

IMMIGRATION CURRICULUM

Learning God's heart for the
immigrant in our communities



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Invitation to Encounter

We are excited that you have joined a nationwide movement of Evangelicals who are intent on learning more about what the Bible has to say about loving our immigrant brothers and sisters. Our hope is that the four studies would be a jumping off point for you to consider how you can join other Evangelicals across the country in showing Christ's love for immigrants in communities like yours. As you ask questions, consider Bible passages, and reflect on current events, we pray that you would ultimately seek to learn how God wants to use you and your unique gifts to serve those around you and to hear what the Bible has to say about immigrants.

About G92

G92 began at Cedarville University in 2011, and is a culture-shaping movement seeking to equip and inspire the next generation of Christian leaders for an effective, biblical response to immigration. The letter G stands for "ger" -- the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament to refer to the immigrant, foreigner, and alien. Ninety-two refers to the 92 uses of the word ger in the Bible. G92 conferences have been held across the country to help raise awareness about the issue and equip Christians to respond in a biblically grounded way. In fact, the videos in the study were recorded in April 2013 at a G92 Conference hosted by Front Range Christian School in Littleton, Colorado. Learn more about G92 at www.g92.org.

Target Audience

This curriculum is designed to be used in a classroom or small group setting by evangelical Christian churches in North America. The content primarily targets adults but may also be relevant to mature high school audiences.

Unit Layout

Lessons consist of a 20 minute video with about 30 minutes of supplemental materials for group discussion and reflection. Also included with each lesson are suggestions for further reading and reflection during the week. Additionally, each lesson can be taught individually or can be broken down to meet small group needs.



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LESSON ONE

Migration as a Metaphor for the Christian Life: What Does The Bible Have To Say?

READ

As Christians, we are all ultimately citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Consider this statement as you divide up the following scripture passages for each person to read aloud to the group:
Philippians 3:20 Hebrews 13:14 1 Peter 1:2 Ephesians 2:12-13

WRITE

Think of any biblical figures that could be considered immigrants or foreigners? Write down their names and what qualifies them as immigrants.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SHARE

If you moved to a new place, what would be some of the first things you would do to familiarize yourself with that place? What steps would you take to go about getting to know your new neighbors? If you have ever moved to a new country, share with the group what things you did to acclimate to your new environment. How did your neighbors respond to your attempts to get to know them?

ROLE-PLAY

On the first day of school in your new community, your son Matthew comes home frustrated that none of his friends can say his name right. (Choose as many as are applicable) How will you respond?

- Encourage him to gently correct his teachers and friends
- Remind him that his name is special, as it has Biblical foundations and was his grandfather's name
- Tell him to shrug it off and get used to it, since you will be living there for a while
- Ask him if he wants to choose a new name to go by while you live in this community
- Personally go to the school to express your complaints and set things right
- Help him to come up with a creative nickname that his friends can say but keep calling him Matthew at home

PRAYER

Dear God, as I consider the stories of Your people in the Bible who knew what it was like to be a foreigner, help me to grow in compassion for those who live as foreigners in my country. Help me to remember that I, too, am ultimately a stranger in this world. I don't always understand why people migrate, but give me a heart of mercy and a desire for justice. Open my eyes to see ways that I can better share Your love with my neighbors. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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VIEW Video Lesson One: "Migration as a Metaphor for the Christian Life: What Does The Bible Have To Say?"
Link to Video: <http://bit.ly/1gKJL43>
Teacher: Dr. M. Daniel Carroll R., Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary

Summary: In this segment, Dr. Daniel Carroll R. encourages Christians to "let the Bible orient us so that we can capture the heart of the metaphor of being a migrant, and as we do that, to capture the heart of what it means to be a Christian." Highlighting the Old Testament stories of Abraham, Joseph, Ruth and Daniel to reveal God's heart for the foreigner, Dr. Carroll helps listeners understand why people migrate and how they assimilate. He reminds Christians about our responsibility to care for the vulnerable, encourages them to start with scripture when approaching the immigration issue, refuse to oversimplify the discussion, and to pray that God would use the church to be a voice for compassion, truth, and order – for the good of the immigrant and for our country.

REFLECT After telling the story of Abram, Dr. Carroll asks viewers, "Have you ever thought of Abram, the father of our faith, as an immigrant, desperately wanting to feed his family?" What is your response to this question? Does this way of remembering Abram impact the way you think about immigrants in your community? Why or why not?

SHARE At the beginning of this session, you wrote the names of people in the Bible that could be considered immigrants. Who did you choose, and what made each of those people an immigrant to you? After hearing Dr. Carroll's talk, would you change any of your answers? What were some of the challenges that Abram, Joseph, Ruth, and Daniel faced in their new homes?

ROLE-PLAY In the role-play activity before the video, your child came home from school in a new place with some tough questions for you. Are there immigrant families nearby who might be dealing with just this scenario? Would your advice to an immigrant family here in the States be different than your instincts of how to deal with this situation if you were in a new country? What are some steps that you or your family could take to help embrace people with different cultural backgrounds?

READ Divide into small groups, and have each group read one of the following stories:
• Abram: Genesis 12:10-20 • Joseph: Genesis 41:41-57 • Ruth: Ruth 2:1-23 • Daniel: Daniel 1:3-21
For each biblical character above, answer the following questions:

What are some things that this person did to assimilate to the expectations of the surrounding culture?

Abram:
Joseph:
Ruth:
Daniel:

What did this person do to hold onto his or her own cultural identity?

Abram:
Joseph:
Ruth:
Daniel:

How did the people around respond and treat this person when he attempted to either assimilate or celebrate his own culture?

Abram:
Joseph:
Ruth:
Daniel:



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How was this person a valuable contribution to her new country or people?

Abram:

Joseph:

Ruth:

Daniel:

THIS WEEK

OPEN THE WORD

Choose one of the following books of the Bible to read this week: Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, or Esther. As you read, consider the questions you worked on in Bible Study.

PRAY

Pray asking God to reveal ways you can better show His love to the stranger in your community, church, or neighborhood.

Record what God has placed on your heart and record a date that you will take action on that revelation.

OPEN YOUR EYES

Ultimately, as Christians our citizenship is in heaven. As you read your Bible this week, keep an eye out for reminders about the previous statement and consider what Jesus says His kingdom is like (for example: what makes you, as a Christian, different from those around you? How is this earthly "kingdom" different from God's kingdom?)

TAKE UP A CHALLENGE

This week, we focused more closely on ways in which immigration is a metaphor for Christians living as strangers on this Earth. Chances are, there are people in your community who live this reality every day. With your family, try attending a service at an Evangelical church that serves a predominantly immigrant community. An Internet search should provide a list of options in your area. Your pastor may also be aware of a sister church in your area that you could visit – oftentimes if the message is in another language, these churches will provide headsets with English translations.

The Bible says that people from every nation will worship Jesus (Matthew 28:19, Philippians 2:9-11, Revelation 15:4). Make sure you talk about your expectations before and your experience afterwards with your family. What new ways of worshipping God did you see at this church? How did this add to your understanding of who God is?

REFLECT ON DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Dr. Carroll alluded to several ways in which Americans may be uncomfortable with immigrants. He also reminded us just how easy it can be to forget that America is in fact a nation of immigrants, and that this is a conversation that has been going on for the entirety of our history.

With your family, do a little investigation into your own cultural heritage. Whether your ancestors came over on the Mayflower, immigrated at Ellis Island, or are among North America's native people groups, each family has unique traditions that they have held onto for generations. In what ways do you honor your family's cultural traditions (ie, at holidays, birthdays, with extended family)? Have you combined or adopted any new ones? How do you respond to people whose cultures are different from your own?



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LESSON TWO

Immigration as an Opportunity for the Church: What Does The American Church Need to Know?

READ

As a group, read Acts 17:24-28. What is implied by the fact that God made every nation from one person? As His children made in His image, everything we have, "life and breath and everything else" comes from Him. Given this reality, do you think there is such a thing as a "self-made" man or woman? Look at verse 26 carefully. Who determines where we should live? Why?

WRITE

What five words come to mind when you hear the word immigration? Write them down.

1.
2.
3.

4.
5.

SHARE

As you have observed immigration conversations in our culture, what do you perceive to be the most important factors that the media or political leaders consider as they form their opinions? (For example, "the economy" or "public safety" might be important factors.) Now consider what you have heard or observed from within the Christian community – what are the most important factors for Christians in forming an opinion about immigration policy?

PICTURE

Find a physical map or globe that the group can use. Invite each person to place a pin or sticker on his or her hometown. Then, invite each person to place a mark on the country or countries where their family originates. Are the locations diverse? Uniform? Invite participants to share some traditions or stories from their country of origin.

PRAYER

Father, as I prepare to engage in the complex topic of immigration, I want to thank You for the reminder in the scriptures that I was once an alien and stranger and that You brought me into Your family. I am so grateful that I am part of Your kingdom with these fellow citizens because of Your grace. Help my brothers and sisters and me seek after You and take Your Word seriously as we think about this very complex topic of immigration. In Jesus' name, Amen.

VIEW

Video Lesson Two: "Immigration as an Opportunity for the Church: What Does The American Church Need to Know?" Link to Video: <http://bit.ly/1gKMPxe>

Teacher: Matthew Soerens, Field Director, Evangelical Immigration Table

Summary: In this segment, Matthew Soerens of World Relief highlights ways in which Evangelicals in the United States can take a fresh, biblically grounded look at the immigration debate and engage with immigrants in their communities. As Christians we have responsibility to both love and provide for the widow, orphan, immigrant, and the poor. Citing research from the Pew Research Center, personal experience, the Founding Fathers, and Scripture, Matthew exhorts listeners to see immigrants as an opportunity and blessing – for our communities, for our country, and for the Gospel.



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REFLECT Today, God has sent the nations to our communities! Matt reminded us that God “works through the movement of people to advance his kingdom.” Remember Acts 17? God knew you would have the neighbors you do. How can you respond with hospitality? What do you think of Matt’s suggestion that we need to see immigrants not as a threat, but as an opportunity? What most surprised you about his talk?

SHARE Which 5 words did you choose to describe immigration? Why did you choose those? After hearing Matt’s talk, would you change these words? Look back at your list of factors to consider when forming opinions about immigration. Are there any factors you would add to your list for Christians?

READ As a group, read Zephaniah 7:4-10. Compare this passage to Isaiah 58 from Lesson 1. Again, the Lord calls his people to show mercy and compassion, and not to oppress the vulnerable. What do you think “true justice” meant to the Israelites? What would this look like in your community? Now read Zephaniah 11-13. What is the result of the Israelites’ disobedience? Why do you think the Lord wants His people to care for the widow, the fatherless, the alien, and the poor? Discuss ways that you can do this in your community.

THIS WEEK **OPEN THE WORD**
In his talk, Matt Soerens shared that the true meaning of the Greek word philoxenia (often translated as “hospitality”) is “the love of strangers.” Use a concordance to search the Bible for uses of the word hospitality. For a start, consider the following verses on the Christian’s call to hospitality:
•1 Peter 4:9 •Hebrews 13:2 •Luke 14:12-14 •1 Timothy 3:2 •Titus 1:8
Answer the following questions:

How can you show hospitality to strangers?

Why should we be hospitable?

Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19. How should we respond?

OPEN YOUR EYES

Think about the people that you come into contact with every single day. Can you see ways in which God has placed these people in your life as an opportunity for you – to learn and to teach, to be blessed and to bless? How has God used the people in your life to show His grace to you and to help you get where you are today? Consider ways in which you can broaden your circle of acquaintances to include people who have different backgrounds from you. What do you think God has to teach you from this?

TAKE UP A CHALLENGE

How much do you know about immigration into the U.S.? Take a quiz at <http://bit.ly/1etqm7r>
Were you surprised by your results? Why or why not?

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Choose two Founding Fathers, like George Washington or Ben Franklin, and learn about their positions on immigration. Were their views different? Did anything about their views surprise you?

Take a moment to peruse the G92 website at www.g92.org. There are common questions about immigration reform at the bottom of the page. Read through them and get acquainted with them. Becoming well informed is a great way to show philoxenia.



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LESSON THREE

God's Heart for the Vulnerable: Why should we welcome the stranger?

READ

As a group, read Acts 17:24-28. What is implied by the fact that God made every nation from one person? As His children made in His image, everything we have, "life and breath and everything else" comes from Him. Given this reality, do you think there is such a thing as a "self-made" man or woman? Look at verse 26 carefully. Who determines where we should live? Why?

WRITE

Growing up, you were likely taught to think in a certain way about "strangers." What do you remember being taught?

How have those lessons shaped the way you interact with people today?

The Bible has a lot to say about strangers, too. Make a quick list of what you remember the Bible teaching about strangers:

PICTURE

Think of a time when you saw someone with a need, and you stepped in to provide for that need. How did you feel in that moment? What were the results? Now think of a time when you had a need and someone helped you. How did you respond? Share this with your small group.

ROLE-PLAY

Imagine that your car breaks down in a small town in French-speaking Canada. You don't speak French; your car can't be fixed until the next day; and you are running low on cash. You also haven't had a shower, and you are tired, hungry, and alone. As you sit outside of the auto shop trying to figure out what to do next, consider the following questions: What is on your mind? What kind of help would you most like to receive? If someone offered to help you, what would your response be?

PRAYER

God, thank You for Your grace in welcoming me into Your family when I was estranged by sin. Thank You for forgiving me and loving me no matter what. Tonight as I hear more about what Your Word says about loving my neighbor, help me to understand and appreciate the way You have made every person unique. Help me to see how welcoming people from other cultures can teach me more about You. Open my eyes to see people around me who need my help, and humble me to see ways I need to be helped by others. I want to understand Your heart for the vulnerable, God. May my thoughts and attitudes towards those I consider as strangers reflect Your love and compassion. In Jesus' name, we pray these things for Your glory and our good. Amen.



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VIEW

Video Lesson Three: "God's Heart for the Vulnerable: Ten Reasons Why Immigration Is Good"

Link to Video: <http://bit.ly/1fLQF6a>

Teacher: Stephan Bauman, President and CEO, World Relief

Summary: In this segment, Stephan Bauman shares ten reasons why Christians must welcome the stranger. Beginning with a reminder of God's heart for the vulnerable, he encourages Christians to act on behalf of the less fortunate neighbor while touching on economic considerations, justice, American values, and God's presence. Viewers are ultimately reminded of Jesus' words that "whatever we do for the least of these you do for me."

REFLECT

Which of Bauman's 10 reasons were most surprising to you? Write one in each blank.

Which did you find most compelling?

SHARE

Review your brainstorm about strangers in your childhood and strangers in the Bible sharing your responses with your group. Is there anything that comes to light from comparing those lists – anything challenging, worrisome, funny, surprising? Do you find that either of those lists of messages influences the way you approach the topic of immigration? How might we become people more influenced by Scripture's teachings on the issue of "strangers"?

ROLE-PLAY

In the role-play activity about your car breaking down in a town where you were a stranger, you were asked to imagine yourself in a very vulnerable position. How did you feel during this activity? Did feelings change according to the role played?

Everyone finds themselves in vulnerable situations every now and then, but for some, this is a daily reality. Keeping this activity in mind, do you agree with Stephan Bauman's basic suggestion that God calls us to care for the vulnerable, and is present with us when we do? Now think about the immigrants in your community. In what ways are they in a vulnerable situation? How can you reach out to someone you might consider a stranger in your community? What do you have to learn from your immigrant neighbor? How can you begin to develop friendships with your neighbors?

READ

Isaiah 58 aloud as a group. In what ways are the questions in verse 3 similar to the questions in Matthew 25:37-38? What are the consequences of "fasting as you do today?" (verse 4). What are the results of "true fasting?" What do you think "true fasting" would look like regarding the way you treat the vulnerable in your community?



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THIS WEEK

OPEN THE WORD

Look at Isaiah 58 again, but this time replace “fast” with “worship” throughout the chapter as Stephan Bauman suggests. Identify the actions that Isaiah exhorts in true fasting. Now identify God's response to true worship. What are some characteristics of true worship? If you were truly worshipping God in every area of your life, what would that look like? Try to keep an eye out for the stranger in what you read, and consider the following: Have you ever noticed that Jesus lived and breathed among the poor? He not only interacted with social outcasts, he sought them out (i.e. John 4:9-26).

Write down a few thoughts to meditate on this week.

OPEN YOUR EYES

Stephan Bauman saw God working in the kitchen – where do you witness God's presence? As you go about your daily tasks this week, ask God to show you where He is working in your surroundings.

TAKE UP A CHALLENGE

You might consider joining the I Was a Stranger challenge (<http://g92.org/experience/challenge/>, #IWasAStranger on Twitter). This challenge gives you the opportunity to go deeper into God's word through reading short portions of scripture for 40 consecutive days that reveal God's heart for the immigrant. You may also challenge yourself to learn more about current immigration law, and see if you agree that our system is “broken.” One place to start is <http://welcomingthestranger.com/learn-and-discern/faqs/>

REFLECT ON DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Stephan Bauman in his talk referenced some key American values. He cited Alexis de Tocqueville, who in Democracy in America wrote that, “America is great because America is good. America will cease to be great when she ceases to be good.” Do you agree or disagree? What do you consider to be key American values? Do these line up with Christian values? How can our country's laws better reflect the Biblical mandate to love the stranger? The Bible makes it clear that as Christians, we are “strangers on earth” who belong to God's kingdom (Hebrews 11:13-16). As Christians, we have a responsibility to follow God's example and love boundlessly. If you are a United States citizen or resident, then you have the opportunity to voice your opinion about laws you want to see changed. The way you engage or abstain politically impacts the direction our country takes in the future.

THANK YOU

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MORE RESOURCES

BOOKS

Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible (Baker Academic, 2008)

Also available in Spanish as **Cristianos en la Frontera: La Inmigración, La Iglesia, y la Biblia** (Casa Creación, 2009)

This book by M. Daniel Carroll R., distinguished professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, provides a thorough review of what the Bible says about immigration, applying God's word to the realities of immigration from Latin America and other parts of the globe to the U.S. today.

Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate (InterVarsity Press, 2009)

This book by World Relief's Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang provides a primer to immigration issues, looking at what Scripture says on the topic, how immigration is affecting the church in the U.S., the history of immigration to the U.S., and the effect of immigration on the economy.

Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission (InterVarsity Press, 2012)

This book, written by missiologist and pastor J.D. Payne, looks specifically at immigration as a missional opportunity, highlighting the ways that immigration creates opportunities to "make disciples of all nations" without ever crossing a border.

MAGAZINES

Cedarville University Torch (Spring/Summer 2012, available online at www.cedarville.edu/torch)

This entire issue of Cedarville University's alumni magazine is focused on immigration, with articles by speakers at their fall 2011 G92 conference including Richard Land, Matthew Soerens, Jason Riley, and Alejandro Mandes.

Christianity Today (see online archive of immigration-related articles at www.christianitytoday.com/ct/topics/i/immigration/)

CT has provided extensive coverage of the issue of immigration from a distinctly Christian perspective. Of particular note is the September 2012 cover story by Katelyn Beaty and Skye Jethani, "Meanwhile, Love the Sojourner."

SMALL GROUP CURRICULA

Welcoming the Stranger: Discovering and Living God's Heart for Immigrants (available for free at www.welcomingthestranger.com)

This resource, published by World Relief and the National Association of Evangelicals, serves as a guide for small groups. The guide includes reading, discussion questions, activities, and suggestions for prayer, with nine units focused on Scripture, mission, refugees, victims of human trafficking, undocumented immigrants, and other topics.

Strangers in the Land (available for purchase online at store.sojo.net/product_p/sg_sitl.htm)

This six-week devotional and study guide, created by Sojourners, is based upon Daniel Carroll's *Christians at the Border*.

VIDEOS

"Send These" (Urban Entry, 2010; available for purchase at www.urbanentry.org/videos/ue4-send-these)

This 15-minute video serves as a helpful discussion-starter for a small group, Adult Education class, or larger forum on immigration from a distinctly Christian perspective.

"A New Dream" (G92, 2011; available online at www.g92.org/watch)

This 10-minute video profiles an immigrant family whose Christian faith informs their thinking on the issue of immigration.

"A Christian Immigrant without Papers: Ricardo's Story" (Available at <http://bit.ly/192K1GQ>)

This 6-minute video produced by Christianity Today profiles a young man in Phoenix, Arizona whose lack of legal status has resulted in many personal challenges, but who nevertheless is ministering to others.

"Perspective: Dr. Richard Land" (G92, 2011, available online at www.g92.org/watch)

This 8-minute video features Dr. Richard Land, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary, discussing his views on immigration issues.

"Interview: Bill Hybels & Matthew Soerens" (Willow Creek Community Church, available at www.g92.org/watch)

In 2010, Bill Hybels and Heather Larson of Willow Creek Community Church interviewed *Welcoming the Stranger* co-author Matthew Soerens at Willow Creek Community Church, addressing why the church should care for immigrants.

