

Welcoming the Stranger

By Stacia Edwards McDermott



As many of us cross borders for vacations, others do so risking their lives for a chance at a better life. Explore the hardships of immigration and our Christian call to welcome the stranger.

For
Teen Family

Season
Fall

Needed

Bible, pens, paper, computer

Prepare in Advance

- Mark Bible for the following readings: Matthew 25:31-45, Ephesians 2:19, Leviticus 19:33-34, Hebrews 13:2 (or see last page).
- Cue up YouTube clips.

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin. Have Matthew 25:31-45 marked and ready (or see last page).

God, guide our conversation as we explore the difficult issue of immigration and in what ways Christ calls us to welcome the stranger.

Read Matthew 25:31-45.

2. Play the game “Stand Up If.” Read the following statements aloud, inviting people to stand if they agree with the statement. No discussion about them at this time.

Stand up if you think . . .

- all people should be allowed to immigrate to any nation of their choosing.
- nations have a right to protect their borders.
- people should be treated differently based on where they are from.
- your faith calls you to welcome the stranger, no matter who they are.
- immigrants take away jobs from U.S. citizens.
- it doesn't matter if families are separated in order to return illegal immigrants back to their countries.
- all people should be treated with dignity and worth.

3. Watch this YouTube video [Immigrant Experience In America](#) to get a glimpse of early 20th century immigration in the United States. Discuss these questions:
 - What is your family's origin? Do you know when and why they came to the United States?



- When watching this video, you may sense an overall welcoming and friendly feeling, perhaps since so many people were experiencing similar struggles/joys as recent immigrants. Why do you think this positive sentiment has changed?
 - Discuss the difference (or maybe lack of difference) in how you feel regarding immigrants from European countries versus Mexico and other developing nations.
 - If God created everyone and everything, why do we put different values on human beings from different regions?
4. Get a glimpse into a small, rural town in Iowa where many undocumented immigrants have found work [The Latinos of Postville](#).
 5. Read Ephesians 2:19 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”

When learning about the people of Postville, how does this verse relate?

6. Watch this video about what has happened to Postville since federal agents have arrested undocumented workers [Main Street Falls Apart](#).
7. Read Leviticus 19:33-34: “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Discuss your reactions to the Postville raids, keeping in mind the Biblical readings you’ve shared.

8. In closing read aloud:

Immigration is an issue that has many complexities and many different sides. Our call to welcome the stranger can be jaded by the fact that some engage in illegal activity such as drug and human trafficking. However, these actions do not permit us to dismiss the fact that we are one human family and the policies our country enforces affect people here and abroad. Since we are all created in the image and likeness of God, how do we preserve the dignity and worth of all people? Hebrews 13:2 reminds us, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

Although an overwhelming issue, our first reading from Matthew 25 reminds us that every act of kindness and hospitality is an act done to God. As a closing prayer, let’s watch this video of a high school girl who wrote a song about immigration [New Life Anthem](#).

Additional Ideas

- For further reading regarding Biblical context for welcoming the stranger, check out these sites: [Hospitality: Welcoming the Strangers Among Us](#); [Strangers No Longer Together On The Journey Of Hope](#)
- To see more about the Postville raids, check out these clips: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDnSi80w7OI>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDG6-1zp52w&feature=related> or read about how Postville is doing in recent years: <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/years-immigration-raid-iowa-town-feels-poorer-less-133035414.html>
- Read about the lengthy process of becoming a US citizen: <http://uscitizenshiptestguide.com/text/apply.html>; <http://www.usaimmigration.info/>
- Talk to your church and civic leaders about immigration reform

