

## Wayfarer

1. Warm-up question: What's something extravagant that you've done for yourself lately, whether large or small?
2. We live in a land of plenty. Even most poor people among us are well off compared to much of the world. That, in turn, makes us a magnet for immigrants. Millions of people want to come here. Jesus said, "To whom much is given, of them shall much be required." Luke 12:48. But we can't save the whole world. The whole world can't live in one country. So on Sunday, we wrestled with how we should respond.
  - a. Immigration is one of the most fraught political issues our country faces. Why is that? What psychological factors give rise to such strong views on immigration? What kinds of emotions do conversations about immigrants stir within you?
  - b. Have you ever become personally acquainted with an undocumented immigrant? How did that relationship impact you?
3. There is a pattern in the Bible so striking we can't miss it. It's amazing how many great Bible heroes were immigrants. The most famous is Abraham. His epic immigrant journey is considered one of the best biblical examples of what it means to live by faith. In Genesis 12, Abraham was called to leave his homeland to travel to an unknown destination. By faith he stepped out into the great unknown, ultimately ended up in a territory we now call Israel.
  - a. Imagine yourself as Abraham. If God called you to leave your home and migrate to an unknown destination, what thoughts and feelings would surge through you? Do you think you'd have the courage to step out and leave?
  - b. When Abraham and his wife Sarah arrived in their new land, what kind of challenges might they have faced? How might the locals have reacted to them?
4. It wasn't just Abraham who became an immigrant. His son Isaac also once had to flee famine, and Isaac's son Jacob (and his entire family) had to do the same. Later when Jacob's descendants (the Israelites) fled oppression in Egypt and returned to the Land of Promise, they were again regarded as immigrants by hostile locals. All of this caused the Israelites to become deeply sympathetic to the plight of immigrants. They knew that, if not for the kindness of strangers, their own ancestors would have never survived and the nation of Israel would have never come into being. Read the medley of Scriptures printed on p. 3, then answer the questions asked there.
5. Jeff shared the true story of a Rwandan man named Emmanuel whose family was swept up in the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s. Emmanuel's father was a pastor in a

congregation composed of both Hutus and Tutsis. When the genocide broke out, a mob of Hutus (some from his father's church) murdered his father, mother, grandmother, and several brothers and sisters. Emmanuel fled carrying his 3-year old sister. After several scrapes with death, Emmanuel threw himself and his sister on the mercy of a Hutu woman in his father's congregation. She took them in, hid them, loved them, and protected them. In your own life, have you ever found yourself in a situation where you desperately needed the kindness of strangers? What happened? How did it feel?

6. Jesus had a great passion for vulnerable people, including strangers and immigrants. In Matthew 25:40, he said that whatever we do to "the least regarded" among us, it's as if we've done it to him. Jesus' passion for strangers probably came from his family's own firsthand experience as displaced immigrants forced to flee political violence. Read Matthew 2:1-17, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. When Joseph learned about King Herod's plot to kill his infant son, what feelings and thoughts do you think he experienced?
  - b. Jeff compared Joseph's experience to that of Raul Marquez. Raul was born and raised in Guatemala, where the government is too weak and corrupt to protect people from gangs. Raul's wife was killed by a gang when Raul refused to cooperate with them. Then the gang threatened to behead Raul's baby boy. With no time to apply for immigration status through legal channels, Raul fled with his son, crossed deserts, and illegally entered the U.S. If you faced what Raul did, what would you do? And how would you hope Americans would respond to you?
  - c. Based on the scriptures reviewed, Jeff suggested that, as followers of Jesus, we all have an obligation to embrace the following core value: **We must be generous and compassionate toward immigrants.** Do you think that's a fair summation of what the Bible teaches? Why or why not? Would you suggest any changes to the wording of this core value?
  - d. Once we agree on a core value on immigration, we next have to discern the best policies for achieving that value. That's where good people – people who genuinely care about immigrants – may disagree. The give and take of good faith conversations can help us reach the best possible solutions. So let's lovingly discuss a few policy questions, comparing and contrasting our views. Should our borders be open or secure? How should our immigration system be reformed? How many immigrants should we take into our nation? Is there any limit? If so, what should it be? Are there also ways we should help alleviate the need for immigrants to flee violence and grinding poverty?

## Medley of Bible Verses on Immigration

“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” Leviticus 19:34.

“Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.” Deuteronomy 27:19.

“You shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 47:21.

“Give counsel, grant justice. Make your shade like night at the height of noon, so as to hide the outcasts. Do not betray the fugitive; let the outcasts of Moab settle among you; be a refuge to them from the destroyer.” Isaiah 16:4.

**Questions:** What strikes you about these verses? Do they surprise you? Are they binding on us? What should we take away from these verses?

## Matthew 2:1-18, selected verses.

1 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” 3 When Herod heard this, he was frightened, 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes, he inquired where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea.”

7 Then Herod learned from the wise men the exact time when the star had appeared, 8 and sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and when you have found the child, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” 9 So they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

13 Afterward, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” 14 Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod.

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated. He sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under. 17 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, 18 “A voice was heard in Ramah, Rachel weeping for her children.”