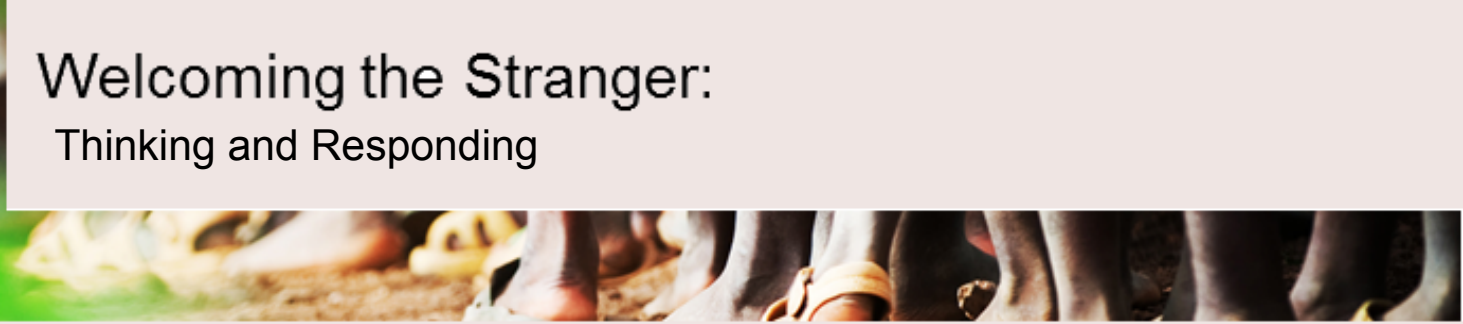




Welcoming the Stranger:

Justice, Compassion, & Truth in the Immigration Debate

Presented by John Faison



Am I Thinking about Immigration *as a Christian*?

Welcoming the Stranger: Am I Thinking about This Issue as A Christian?



- By their own admission, most Christians **do not** think about immigration from a biblical perspective
 - Just 9% of all Protestant Christians and 12% of white evangelicals say that their views on immigration are **primarily influenced by their Christian faith** ([Pew Forum Survey](#), September 2010)
 - Why? Perhaps because just 20% of Protestant Christians (and 16% of white evangelicals) have heard about immigration from their pastor or other clergy ([Pew Forum Survey](#), September 2010)

But That's *Not* because the Bible is Silent on the Topic

- *Ger*, the Hebrew word closest to “immigrant” in English, appears 92 times in the Old Testament
- Fundamentally, God’s people are called to love and seek justice for immigrants **because** we are to follow God’s example
 - *The Lord your God is the God of all gods and Lord of all lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God who doesn’t play favorites and doesn’t take bribes. **He enacts justice** for orphans and widows, and **he loves immigrants**, giving them food and clothing. That means **you must also love immigrants*** (Deuteronomy 10:17-19 CEB)

Many of the heroes and heroines of the biblical narrative were immigrants themselves

- Abraham
- Rebekah
- Joseph
- Ruth
- David
- Jesus
- Paul
- Called by God/Fled Famine
- Family-Based Immigrant
- Victim of Human Trafficking
- Family-Based Immigrant/Fled Famine
- Asylum Seeker
- Refugee / Celestial Immigrant
- Employment-Based Immigrant

God's Law for the Israelites repeatedly insists that the native-born and the immigrant be treated equally

- *The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you* (Exodus 12:49 NIV)
- Just like the citizens, immigrants were entitled under the law to
 - Fair treatment as laborers (Deuteronomy 24:14)
 - A Sabbath rest from work (Exodus 20:10)
 - Prompt payment for labor (Deuteronomy 24:15)
 - Equal treatment when accused of a crime (Leviticus 20:2, 24:16, 24:21-23)

God recognizes immigrants as uniquely vulnerable to injustice, alongside the fatherless and the widow

- *The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow (Psalm 146:9 NIV)*
- *Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor (Zechariah 7:10 HCSB)*
- *If you truly reform your ways and your actions; if you treat each other justly; if you stop taking advantage of the immigrant, orphan, or widow; if you don't shed the blood of the innocent in this place, or go after other gods to your own ruin, only then will I dwell with you in this place (Jeremiah 7:6 CEB)*

See also Ezekiel 22:7, Malachi 3:5, Deuteronomy 24:21

God commands His people to remember their own immigrant history

- *You must not oppress foreigners. You know what it's like to be a foreigner, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt (Exodus 23:9 NLT)*
- See also Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 10:19
- Most North American Christians also have immigrant histories, which we would do well to remember and to allow to inform how we treat immigrants

Christians are Called to Hospitality (*philoxenia*, literally, the love of strangers)

- “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, *I was a stranger and you invited me in*, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:35-36, 40)
- So much emphasis on how we treat an immigrant that he just might send an angel in the form of one to see how we treat them! (Hebrews 13:2)

Christians are Called to Submit to the Law

- Most immigrants in the US have legal status
- But about one-third of immigrants are present unlawfully, so we also need to wrestle with passages that speak to how Christians should relate to the law
- “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” (Romans 13:1)
- For the US citizen, there is **no conflict between welcoming immigrants and following the law** (at least in most states)
- Were laws to change, and ministry to be made illegal, Scripture makes clear that there are certain instances where “we must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

Christians are Called to Submit to the Law

- Undocumented brothers and sisters need to wrestle before God with their situation
 - Many came out of desperation, seeking to provide for their families, and Scripture tells us that “if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8)
 - Most undocumented immigrants within the Church are eager to get right with the law, but **current law does not allow for this reconciliation**
 - Our current immigration system—where laws are selectively ignored—mocks the ideal of the rule of law; we can all advocate for a more functional system that restores the rule of law

A Personal Issue

Immigrants Are Our Neighbors

- Whatever our approach to immigration policy, we are commanded to view immigrants themselves as our neighbors—with love.
- We are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. - MLK

A Biblical Issue

Christians are Called to Submit to the Law

- Our current immigration system—where laws are selectively ignored—mocks the ideal of the rule of law; we can all advocate for a more functional system
- For the US citizen, there is no conflict between welcoming immigrants and following the law, but the **SAFE Act** could change that.
 - Our government should not criminalize private citizens who give a cup of cold water, a hot meal, a warm bed or medical assistance to those who are in our country illegally. – Richard Land former Pres of ERLC of SBC
- We are called to show *philoxenia* (Rom 12:13) context for Romans 13

An Issue for the Church

Immigrants are often our brothers

- Biblically, [there is one Church](#)— “one Body, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)
- Each part of the Body is interdependent on each other part, so no part can say to another part that it is unneeded (1 Corinthians 12:14-25)
- Whether we see it or not in our own local church, immigrants are a large and ever-growing element of evangelical churches in the United States
- In fact, research by Dr. Todd Johnson at Gordon-Conwell Seminary suggests that immigrant congregations are the fastest growing segment of evangelical churches in the U.S.

A Missional Opportunity

- “make disciples of every nation” (Matthew 28:19)
- With immigration, the nations arrive at our doorstep, representing an enormous missional opportunity. The Pew Research Center projects that by 2050 a majority of all Americans will be people of color.
- The movements of peoples are part of God’s sovereign plan to draw people to Himself
 - “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this *so that men would seek him* and perhaps reach out for him and find him.” (Acts 17:26-27)

A Missional Opportunity

“86% of the immigrant population in North America are likely to either be Christians or become Christians. That’s far above the national average... The immigrant population actually presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America... This group that we want to keep out is actually the group that we most need for spiritual transformation... We shouldn’t see this as something that threatens us. We should see this as a wonderful opportunity.”

- Dr. Timothy Tennent

Missiologist & President, Asbury Theological Seminary

A Missional Opportunity

- But most evangelical churches *are* missing this missional opportunity
 - Just 10% of churches in the US have any sort of ministry or ministry partnership focused on refugees or other immigrants ([Harford Seminary Faith Communities Today Survey](#), 2010)
 - That may be because *most* white evangelicals say immigrants are “a burden on our country” and that immigration “threatens traditional American customs and values” (Pew Forum Survey, May 2011, analyzed by [Christianity Today](#))
 - Almost all white evangelicals—88%—say that their views on immigration are *primarily* influenced by concerns other than their Christian faith (political, economic, personal experience, etc.) ([Pew Forum Survey](#), September 2010)
 - And that’s because just 16% of white evangelicals have heard about immigration from their pastor or other clergy ([Pew Forum Survey](#), September 2010)

Welcoming the Stranger:

Do I Have My Facts Right?

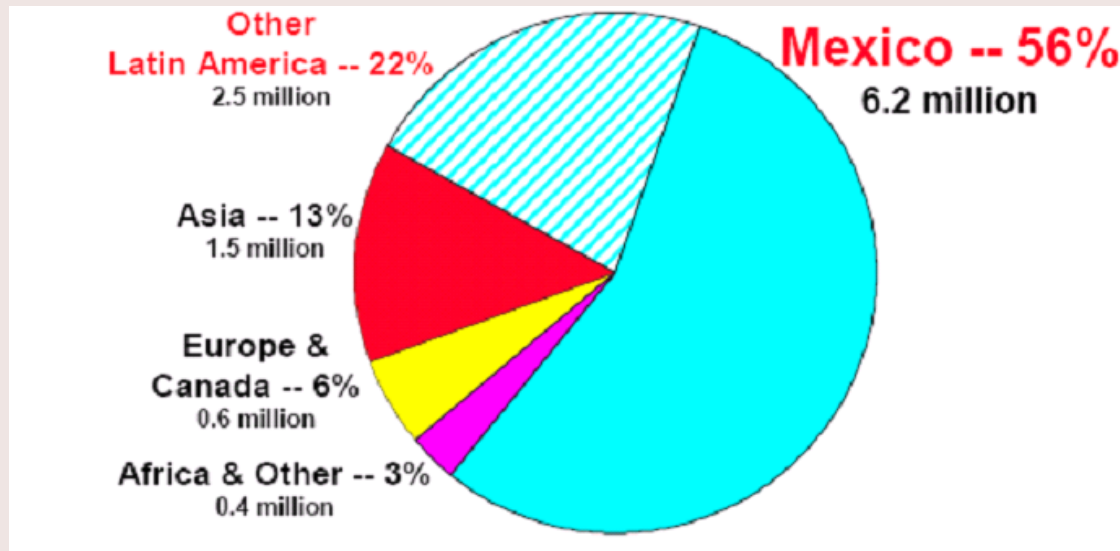
Who Are These People?

- **Immigrants** are anyone born in one country but now living in another
- There are about 37 million immigrants currently living in the U.S., representing about 12% of the total US population
- Of those, approximately
 - 35% are naturalized citizens
 - 33% are Lawful Permanent Residents (including many former refugees)
 - 2% are in temporary legal status
 - 31% are present unlawfully

Welcoming the Stranger:

Who Are Undocumented Immigrants?

- Most come from Latin America, but there are also millions of undocumented Asians, Europeans, and Canadians
- 2 in 9 **Korean** Immigrants is Undocumented
- 1 in 6 **Filipino, Chinese, or Vietnamese** Immigrants is Undocumented
- 1 in 7 **Indian** Immigrants is Undocumented



Graphic courtesy of the Pew Hispanic Forum, 2006

Welcoming the Stranger: Do I Have My Facts Right?

What Are Some Common Myths and Misunderstandings about Immigration?

- Myth: Immigrants today are different than those of past generations who came the legal way
- Fact: Our federal immigration laws have changed dramatically, such that there is presently no line to get into to migrate legally for many would-be immigrants
 - Prior to 1882, there was no illegal immigration *because there was no federal immigration law*
 - Even through Ellis Island—from 1892 to 1924—98% of immigrants were admitted and there was no requirement of a visa
 - Now, lawful immigration is tightly limited by law and usually possible only for:
 - Close relatives of US citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents (sometimes with long backlogs)
 - Limited numbers of highly-educated employer-sponsored immigrants (but only 5,000 employer-sponsored visas annually can possibly go to those not “highly-skilled”)
 - A fraction of one percent of the world’s refugees, fleeing persecution (not fleeing poverty)
 - Winners of an online lottery (odds about 1 in 300), but only for certain countries

•Myth: Immigrants are a drain on the economy

The Facts

- Immigration has a positive impact on the American economy as a whole and on most individual Americans
 - 96% of economists surveyed by the *Wall Street Journal* said that illegal immigration, in particular, had “**been beneficial to the economy**”
- Immigration also has a net positive impact on our fiscal health
 - Immigrants *do* bring costs, but their fiscal contributions are greater than their costs
 - The American Enterprise Institute reports that, on average, foreign-born adults pay **\$7,826** in taxes while their families receive **\$4,422** per year in governmental benefits in a given year



The Facts

- Immigrants contribute economically as:
 - Workers (typically in jobs that complement those done by US citizens)
 - Consumers (immigrants are about 13% of the US population)
 - Taxpayers
 - 75% of undocumented immigrants pay payroll taxes, according to Social Security Administration's Chief Actuary
 - They contribute as much as \$15 billion annually to Social Security, though ineligible for benefits
 - Many undocumented immigrants also file taxes with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number
 - In the Carolinas alone, undocumented immigrants paid (in 2010):
 - \$91.3 million in local/state personal income taxes
 - \$29.5 million in property taxes
 - \$240.6 million in sales taxes

What Are Some Common Myths and Misunderstandings about Immigration?

- **Myth: Undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes**
- **Fact:** The Social Security Administration estimates **3 out of 4 undocumented immigrants** have payroll, Social Security, & Medicare taxes deducted from their paychecks
- The Social Security Administration has received as much as **\$15 billion per year** in recent years in withholdings that do not match a valid Social Security number
- Many undocumented immigrants file taxes each year using an “Individual Taxpayer Identification Number” (ITIN)
- Undocumented immigrants also pay state and local sales, property & income taxes—which accounted for more than \$43 million in South Carolina alone in 2010
- But they are ineligible to benefit from Social Security or Medicare, and from almost all federal & state public benefits (food stamps, welfare, subsidized housing, etc.)

What Are Some Common Myths and Misunderstandings about Immigration?

- **Myth: Immigrants are a drain on our economy**
- **Fact: Almost all economists—44 out of 46 surveyed by the *Wall Street Journal*—agree that immigration (and particularly illegal immigration) has benefitted the U.S. economy**
- Immigrants generally fill holes in our labor market—at both the high- and low-ends of the educational spectrum—complementing the work that US citizens do
- Immigrants also contribute as taxpayers, consumers & entrepreneurs
- Immigrants do bring costs (public education, emergency healthcare, public benefits for US citizen kids), but they are outweighed by the economic & fiscal benefits
 - The American Enterprise Institute reports that, on average, foreign-born adults pay **\$7,826** in taxes while their families receive **\$4,422** per year in governmental benefits in a given year

Myths and Misunderstandings about Immigration?

Myth: Immigrants do not share our values.

- Fact: Immigrants tend to have strong family values; as compared to native-born US citizens, Hispanic immigrants are:
 - More likely to attend church on a weekly basis
 - More likely to be pro-life
 - More likely to be married and less likely to get divorced
- Immigrants tend to have a very strong work ethic, with labor participation rates amongst undocumented adult males of 96% vs 72% white
- Immigrants are 8 times less likely to commit crimes than native-born US citizens, and are significantly less likely to be imprisoned

What Are Some Common Myths and Misunderstandings about Immigration?

- **Myth: “Immigration Reform” is a code word for “amnesty”**
- **Fact:** Bipartisan bill currently being considered by the US Senate would mean accountability for the undocumented, balancing compassion with a respect for the rule of law
 - Under bipartisan Senate bill, most undocumented immigrants (with special programs for farmworkers and childhood arrivals) could earn legal status only after:
 - Waiting for at least ten years in “Registered Provisional Immigrant” status
 - Paying \$2,000 in fines (in addition to processing fees)
 - Passing a criminal background check
 - Borders are certified secure based on specific metrics established in the bill
 - All those currently “in line” abroad with pending petitions have been admitted
 - A mandatory, national E-Verify workplace authorization system is in place



- Many evangelical leaders advocate immigration reforms that would:
 - Make it harder to immigrate **unlawfully**
 - Make it easier to immigrate **lawfully**
 - To meet needs of U.S. labor market and **economy**
 - To keep **families** together
 - Continue to provide **refuge** to those fleeing persecution
 - Allow the undocumented to come forward, pay a fine for having violated the law, and **earn** permanent legal status and eventual citizenship over the course of several years
- These sort of reforms are supported by:
 - Most **evangelical Christians** (CBS News Poll, August 2013)
 - Most **evangelical pastors** (LifeWay Research Poll, September 2013)
 - Most Republicans, Democrats, and Independents (Public Religion Research Institute, March 2013)

The Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform

As evangelical Christian leaders, we call for a bipartisan solution on immigration that:

- **Respects** the God-given dignity of every person
- **Protects** the unity of the immediate family
- **Respects** the rule of law
- **Guarantees** secure national borders
- **Ensures** fairness to taxpayers
- **Establishes** a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents

www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com

Signatories

Leith Anderson, National Association of Evangelicals
Joel Boot, Christian Reformed Church of North America
Noel Castellanos, Christian Community Development Association
Matt Chandler, The Village Church (TX)
Jim Daly, Focus on the Family
Tony Evans, Oak Creek Fellowship (TX)
Bill Hamel, Evangelical Free Church
Alec Hill, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
Bill Hybels, Willow Creek Community Church (IL)
Richard Land, Southern Baptist Convention ERLC (emeritus)
Jim Liske, Prison Fellowship
Max Lucado, author
Jo Anne Lyon, Wesleyan Church
Russell Moore, Southern Baptist Convention Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Doug Nuenke, The Navigators
Luis Palau, Luis Palau Association
Paige Patterson, Southwestern Baptist Seminary
John Perkins, CCDA/Perkins Foundation
Jerry Porter, Church of the Nazarene
William Roberts, The Salvation Army
Samuel Rodriguez, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference
Gabriel Salguero, National Latino Evangelical Coalition
Mat Staver, Liberty University
Rich Stearns, World Vision
Ed Stetzer, LifeWay Research
Gary Walter, Evangelical Covenant Church
David Wilson, Church of the Nazarene
George Wood, Assemblies of God
Bryant Wright, Southern Baptist Convention

Welcoming the Stranger:

How Should I Respond?

Welcoming the Stranger:

How Should I Respond?

- Prayer
- Listening
- Education
- Advocacy
- Service
- Evangelism

How Should I Respond? Prayer

[#Pray4Reform](#)



In obedience to the biblical command (1Tim. 2:2) to [pray](#) “for kings and all those in authority,” the Evangelical Immigration Table is challenging Christians to pray for legislators as they consider immigration reforms. Folks can commit to pray (and sign up for occasional emails with prayer requests and reminders) by:

- Visiting www.pray4reform.org
- Texting “immigration” to 877877

How Should I Respond? Listening

"I Was a Stranger..."



40 Days of Scripture & Prayer

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Genesis 1:27-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 21. Jeremiah 7:5-7
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Exodus 12:49	<input type="checkbox"/> 22. Jeremiah 22:3
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Exodus 22:21	<input type="checkbox"/> 23. Ezekiel 22:6-7
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Exodus 23:9	<input type="checkbox"/> 24. Ezekiel 22:29
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Exodus 23:12	<input type="checkbox"/> 25. Zechariah 7:10
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Leviticus 19:9-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 26. Malachi 3:5
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Leviticus 19:33-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 27. Matthew 2:13-14
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Leviticus 23:22	<input type="checkbox"/> 28. Matthew 25:35
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Leviticus 24:22	<input type="checkbox"/> 29. Mark 2:27
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Numbers 15:15-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 30. Luke 10:36-37
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Deuteronomy 1:16	<input type="checkbox"/> 31. Acts 16:37
<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Deuteronomy 10:18-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 32. Acts 17:26-27
<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Deuteronomy 24:14	<input type="checkbox"/> 33. Romans 12:13
<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Deuteronomy 24:17-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 34. Romans 13:1-2
<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Deuteronomy 24:19	<input type="checkbox"/> 35. Ephesians 2:14-18
<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Deuteronomy 26:12	<input type="checkbox"/> 36. Philippians 3:20
<input type="checkbox"/> 17. Deuteronomy 27:19	<input type="checkbox"/> 37. Hebrews 13:2
<input type="checkbox"/> 18. Job 29:16	<input type="checkbox"/> 38. 1 Peter 2:11-12
<input type="checkbox"/> 19. Psalm 94:6-7	<input type="checkbox"/> 39. 1 Peter 2:13-14
<input type="checkbox"/> 20. Psalm 146:9	<input type="checkbox"/> 40. Revelation 7:9-10

www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com

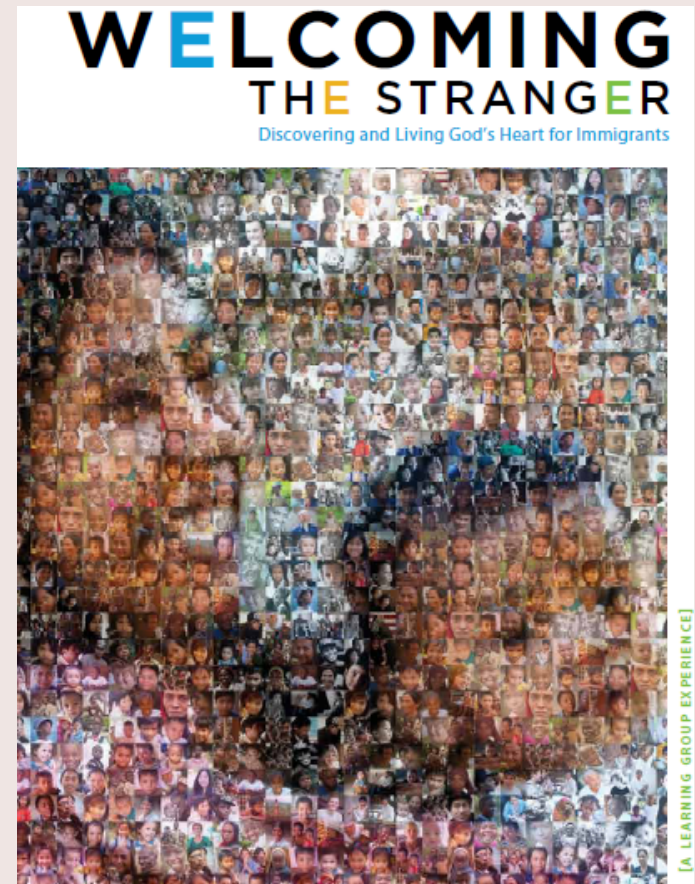
"I Was a Stranger..." Challenge

For 40 consecutive days, commit to reading one Scripture passage per day about God's heart for immigrants.

Full info at www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com/iwasastranger

How Should I Respond? Education

- Consider how you could help disciple others to explore this complex topic from a distinctly biblical perspective
- Preach on the story of an immigrant in Scripture
- Challenge your congregation to take the “I Was a Stranger” Challenge
- Focus on a distinctly biblical response to immigration in an Adult Education class or in small groups
 - A 9-session curriculum is available for free download at www.welcomingthestranger.com



How Should I Respond?

Advocacy

- There are plenty of important ways that we should love our neighbors on an interpersonal level—that's most of the missional work we do
- But when systemic injustice is at the root of a problem, **loving our neighbor means advocacy** as well
 - “We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

How Should I Respond?

Advocacy

- Sign the Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform (www.evangelicalimmigrationtable.com)
- Make a phone call:
 - Dial **866-877-5552**, enter your zip code, and you'll be automatically connected to your U.S. Representative's office, where you can leave a message
- Write a letter to your Representative
- Write an Op-Ed or a Letter to the Editor of the local newspaper

How Should I Respond?

Service

- While immigrants are a diverse group economically, many are among the poorest people in society, with many human needs
- You could get involved by [volunteering](#)
 - Serve as an [English language](#) tutor or a “friendship partner” for a newly arrived refugee or other immigrant
 - Help your church prepare to meet the need for authorized, affordable legal services.

Evangelism

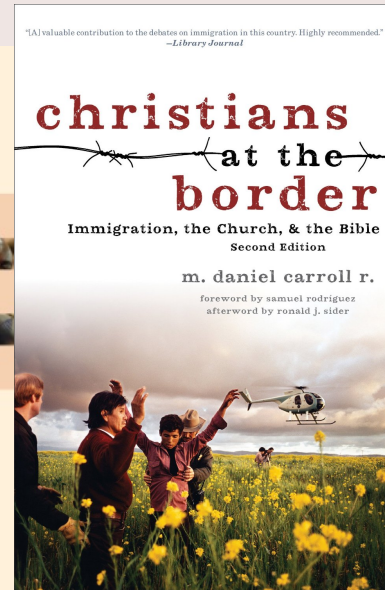
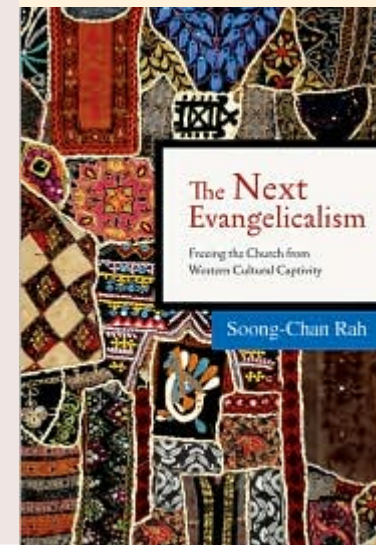
- As we befriend, serve, and advocate with immigrants, we have the opportunity to share the gospel, the [good news](#) of a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ

Events

- April 3, WSSU, Winston-Salem, NC: “Bibles, Badges & Business”
- April 24, Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Charlotte, NC: “Carolinians for Reform”
 - Dennis Hollinger, Gordon-Conwell Seminary
 - Barrett Duke, Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
 - Alex Nowrasteh, Cato Institute
- April 29, Washington, D.C.: “Pastors for Reform”
- May 31, North Charlotte, NC: Daniel Carroll, Professor at Denver Seminary

Welcoming the Stranger:

- *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate* (InterVarsity Press, 2009), by Matthew Soerens and Jenny Yang
- *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Baker Academic, 2008, 2013), by Daniel Carroll Rodas
- *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* (InterVarsity Press, 2012), by J.D. Payne
- *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (InterVarsity Press, 2009), by Soong-Chan Rah



Welcoming the Stranger:

Online Resources

- Welcoming the Stranger (www.welcomingthestranger.com)
 - Includes downloadable 9-Session Learning Group Guide
 - Includes sources for most statistics mentioned in this presentation
 - Download this presentation to share
- G92.org (<http://www.g92.org>)
 - Regularly updated blog, films, and event information
- Evangelical Immigration Table (www.evangelicalimmigrationtable.com)
 - “I Was a Stranger” Challenge
 - #Pray4Reform Initiative
 - Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform



Facebook: Welcoming the Stranger (www.facebook.com/WelcomingtheStranger)



Twitter: @CIRaleigh

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**Evangelical
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