural development and community banking.

<sup>b</sup> Dr. Todd M. Johnson, Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, “USA Evangelicals/evangelicals in Global Context: Trends and Statistics.”

<sup>c</sup> All Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version.

other aliens find a place of safety in this world.”<sup>d</sup> God does not distinguish among arbitrary divisions such as country of origin. Instead, God desires to include all people in His Kingdom, for “[t]here is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

Evangelicals recognize that, “[e]veryone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” (Romans 13:1) Therefore we support the importance of following and enforcing laws, while simultaneously recognizing that laws were created for the well-being of human beings and society. Ultimately the laws must answer to God’s higher law, which requires us to treat all human life with sanctity. All persons bear the image of Christ and thus should be treated with the dignity and respect that we would afford our Savior. Valuing persons includes doing what we can to preserve them, to care for them, and to create fair systems that lead to healthy societies.<sup>e</sup> We must from time to time ask if our human-made laws create a just and better existence for those who are created in God's image.

### **Why Do Immigrants Come Here, and What Do They Do for Society?**

We at World Relief have worked to serve refugees and other immigrants for many years, and have found that they contribute to our society in countless ways. Immigrants often fill jobs that native-born Americans do not fill, such as jobs that require hard labor but less education. There are also many immigrants in medical and technical fields. Immigrants are also helping to fill the gap left by an aging population that is leaving the workforce. Immigrants pay taxes, participate in our communities, churches, schools, and political systems. Immigrants are dedicated to their families, and are hard-working.

We know that some immigrants have violated immigration law by entering this country illegally or overstaying a valid visa, and there are many reasons why they have done so. They may have had to flee quickly to escape persecution, civil strife, or natural disasters in their own countries. Many others came to this country because they needed to support their families, who are from countries where they cannot earn a living wage. Many immigrants have applied legitimately for the right to live in this country with their family members, but must wait for many years for final approval due to backlogs in the system.

### **The Need for Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

Immigration is a defining feature of America’s history and will continue to be an important issue for America’s future. President Bush, members of both parties in Congress, and the faith community have called for changes to our immigration system to address numerous problems.

World Relief believes that a comprehensive approach to immigration reform is required to address the complex and outmoded immigration system that currently exists. For example, current law has created numerous barriers for legitimate refugees abroad and seekers of asylum in the U.S. to receive the protection they deserve. Additionally, approximately

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<sup>d</sup> Jonathan Robert Nelson, Remarks for The American Bar Association’s, “Fortress America: The State and Future of U.S. Immigration Law and Policy,” held at the National Press Club, January 26, 2006.

<sup>e</sup> Evangelical Project for Public Engagement. National Association of Evangelicals, [For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility](#), 8, 10 (2004).

eleven million “undocumented” immigrants currently live in the United States,<sup>f</sup> and more than three million U.S. citizen children live in families headed by an undocumented immigrant.<sup>g</sup> An “undocumented” individual does not have current permission to work or live in the U.S.

Many undocumented children are raised here but are unable to attend college or work legally. Individuals are risking their lives and literally dying to come to the United States. Families face inhumane waits of up to twenty years to reunify with family members. There are an inadequate number of visas for employers to hire the foreign workers necessary for jobs that they cannot find native-born Americans to fill. We have a growing black market characterized by widespread use of false documents, increasingly violent smuggling cartels, and exploitation of undocumented workers.

Because many immigrants do not currently have a means by which to receive lawful status in the United States, they go undetected by living in the shadows. If they could apply for current lawful status, they would be much more likely to come forward, and the government could better target the small number of potential criminals and terrorists.

We do not condone any violations of the law, such as living in the United States illegally, but we recognize that our complex and inadequate immigration system has made it nearly impossible for many of the hard-working people that our country needs, to enter or remain in the country legally and/or reunite with family members.

### **What Are World Relief and Other Agencies Doing?**

World Relief is actively advocating for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level, cooperating with other faith-based agencies, and working to engage the Evangelical community. We approach comprehensive immigration reform as a non-partisan issue, in which we feel called to engage based upon Scripture and our moral values.

We believe that a comprehensive approach is required that goes beyond border protection alone and addresses the current problems of our immigration system, by looking at root causes of immigration, developing workable solutions, and providing dignified relief to the millions of immigrants who are contributing to our communities, despite their lack of legal status. We also advocate for reforms that better protect those seeking refugee and asylum status.

We advocate that any legislation that is passed include the following specific principles:

- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;
- The creation of more responsive legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner that prevents their exploitation and assures them due process;
- The option for those individuals and families who are already living in the U.S. and working hard, to apply for permanent legal status and citizenship if they choose to do so, by meeting specific application criteria; and

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<sup>f</sup> <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/44.pdf>, stating that as of March 2005, there were nearly 11 million undocumented individuals in the U.S.

<sup>g</sup> <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/46.pdf>.

- Border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of enforcing our laws.

**What Can You Do? A Call to Action.**

- Ask your church and/or Pastor to sign the attached letter to the President and Congress, in support of comprehensive immigration reform.
- Call or send a letter or e-mail to the President, your Senators and Representative, in support of comprehensive immigration reform. (See [www.whitehouse.gov/contact/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/); [www.senate.gov/](http://www.senate.gov/); [www.house.gov/writerep/](http://www.house.gov/writerep/).)
- Schedule an appointment with your Senator or Representative, or with their staff.
- Talk about immigrants and refugees in your church.
- Volunteer with a local refugee or immigration program, such as a World Relief office.



**WORLD RELIEF** *Advocacy Speaking Up for the Least of These*

## Debunking Myths

### Top 10 Myths and Facts about Immigration

# 1

#### ■ IMMIGRANTS DON'T PAY TAXES

Immigrants pay taxes, in the form of income, property, sales, and taxes at the federal and state level. As far as income tax payments go, sources vary in their accounts, but a range of studies find that immigrants pay between \$90 and \$140 billion a year in federal, state, and local taxes. Undocumented immigrants pay income taxes as well, as evidenced by the Social Security Administration's "suspense file" (taxes that cannot be matched to workers' names and social security numbers), which grew by \$20 billion between 1990 and 1998.

# 2

#### ■ IMMIGRANTS COME HERE TO TAKE WELFARE

Immigrants come to work and reunite with family members. Immigrant labor force participation is consistently higher than native-born, and immigrant workers make up a larger share of the U.S. labor force (12.4 percent) than they do the U.S. population (11.5 percent). Moreover, the ratio between immigrant use of public benefits and the amount of taxes they pay is consistently favorable to the U.S. In one estimate, immigrants earn about \$240 billion a year, pay about \$90 billion a year in taxes, and use about \$5 billion in public benefits. In another cut of the data, immigrant tax payments total \$20 to \$30 billion more than the amount of government services they use.

# 3

#### ■ IMMIGRANTS SEND ALL THEIR MONEY BACK TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES

In addition to the consumer spending of immigrant households, immigrants and their businesses contribute \$162 billion in tax revenue to U.S. federal, state, and local governments. While it is true that immigrants remit billions of dollars a year to their home countries, this is one of the most targeted and effective forms of direct foreign investment.

## **4 ■ IMMIGRANTS TAKE JOBS AND OPPORTUNITY AWAY FROM AMERICANS**

The largest wave of immigration to the U.S. since the early 1900s coincided with our lowest national unemployment rate and fastest economic growth. Immigrant entrepreneurs create jobs for U.S. and foreign workers, and foreign-born students allow many U.S. graduate programs to keep their doors open. While there has been no comprehensive study done of immigrant town businesses, we have countless examples: in Silicon Valley, companies begun by Chinese and Indian immigrants generated more than \$19.5 billion in sales and nearly 73,000 jobs in 2000.

## **5 ■ IMMIGRANTS ARE A DRAIN ON THE U.S. ECONOMY**

During the 1990s, half of all new workers were foreign-born, filling gaps left by native-born workers in both the high- and low-skill ends of the spectrum. Immigrants fill jobs in key sectors, start their own businesses, and contribute to a thriving economy. The net benefit of immigration to the U.S. is nearly \$10 billion annually. As Alan Greenspan points out, 70 percent of immigrants arrive in prime working age. That means we haven't spent a penny on their education, yet they are transplanted into our workforce and will contribute \$500 billion toward our social security system over the next 20 years

## **6 ■ IMMIGRANTS DON'T WANT TO LEARN ENGLISH OR BECOME AMERICANS**

Within 10 years of arrival, more than 75 percent of immigrants speak English well; moreover, demand for English classes at the adult level far exceeds supply. Greater than 33 percent of immigrants are naturalized citizens; given increased immigration in the 1990s, this figure will rise as more legal permanent residents become eligible for naturalization in the coming years. The number of immigrants naturalizing spiked sharply after two events: enactment of immigration and welfare reform laws in 1996, and the terrorist attacks in 2001.

## **7 ■ TODAY'S IMMIGRANTS ARE DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF 100 YEARS AGO**

The percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign-born now stands at 11.5 percent; in the early 20th century it was approximately 15 percent. Similar to accusations about today's immigrants, those of 100 years ago initially often settled in mono-ethnic neighborhoods, spoke their native languages, and built up newspapers and businesses that catered to their fellow émigrés. They also experienced the same types of discrimination that today's immigrants face, and integrated within American culture at a similar rate. If we view history objectively, we remember that every new wave of immigrants has been met with suspicion and doubt and yet, ultimately, every past wave of immigrants has been vindicated and saluted.

## **8 ■ MOST IMMIGRANTS CROSS THE BORDER ILLEGALLY**

Around 75 percent of today's immigrants have legal permanent (immigrant) visas; of the 25 percent that are undocumented, 40 percent overstayed temporary (non-immigrant) visas.

## **9 ■ WEAK U.S. BORDER ENFORCEMENT HAS LED TO HIGH UNDOCUMENTED**

### **IMMIGRATION**

From 1986 to 1998, the Border Patrol's budget increased six-fold and the number of agents stationed on our southwest border doubled to 8,500. The Border Patrol also toughened its enforcement strategy, heavily fortifying typical urban entry points and pushing migrants into dangerous desert areas, in hopes of deterring crossings. Instead, the undocumented immigrant population doubled in that time frame, to 8 million— despite the legalization of nearly 3 million immigrants after the enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986. Insufficient legal avenues for immigrants to enter the U.S., compared with the number of jobs in need of workers, have significantly contributed to this current conundrum.

## **10 ■ THE WAR ON TERRORISM CAN BE WON THROUGH IMMIGRATION**

### **RESTRICTIONS**

No security expert since Sept. 11 has said that restrictive immigration measures would have prevented the terrorist attacks—instead, the key is effective use of good intelligence. Most of the 9/11 hijackers were here on legal visas. Since 9/11, the myriad of measures targeting immigrants in the name of national security have netted no terrorism prosecutions. In fact, several of these measures could have the opposite effect and actually make us less safe, as targeted communities of immigrants are afraid to come forward with information.

*Sources for this information are available at [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org).*



## **WORLD RELIEF** *Advocacy Speaking Up for the Least of These*

### **Why Advocate?**

Proverbs 31:8: *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

World Relief's commitment to advocacy for justice and on behalf of the poor and oppressed is based on biblical truths and on the example of Jesus. Scripture constantly emphasizes the importance of showing compassion (Matthew 25:31-46), seeking justice (Isaiah 58:1-14), defending what is right (Proverbs 31:8), and showing mercy (Micah 6:8).

World Relief seeks to follow the example of Christ, who intervenes on our behalf to God, as our advocate. Because of Christ's love and support of us, we receive freedom and eternal life. As Christians we are called to be Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), representing Christ to the world and speaking on His behalf. For this reason, we also defend those who are oppressed, weak and who do not have a voice of their own, whether in Darfur, Burma or the US, just as Christ defends us.

### **What is Advocacy?**

A great definition of advocacy, is as follows:

*Seeking with, and on behalf of, the poor to address underlying causes of poverty, bring justice, and support good development through influencing the policies and practices of the powerful.*

Advocacy is not just responding to individual needs, but influencing policies and structures that create poverty and oppress God's children.

We can see a perfect example of an advocate in the life of Esther. She was a normal woman who was suddenly thrust into a position of great influence; as the wife of a King. When she learned of the great injustice happening to the Jewish people, she risked her life to advocate and intervene for them and to persuade the King to show justice and mercy. "“Who knows,” said Mordecai to Queen Esther, ‘but that you have come to royal position for *such a time as this?*’”

Esther's story reminds us that although World Relief may just be one organization, God has given us resources and the ability to make a difference in the lives of many.

World Relief continue to educate and mobilize churches on the important issues of our day and speak out to those in positions of influence so that the vulnerable, oppressed and poor will receive the dignity, rights, and freedom God desires for them.



# WORLD RELIEF

February 27, 2006

Dear Evangelical Leader:

I am writing you to let you know about exciting advocacy work that World Relief is doing in support of comprehensive immigration reform. We live in a nation of immigrants, and immigrants are a growing part of the thriving church. Discussions of our country's immigration system appear often on national and local news.

World Relief has a long history of serving refugees and other immigrants in the United States. Over the last year, World Relief has been actively engaged in studying the issue of immigration reform. As a result, we have chosen to support comprehensive immigration reform. Attached is a background statement for Evangelicals that we have prepared with our views on the issue. We encourage you to review it thoughtfully.

Attached also is a letter that we are circulating for signatures from Evangelical leaders, churches, and organizations, asking the President and the Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform. If you support the principles outlined in the background statement and the letter, we encourage you to sign on to it.

We plan to distribute the letter with signatures in early March 2006, but will keep the letter open for additional signatories and distribution after that date. Please follow the instructions at the bottom of the letter if you would like to lend your support to this important cause. If you would like to receive more information or would like to get involved in other advocacy issues at World Relief, please email [policy@wr.org](mailto:policy@wr.org).

As always, we thank you for your support of World Relief.

Serving Together In Christ,

Sammy Mah,  
President & CEO  
World Relief

**For Sign-on by National Evangelical Organizations, Local Churches and Other Evangelical Organizations, and Individual Evangelical Leaders- please email [immigration@wr.org](mailto:immigration@wr.org)**

Dear Mr. President and Members of Congress:

We are writing to you as non-partisan Evangelical leaders and churches who are concerned about the issue of immigration in the United States. We urge you to support comprehensive immigration reform. The current state of immigration in this country is a complex situation, which requires a workable solution beyond increasing enforcement mechanisms.

We support comprehensive immigration reform, based on Biblical mandates, our Christian faith and values, and our commitment to civil and human rights. We value immigrants as human beings, made in the image of God. We are aware of the obstacles that immigrants face, especially undocumented individuals, because they are vital members of our churches, our communities, and our nation. Evangelical immigrants are a continually growing part of our churches.

God requires that we show love and compassion to aliens. In Deuteronomy 10:18–19, we learn that “[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.” Leviticus 19:33-34 teaches us, “when an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

We are deeply concerned with the possibility of some anti-immigrant provisions being included in legislation that could pass in Congress this year. Instead, we encourage Congress and the Administration to enact comprehensive immigration reform that includes the following principles.

- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;
- The creation of more responsive legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner that prevents their exploitation and assures them due process;
- The option for those individuals and families who are already living in the U.S. and working hard to apply for permanent legal status and citizenship if they choose to do so, by meeting specific application criteria; and
- Border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of enforcing our laws.

Thank you for your consideration of these important principles.

Sincerely,



### **Advocacy 101- Communicating and Meeting with Congress Members**

One of the main shortcomings in our work to pass compassionate immigration reform in 2007 was that members of Congress were hearing primarily from those who opposed comprehensive reform. In fact, some staff members estimated the ratio was 10 anti-immigrant calls for every pro-immigrant call! Nearly every poll shows restrictionists to be in the minority, but they have been loud, vocal, and organized. Consequently, it is all the more imperative that our elected officials hear from the majority in the faith community who support humane, compassionate, and sensible reform. If we hope to pass strong legislation, the groundwork must be laid now even if the next opportunity doesn't come until 2009. The religious community can provide leadership and encouragement to our elected officials by prioritizing this agenda and making clear that we stand behind them. It is important to tell our elected officials that the faith community supports comprehensive immigration reform more than ever and to educate them about what elements we insist be included in any acceptable comprehensive immigration bill. There are many ways to get this message to your elected officials, but nothing is better than simply telling them directly!

#### **Communicating to Members of Congress and the Administration**

Communicating with your members of Congress and administration officials is the most important advocacy step you can take. It takes just minutes to pick up the phone, put pen to paper, or log onto e-mail and let your representatives in Washington, D.C., know how you feel about the issue you care about. While this communication is often used to ask them to support policy or defeat harmful legislation, also remember to thank legislators when they act on your wishes or take a position you agree with. Some elected officials have consistent anti immigrant policy positions, or don't communicate much on these issues. It is important to contact these officials, and let them know that his/her constituents are supportive of immigrants' rights.

While you may not be successful in convincing them that your position is correct, it is important to create the space for dialogue and for him/her to hear your perspective. Education and politics can, over time, change people's minds. In addition, you may also want to voice your opinion to Congressional leadership and key committee members. These leaders are responsible for setting national policy and should be responsive to a broader sampling of public opinion. The committee with jurisdiction over many immigration issues is the Judiciary Committee (in both the House and Senate) and, within the Judiciary Committee, the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Citizenship.

## **Meeting with Members of Congress and the Administration**

Face-to-face meetings are the most effective way to influence policymakers. You can meet with them either in their district offices or in Washington, D.C. If you are unable to see policymakers in person, you should still meet with their staffers.

### **Arranging the Appointment**

To meet with your senators and/or representatives, call the legislator's office (either in Washington, D.C. or at home). Identify yourself as a constituent (if you are) and ask to speak to the staffer who is responsible for immigration. Generally, members of Congress are in Washington, D.C., Tuesday through Thursday, and are frequently in their home state Friday through Monday and when Congress is not in session.

### **Preparing for the Meeting**

- **DO YOUR HOMEWORK!** Know exactly what you want to say and carefully review your messages.
- If possible, compile information about the impact of specific immigration issues on the members of Congress' district/state. Do not compile a long list of statistics: your elected officials will not remember them and they will lose their impact. Prepare a few dramatic numbers or anecdotes to illustrate your points. Collect recent local news articles that illustrate the issue. Or, consider including in your meeting individuals who would be affected by the policy change.
- To encourage policymakers to support a specific immigration issue, present materials that clearly articulate your position, using specific case examples when possible.
- Know the counter-arguments and be ready to respectfully answer any questions or disagreements.
- Make sure everyone in your group is prepared. Brief everyone attending the meeting and make sure they have any written materials to review well ahead of time.
- Be organized. Agree ahead of time the role each participant will take, who discusses what, and in what order participants will speak.
- If you are going as part of a larger coalition, meet ahead of time. It is unwise to have an internal debate or conversation in front of your elected official. Be certain everyone agrees on your group's central message and what you want to ask the legislator to do for you.
- Prepare a packet to leave behind that could include background information, fact sheets, and/or newspaper clippings. Attach your card or contact information to the packet.

### **Making the Presentation**

- Be on time! Allow extra time to clear security, especially at the White House, on Capitol Hill, and in busy federal office buildings.
- Begin by introducing yourselves.
- Explain to the legislator/staffer why you asked for the meeting.
- Present your concerns simply and directly. Get to your "bottom line" immediately. Be brief, direct, courteous and positive. Presentation of each topic roughly should follow this outline:
  - **Background:** Explain the issue in the simplest possible terms.
  - **Impact:** Explain how the issue directly affects your community or the group you represent.
  - **Recommendation:** Indicate what you would like the policymaker to do.

- Do not fight with the policymaker or staff members.
- Politely answer questions and concerns, but if you disagree, make your point and move on. Remember, you are meeting with the member or staff person to inform him/her about your positions on issues and encouraging their support.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, say so, and promise to get back with the answer. Be sure to follow up with your answer as quickly as possible after the meeting.
- Make sure you do not do all of the talking! Give the policymaker opportunities to ask questions or state his or her opinion. Members and staff will appreciate the chance to be heard, and you will learn much more by listening. Also, ask questions.
- Stay away from jargon and acronyms. Remember that the policymaker deals with dozens, if not hundreds, of issues each week, each with its own “language.”
- Thank the policymaker if he or she has been supportive. They receive thanks far less than they get criticized. They will appreciate your recognition.
- Be sure to ask for the policymaker’s support. If he or she is already very supportive, ask him or her to cosponsor the relevant bill and/or take a leadership role in moving the bill through the process, getting additional cosponsors, or other ways.

### **Following-up After the Meeting**

- Send a note thanking the member or staff person for meeting with you. Briefly summarize the main points of the meeting.
- Remember to follow up with responses to any questions the member or staff person asked but you could not answer at the time.
- Do not think of the meeting as an isolated event. Think of other ways to maintain the relationship you have initiated.

**SAMPLE LETTER IN SUPPORT OF COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM**

VIA FACSIMILE: \_\_\_\_\_

The Honorable Representative / Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative / Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing to express my concern about the immigration debate that is unfolding in Congress right now.

As a person of faith, I support comprehensive immigration reform, based on Biblical mandates, my Christian faith and values, and my commitment to civil and human rights. I value immigrants as human beings, made in the image of God. I am aware of the obstacles that immigrants face, especially undocumented individuals, because they are vital members of our churches, our communities, and our nation.

This is a historic moment in which your leadership is needed to guide this country in the right direction and I would urge you to consider reform that is not enforcement only but is comprehensive in nature and all based on the following principles:

- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;
- The creation of more responsive legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner that prevents their exploitation and assures them due process;
- The option for those individuals and families who are already living in the U.S. and working hard to apply for permanent legal status and citizenship if they choose to do so, by meeting specific application criteria; and
- Border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of enforcing our laws.

Thank you for your consideration of these important principles.

Sincerely,

Name  
Street address  
City, State



**WORLD RELIEF** *Advocacy Speaking Up for the Least of These*



## “Welcoming the Stranger”

By Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang

Published by InterVarsity Press

Available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

You can also join the book’s Facebook Page

[www.WelcomingTheStranger.com](http://www.WelcomingTheStranger.com)



## **WORLD RELIEF** *Advocacy Speaking Up for the Least of These*

### **Discussion Questions**

Based on the book “Welcoming the Stranger ”

These questions are designed to encourage discussion about and deeper reflection on the complexities surrounding immigration and the integration of this important issue with our Christian faith. We hope that they will be particularly useful for guiding small group discussions.

#### **Chapter 1: The Immigration Dilemma**

1. Two views were presented in the quotations at the beginning of the chapter. Which of these views have you heard the most?
2. The chapter says that, “It is these ‘easy’ issues that often prove to be the most complex and the hardest to resolve, since our presumptions keep us from hearing the other side.” What presumptions have you held regarding the issue of immigration?
3. The authors have shared their backgrounds and experiences with immigrants; spend some time to share in the group your own experiences with immigrants and the debate.
4. C. S. Lewis says that humans are the “holiest object presented to your senses.” How does this quote help us to begin to treat our neighbors in God’s image?
5. Which aspect of the immigration debate either interests or confuses you the most? (Political, economic, spiritual, etc.)
6. What is one question concerning immigration that you would like to see answered in your study of this issue?

#### **Chapter 2: “Aliens Among You”: Who Are Undocumented Immigrants?**

1. The rhetoric surrounding undocumented immigrants is particularly fierce. How does the emotional rhetoric change the debate?
2. How do the stories of immigrants help us see the image of God in present-day circumstances?
3. Which story stands out to you as the most interesting story? Why are you drawn to that particular story?
4. In the story of Pedro and Martha, Social Security cards and taxes show the complexity of ethical dimensions in the issue of undocumented immigrants. If most undocumented immigrants pay taxes, what rights should they have under the law?

#### **Chapter 3: Nation of Immigrants: A Historical Perspective on Immigration to the United States**

1. God presents care for refugees as a justice issue while reminding the Hebrews that he was faithful to redeem their situation. How can the church remember our past in a productive way? How can we rehearse our own immigrant history both in a national and spiritual sense?
2. Historian Roger Daniels has proposed that Americans have a “dualistic” view of immigration. What does he mean? Do you think this is historical or hypocritical?
3. What are the two or three goals that you find immigrants of the past and present share?
4. What does the ebb and flow of historical sentiment toward immigrants reveal about our country? Is it an encouragement or a discouragement to read the brief historical immigration summary of our nation?

5. In the section titled “The Church and Immigration History,” what surprised you the most about the church’s response to immigrations in the past?

#### **Chapter 4: Immigrating the Legal Way: Our Immigration System Today**

1. Before reading this chapter, what were some common misconceptions that you have either heard or held with regard to the current immigration system?
2. Many say that undocumented immigrants should just “wait in line.” How does this chapter shed light on this misconception? How has your understanding of the immigration system changed?
3. Have you ever known anyone struggle with the process of obtaining a visitor’s visa? What was their experience?
4. What surprised you the most about the path to legal status in the U.S.?
5. In your opinion, what role does the U.S. economy have on undocumented immigration?
6. Do you think that environmental or economic hardship should be added to the definition of a refugee? Why or why not?

#### **Chapter 5: Thinking Biblically About Immigration**

1. Share and reflect on a past experience of turning to Scripture for insight and principles regarding a particular social or political issue. How is this issue of undocumented immigration similar or different?
2. How should our heavenly citizenship dictate the way we view and treat immigrants in our churches? How about in our schools and in our communities?
3. Why do you think that God places special emphasis on the well-being of immigrants?
4. How does Jesus respond when he is asked, “Who is my neighbor?” How does his response inform how we view immigrants?
5. After reading this chapter, do you agree that there is a biblical mandate to care for immigrants? If so, what is one way you could begin to fulfill this calling during the next week?

#### **Chapter 6: Concerns About Immigration**

1. What were some of your primary concerns regarding this debate before reading this book? Who or what was your source for these concerns?
2. Do you think that we have an obligation to the poor living among us prior to the poor living abroad? What are some possible nuances to that argument?
3. Which argument of those against a more generous immigration policy—poverty already in our communities, creation care, national security, cultural identity, etc.—is most persuasive and compelling to you. Why?
4. Describe or reflect on a time when you were a minority. What was the most uncomfortable aspect of this experience?
5. What distinction do the authors make between “doing justice” and “acting justly?” How does this change or reinforce your own perception of the command?
6. Are there any immigrants or refugees in your daily path? At the end of your time together, take some time to pray for ways to reach out to immigrants and the foreign-born in your own neighborhood.

#### **Chapter 7: The Value of Immigration to the United States**

1. What do you see as the impact of immigration on your local community? What are the benefits? What are the costs?
2. Do you think God’s instructions to “welcome the stranger” trump any negative impact that immigrants might have on the economy? Why or why not?

3. What were a couple of the key take-away points from the section on global perspectives on immigration?
4. Over the last fifty years, immigrants have moved to more developed countries. What are the implications for the sending and receiving countries as well as for the immigrants themselves?
5. It is often difficult to understand the economic impact of immigrants. From this chapter, what is the ultimate impact contended to be?
6. Examine George Borjas' argument and the counterarguments discussed. Which makes more sense?
7. In your personal experience—or in those of your family or community—how have you observed the economic impact of immigrants?
8. Brainstorm together some of the possible “root causes” of why there are so many undocumented immigrants in America today.

### **Chapter 8: The Politics and Policies of Immigration Reform**

1. Do you think that the issue of immigration has been used for political gain by members of Congress and those running for President?
2. Do you think that a path to earned legalization with the appropriate penalties is a fair consequence for the legal infraction of illegal presence in the U.S.?
3. How do you think the moral voice of the faith community can shape the immigration debate?
4. What factors have made immigration a “hot topic” in political circles?
5. After reading through the many pieces of legislation concerning immigration, what are the core elements that you believe immigration reform should include?
6. What further information would you need to know in order to advocate on behalf of immigrants?
7. As a follower of Christ, how can you encourage the people within your sphere of influence toward a more godly view of undocumented immigrants?

### **Chapter 9: The Church and Immigration Today**

1. Do you feel that the current immigration law is just or unjust? Why?
2. How do you see your church engaging in ministering to “the least of these” in the United States?
3. How should ethnic majority churches respond to the rise in immigrant churches?
4. If your church were to create a statement on immigration, what would it say?
5. In his daily life, Jesus showed personal hospitality to the outcasts of his day both ethnically with the Samaritan woman (John 4), religiously with the Roman centurion (Matthew 8), and socially with the woman caught in adultery (John 8). What can we do to show Christlike hospitality both personally and corporately?
6. Do you agree with the authors when they state that God is using cultural diversity to accomplish his greater purposes here on earth?
7. How does the fact that the immigrant church is the fastest growing evangelical church in America change the missions strategy of the church?
8. In the conclusion the author remarks “correct obedience to God is submitting to what is essential to God’s heart.” After reading this chapter, what do you feel is essential to God’s heart in the midst of the immigration debate? What do you feel God may be asking you to submit to while reading this book?

### **Chapter 10: A Christian Response to the Immigration Dilemma**

1. The authors argue that we cannot really understand the immigration issue until we personally know and interact with immigrants in our community. How could you begin to do this?
2. Is there a church or organization in your community that is actively serving the foreign born? How could you get involved?
3. What could you—individually or as a group—do to help educate your larger church community about this issue?
4. Many Christians are wary of meddling in politics. Why do you think this is? Do you think that there is a place for the church to be involved in political advocacy?
5. How could you personally and as a church community help your congressional representatives understand your position(s) on this issue?
6. What do the authors argue are some of the root causes of immigration? Do you agree? What part of the way that you live might contribute, either positively or negatively, to these situations?
7. What response do you believe that God is calling you to with this important and controversial issue? How will you respond to that call?



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### **Ministries and Organizations Serving Immigrants and Refugees in the United States**

Throughout the country, there are churches and Christian organizations working to serve, welcome and empower immigrants and refugees, and they very often need volunteers. We have listed several of the larger, national organizations below. Also many local organizations and individual churches are doing important work in Christ's name—so many that we cannot include contact information for each one here.

#### **World Relief**

7 E. Baltimore St.  
Baltimore, MD 21203  
443-451-1900 or 800-535-5433  
[www.wr.org](http://www.wr.org)

World Relief, our employer, a partner in the publication of this book and the recipient of the author's portions of the royalties of this book, is the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals. World Relief's mission is to work with, for and from the church to relieve human suffering, poverty and hunger worldwide in the name of Jesus Christ. Within the United States, we have various affiliate offices that partner on a local basis with churches to holistically assist immigrants, refugees and members of their communities to become fully integrated participants in society. World Relief's U.S. offices are listed below; you can call the office nearest you to ask about church partnership and volunteer opportunities. Our website also provides further information on our work in the United States and around the world, with links to the local websites of many of our individual affiliate offices.

#### **California**

Modesto	209-575-1132
Sacramento	916-978-2650
San Jose	408-729-3786
Southern California	714-210-4730
Stockton	209-943-6919

#### **Florida**

Jacksonville	904-448-0733
Miami	305-541-8320
Tampa	727-849-7900

#### **Georgia**

Atlanta	404-294-4352
Lawrenceville	770-338-5968

#### **Idaho**

Boise	208-323-4964
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**Illinois**

Aurora 630-906-9546  
Chicago 773-583-9191  
DuPage County 630-462-7566  
Moline 309-764-2279

**Maryland**

Baltimore 410-244-0002

**Minnesota**

Minneapolis-St. Paul 612-798-4332

**North Carolina**

High Point 336-887-9007

**Tennessee**

Nashville 615-833-7735

**Texas**

Fort Worth 817-924-0748

**Washington**

Kent 253-854-7857  
Richland 509-734-5477  
Seattle 206-587-0234  
Spokane 509-484-9829

**Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC)**

415 Michigan Ave., NE  
Suite 150  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-635-2556  
[www.cliniclegal.org](http://www.cliniclegal.org)

CLINIC, working through a network of local affiliates, including many Catholic Charities and Catholic Social Services offices and individual Catholic parishes, provides immigration legal services to local offices located throughout the United States. Many of these local offices have volunteer opportunities. Look at [www.cliniclegal.org](http://www.cliniclegal.org) for the Public Directory of CLINIC Member organizations.

**Church World Service**

28606 Phillips Street  
P.O. Box 968  
Elkhart, IN 46515  
574-264-3102 or 1-800-297-1516  
[www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)

Church World Service, which is affiliated with about thirty-five Protestant and Orthodox denominations in the U.S., provides a number of services including programs for refugees and immigrants. Their website can help you to connect with a local office in your area.

**Episcopal Migration Ministries**

815 Second Avenue

New York, NY 10017

800-334-7626

[www.episcopalchurch.org/emm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/emm)

A ministry of the Episcopal Church in the U.S., Episcopal Migration Ministries provides refugee resettlement and immigration services at locations throughout the country. For information on local affiliates, see their website.

**Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service**

700 Light St.

Baltimore, MD 21230

410-230-2700

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

Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service (LIRS) also serves refugees and immigrants in many communities throughout the United States, working through affiliated offices. It is associated with several Lutheran denominations in the United States. Their website includes a full list of affiliate offices.



## **WORLD RELIEF** *Advocacy Speaking Up for the Least of These*

### **Ministries and Organizations Addressing the Root Causes of Immigration**

There are literally thousands of excellent Christian ministries and organizations seeking to act out of God's love to assist and empower those facing situations of poverty, unemployment, war and conflict, and environmental degradation. Though we cannot mention all of them here, we have provided the names and website addresses of several reputable organizations engaged in this work, through direct service or through advocacy, that you could choose to support in various ways.

A Rocha ([www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org))  
Agros International ([www.agros.org](http://www.agros.org))  
Baptist World Aid (<http://www.bwanet.org/default.aspx?pid=13>)  
Bread for the World ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org))  
Catholic Relief Services ([www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org))  
Christ for the City International ([www.cfc.org](http://www.cfc.org))  
Christian Reformed Church World Relief Committee  
(<http://www.crcna.org/pages/crwrcc.cfm>)  
Compassion International ([www.compassion.com](http://www.compassion.com))  
Congo Initiative ([www.congoinitiative.org](http://www.congoinitiative.org))  
Covenant World Relief (<http://www.covchurch.org/cwr>)  
Floresta ([www.floresta.org](http://www.floresta.org))  
Food for the Hungry ([www.fh.org](http://www.fh.org))  
Habitat for Humanity ([www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org))  
InnerCHANGE (<http://www.crmleaders.org/ministries/innerchange>)  
International Justice Mission ([www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org))  
Lutheran World Relief ([www.lwr.org](http://www.lwr.org))  
Mennonite Central Committee ([www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org))  
The Micah Challenge ([www.micahchallenge.org](http://www.micahchallenge.org))  
The ONE Campaign ([www.one.org](http://www.one.org))  
OxFam International ([www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org))  
Samaritan's Purse (<http://www.samaritanspurse.org>)  
Salvation Army World Service ([www.salvationarmy.org](http://www.salvationarmy.org))  
Servants to Asia's Urban Poor ([www.servantsasia.org](http://www.servantsasia.org))  
Tear Fund ([www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org))  
World Concern ([www.worldconcern.org](http://www.worldconcern.org))  
World Relief ([www.wr.org](http://www.wr.org))  
World Vision ([www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org))



## **WORLD RELIEF** *Advocacy Speaking Up for the Least of These*

### **Selected Resources for Learning More about the Immigration Issue**

Please note that some resources may contain language or other content that some readers may find offensive.

#### **Books**

##### ***Christian Perspectives on Immigration***

*Bulls, Bears, & Golden Calves: Applying Christian Ethics in Economics* by John E. Stapleford (InterVarsity Press, 2002) (see particularly chapter fifteen)

*Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* by M. Daniel Carroll R. (Baker Academic, 2008)

*Good Intentions: Nine Hot-Button Issues Viewed Through the Eyes of Faith* by Charles M. North and Bob Smietana (Moody Publishers, 2008) (see particularly chapter nine)

*Re-Creating America: The Ethics of U.S. Immigration Policy in a Christian Perspective* by Dana Wilbanks (Abingdon Press, 1996)

*Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* by Justo González (Abingdon Press, 1996) (see particularly chapter four)

##### ***Immigrant and Refugee Stories***

*Brother, I'm Dying* by Edwidge Danticat (Knopf, 2007)

*Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario (Random House, 2006)

*The New Americans: Seven Families Journey to Another Country* by Rubén Martínez (New Press, 2004)

*Of Beetles & Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard* by Mawi Aseghom (Little, Brown and Company, 2001)

*The Story of My Life: An Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky* by Farah Ahmed and Tanim Ansary, (Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2005)

##### ***On Serving Immigrants and Refugees***

*The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* by Mary Pipher (Harvest Books, 2003)

***History of Immigration to the United States***

*Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* by Jean Pfaelzer (Random House, 2007)

*Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* by Roger Daniels (Hill and Wang, 2004)

*Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* by Juan Gonzalez (Viking Penguin, 2000)

*Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind in America* by Lawrence B. Davis (University of Illinois Press, 1973)

*Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* by John Higham (Rutgers University Press, 2002)

**Websites**

American Immigration Law Foundation  
[www.ailf.org](http://www.ailf.org)

Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform  
[www.sojo.net/immigration](http://www.sojo.net/immigration)

Immigration Advocates Network  
[www.immigrationadvocates.org](http://www.immigrationadvocates.org)

Migration Policy Institute  
[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

National Immigration Forum  
[www.immigrationforum.org](http://www.immigrationforum.org)

Pew Hispanic Center  
[www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org)

U.S. Catholic Bishops' "Justice For Immigrants" Campaign  
[www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)

United States Citizenship & Immigration Services  
[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

World Relief  
[www.wr.org](http://www.wr.org)

## **Films**

*Destination America*, directed by David Grubin, Stephen Stept, and Chana Gazit (PBS Films, 2005)

*Dying to Get In: Undocumented Immigration at the U.S. Mexican Border*, directed by Brett Tolley (Mooncusser Films, 2007)

*Dying to Live: A Migrant's Journey*, directed by Bill Groody (Groody River Films, 2005)

*God Grew Tired of Us*, directed by Christopher Dillon-Quinn and Tommy Walker (NewMarket Films, 2006)

*The New Americans*, mini-series edited by David E. Simpson (Kartemquin Films, 2003)

*Rain in a Dry Land*, directed by Anne Makepeace (Anne Makepeace Productions, 2006)

*Under the Same Moon*, directed by Patricia Riggen (Fox Searchlight, 2008)

*The Visitor*, directed by Thomas McCarthy (Overture Films, 2008)

*Wetback: The Undocumented Documentary*, directed by Arturo Perez Torres (National Geographic Video, 2007)

\*\*For regular updates on advocacy around immigration, please email [advocacy@wr.org](mailto:advocacy@wr.org)



7 East Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 443-451-1969 • [www.worldrelief.org](http://www.worldrelief.org)