

4-Week Group Bible Study On Undocumented Immigrants

There are approximately eleven million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Pastors from many denominations have united in solidarity across the nation to address this issue because immigrants are becoming a part of their own church congregations. Church leaders are finding that current immigration laws make it virtually impossible for these immigrants to become legalized.

Immigration is a controversial issue in our country. This 4-week study is the result of a research assignment that provides a resource for our congregations.

The information contained in this bible study does not reflect an official position taken by the Cumberland Presbyterian Denomination. This information is provided as a Resource to pastors and churches that will inform and engage church members in the issue of immigration.

**Provided by
The Red River Presbytery Committee on Ordained Clergy,
Theology and Social Concerns**

Welcoming the Stranger - Bible Study

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Subject: Undocumented Immigrants

SESSION 1

Show the Bill Hybel introduction to the interview with Matt Soerens (0 - 11:00) found at evangelicalimmigrationtable.com - Media, Educational Resources - "*Bill Hybels and Heather Larson of Willow Creek Community Church interview author Matthew Soerens about the issue of immigration*"

Read the 2 quotes from Welcoming the Stranger, Chapter 1, location 77 (Are you tired of waiting to pay for your groceries...) and location 87 (Out of fear and hatred of an enemy you....)

Discussion Questions (taken from Appendix 1, Welcoming the Stranger)

1. Of the two views that were quoted, which of these views have you heard the most?
2. What presumptions have you held regarding the issue of immigration?
3. Do you have any experiences with immigrants you would like to share?
4. Display the following from the text (location 248) : C. S. Lewis reminds us that each human being -- the foreign born certainly not excluded -- is an immortal being with a destiny much greater than this life alone, and in this sense is "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.)

Read story Pedro, Martha and Family - Economic Realities – Chapter 2, Location 387 Kindle, Welcoming the Stranger by Soerens and Yang

1. This story said that more than 10% of the population of Mexico lives on less than \$2 per day. Is this surprising to you? Put yourself in their place? Would you be willing to separate your family?
2. What would cause a mother to leave her 10 and 11 year old children behind?
3. What struck a note with you in this story?

Read and discuss a Biblical Immigration Story (or assign for outside reading)

Genesis 12 - entire chapter

1. What are some immigration issues that Abraham faced?
2. Why do you think Abraham lied about Sarah?
3. Our country is a country of immigrants. Many families had to be separated during the world wars. Did any members of your family have to be separated from their

families for economic reasons? Or possibly because of the death of a parent? How does this affect the family dynamic?

SESSION II

Show 13:00-20:45 of interview with Matthew

Soerens evangelicalimmigrationtable.com - Media, Educational Resources - "*Bill Hybels and Heather Larson of Willow Creek Community Church interview author Matthew Soerens about the issue of immigration*"

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are the people we call "undocumented immigrants"?
2. Matthew Soerens said "When you're fleeing danger, you do desperate things. What desperate measure did Abraham take in the scripture we read last week (Genesis 12)?"
3. Can you think of some biblical characters who were immigrants? Ruth, David, Moses & the Israelites, Jesus, Mary & Joseph (refugee and immigrant - See Matthew 2:13-23)

Look at the Scriptures Matthew Soerens presented:

Exodus 12:49, Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:33-34

Question: Do you think these scriptures apply to us today? Why or why not?

Guided Small Group Discussion

Break the group into 5 small groups, or more, if needed and using i-pads and laptops, give each group a section to read of "Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope", A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States (<http://usccb.org>)

Each group is to read their assigned section and list major points (outlined below) on a poster board. One person from each group will report back to the entire group.

Group 1 - Intro. Sections 5, 6, 7, 8

Group 2 - Ch. 1 Sections 13-16 and 17-21

Group 3 - Ch. 2 Sections 22-25 (OT Scripture)

Group 4 - Ch. 2 Sections 22,23,26,27 (NT Scripture)

Group 5 - 5 Principles, Sections 34-38

Each group answer these questions:

In your reading, what are the concerns surrounding immigrants/immigration?

What is the recommended response to immigration/immigrants based on the readings?

Do you have any other recommended response?

Any other concerns?

Group reading & preparation of posterboard - 10 minutes

Group Sharing - 16 minutes

Wrap-up - 4 minutes

SESSION III

Show 20:40-32:45 of interview with Matthew Soerens evangelicalimmigrationtable.com - Media, Educational Resources - "*Bill Hybels and Heather Larson of Willow Creek Community Church interview author Matthew Soerens about the issue of immigration*"

DISCUSS (taken from Appendix 1 Chapter 5 Discussion Questions - Welcoming the Stranger)

- 1. 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?**
- 2. Why do you think God places special emphasis on the well-being of immigrants?**
- 3. Heather said - The people here have broken a Law! Have you ever thought of this issue in that sense? Do you think most people look at the issue this way? Put yourself in their shoes. Do you think you might be willing to break the law to come to the United States?**

Watch 32:45-44:00 of interview with Matthew Soerens

DISCUSS (taken from Appendix 1 Chapter 7 Discussion Questions - Welcoming the Stranger)

- 1. 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?**
- 2. What did you learn about the economic impact illegal immigrants have on society? What are your feelings about this?**
- 3. What are some possible "root causes" of why there are so many undocumented immigrants in America today? What do you think a Christian or a church response could be?**

Show "The Stranger" trailer from evangelicalimmigrationtable.com – Resources tab – The Stranger Film - and announce that we will be watching the film next week.

The movie will have to be ordered through the evangelicalimmigrationtable.com website. Instructions are located under Resources – The Stranger Film.

SESSION IV

Show "The Stranger" documentary film.

This can be downloaded using the website evangelicalimmigrationtable.com,

Resources *The Stranger Film*

DISCUSS

1. What are some things you have learned from our discussions?
2. What is your response personally? Has your perspective changed?
3. What, as a church, do you think should be our response?

RESOURCES:

1. website: evangelicalimmigrationtable.com. This is a web-site with information on a Christian response to immigration. The Evangelical Immigration Table is a coalition which includes pastors and Christian university leaders from over twenty evangelical denominations. There are sermon outlines, statements and press releases, Media Clips, Evangelical Perspectives and Educational Resources located on this Website, as well as opportunities for individuals and churches to get involved.
2. Book: *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate* by Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, 2010 - Intervarsity Press, ISBN 978-0-8308-7840-6 (digital) – A paper copy of this book may also be ordered from amazon.com.
3. Document: "Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope", a pastoral letter concerning migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States. Retrieved at usccb.org
4. Interview: Interview with Matt Soerens found at evangelicalimmigrationtable.com - Media, Educational Resources - "*Bill Hybels and Heather Larson of Willow Creek Community Church interview author Matthew Soerens about the issue of immigration*"
5. Statistical information and Data about Undocumented Immigrants in the United States may be obtained at the website: migrationpolicy.org. Migration Policy Institute.

On the bottom right-hand of the page is a section called IN THE SPOTLIGHT. There is currently data about immigrants in each state. There is also a tab called Research and Initiatives. There are several sections under this tab about Immigrants and Immigration.