

*be, not
afraid*
Resources for Congregations & Immigrant Families Fractured by Fear



Bible Study Guide

People on the Move • New Neighbors • Much to Give



Introduction and Contents

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has heard from synods, districts and numerous individual pastors who want resources to address immigration issues impacting their members and communities. Be Not Afraid is a project designed to equip congregations to respond to our country’s broken immigration system in ways that affirm community and abate fear.

We are grateful for your congregation’s willingness to be involved in turning back fear and inspiring people with strength and hope. This Bible study guide will help you introduce the issues to your congregation and help them think about immigrants and immigration from a scriptural perspective. You may use it to recruit support and volunteers to implement other pieces of the Be Not Afraid project, or you may use it after volunteers have been trained to increase support among wider membership for upcoming activities, or you may simply use it to raise general awareness about immigrant needs and ministries.

The study guide includes three sessions:

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Bible Study Guide: Part One

People on the Move

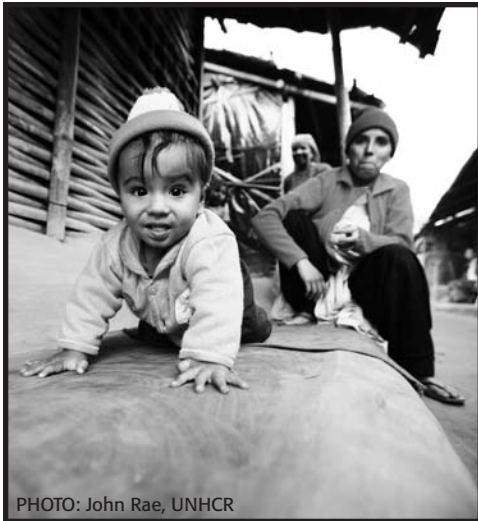


PHOTO: John Rae, UNHCR

Immigration Myth

All people on the move are immigrants.

Immigration Fact

People arrive in the United States through a variety of circumstances. They may be refugees, asylum seekers, temporary workers or visitors. People in each circumstance must go through a different process to become lawful permanent residents if their intention is to remain and work in the country.

Before the conversation starts we agree that

- immigration is a complex issue,
- there are strongly held, differing opinions among us,
- we will seek to understand how best to serve, and
- we will speak respectfully about both immigrants and those who enforce immigration law.

Opening Prayer

Almighty and merciful Lord, we ask you to be with us in our conversation. Guide our words that we may help each other understand. Guide our hearts and minds that we may see through your eyes. In Jesus' name, amen.

Through the Lens of Scripture (5 minutes)

What can be discerned about immigration from the following Bible passages? On a board or poster paper record three words or phrases that each passage brings to mind.

Matthew 25:34-36 "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'"¹

Romans 13:1 "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God."

¹ All Scripture passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright 1989, 1993 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Immigration Terms

refugees: People who fled their home country due to persecution or fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees typically stay in camps in a safer country before being resettled in a third country. The process usually takes years.

Lopez Lomong, a middle-distance runner who represented the United States in the 2008 Olympic Games, is a former refugee from Sudan.

asylum seekers: People forced to flee their homeland without access to the refugee resettlement process. People must apply for asylum within one year of arrival in the United States in order to be considered eligible. Those who receive asylum are called *asylees*.

Nobel laureate author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn sought asylum in the United States after he was exiled from the Soviet Union.

immigrants: People who have been admitted to live permanently in the United States as lawful permanent residents (LPRs).

Most U.S. citizens have immigrant ancestors.

non-immigrants: People who are permitted to enter the United States for a limited period. Most non-immigrants must apply for a visa before entry. Visa holders must also pass an immigration inspection upon arrival.

Examples of non-immigrants include students, tourists, temporary workers, business executives, diplomats, artists, entertainers and reporters.

Through Your Eyes (10 minutes)

- Break into small groups of three participants, and share a story about a big move in your personal or family history.
- What fears did you or your ancestors experience?
- What acts of welcome and help did you or your ancestors receive?
- Identify 2–3 fears and 2–3 acts of welcome for your small group to share with the large group.
- Share with the large group the fears and acts of welcome you identified. Record lists of fears and acts of welcome from each small group on a board or poster paper. Circle words that are identified more than once.

Through the Eyes of Tomás (15 minutes)

Back in small groups, read the following story aloud and discuss the questions at the end.

Tomás is in a county jail waiting to hear if his wife and two children are safe. Today Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided his workplace and arrested all employees without documentation. Tomás blames himself for what has happened. He knew the risks in overstaying his visa and tried to live in the shadows. He wanted to seek a legal way to remain, but the risk of exposure was too great.

His family has hardly left the house because they are afraid. Raquel, his wife, anxiously watches their children, who were born in America and are therefore U.S. citizens, go off to school each morning, and she watches worriedly for their return each afternoon. Going to church is scary for the family too, but it has been one of the few positives in their life, building their faith and providing a place to better their English speaking skills.

Another positive was sending money, called remittances, back to Tomás' brother to help take care of their extended family. But now all of that is over. Deportation seems certain.

Immigration Terms, continued

visa: Travel document granted by consular officials. Visas do not guarantee entry into the United States.

The number of temporary worker visas granted in the United States each year is 5,000. U.S. demand for foreign-born workers is about 500,000.

undocumented immigrants: People present in the United States without the permission of the U.S. government. Undocumented immigrants enter the United States without being inspected by an immigration officer or by using false documents. A foreign-born person who entered the country with permission of the U.S. government can become undocumented by "overstaying," remaining after a temporary visa expires.

Legal Notes

- It *is* lawful to provide human care to a person who lacks documentation.
- You are *not* required to report someone who lacks documentation.
- It is *not* lawful to help someone avoid compliance with immigration law, such as an order of deportation.

How can Tomás make sure his wife and children return to his country with him? Since the children are U.S. citizens, they will need passports to travel...assuming his country will allow them to enter. Until all of these issues are figured out, Tomás worries how his wife will pay the rent and put food on the table. And if she is arrested herself, who will take care of the children?

- How is Tomás' experience different from or similar to the family stories you just shared?
- What aspects of this story could be addressed through better border control and immigration law?
- What aspects of this story could be addressed by human care from churches both in the United States and in Tomás' home country?
- How would you encourage this father in detention? What is your prayer for people in his situation?

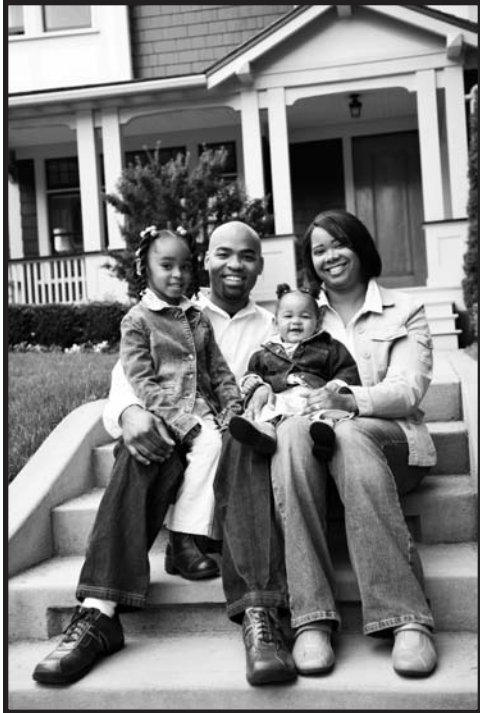
Rejoin the large group and discuss these questions:

- What surprised you about Tomás' story?
- Sometimes knowing someone's plight makes us want to bend laws, and sometimes knowing that someone has broken the law makes us want to withhold compassion. How do we guard against both extremes? What is a faithful response?
- Look at the list of biblical principles and the fears and acts of welcome you listed earlier. What are we already doing as a congregation to welcome newcomers? How can we reduce fear? How can we be more welcoming?

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, we praise your marvelous creation of people and the way you care for each one of us. You provide for us eternally through salvation in your Son Jesus Christ. You provide for us daily in all our needs. Thank you for the opportunities you give to offer hospitality and care for the strangers in our midst. Help us to love our neighbor without fear through our words and by our actions. Grant us strength to serve according to your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

Bible Study Guide: Part Two New Neighbors



Immigration Myth

Being undocumented is a criminal offense.

Immigration Fact

Being undocumented is usually a civil violation, not a criminal one. Other civil violations include motor vehicle infractions such as speeding or parking at an expired meter.

Before the conversation starts we agree that

- immigration is a complex issue,
- there are strongly held, differing opinions among us,
- we will seek to understand how best to serve, and
- we will speak respectfully about both immigrants and those who enforce immigration law.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, send your Holy Spirit to guide our discussion. Help us to let go of fears and judgments. Help us to seek wisdom and understanding so that we can serve people according to your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

Through the Lens of Scripture (5 minutes)

Read the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25–37.

- In verse 29 the lawyer asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” In what ways is the parable a surprising answer to the question? Are there any restrictions or qualifications about neighbors?
- Identify 3–5 things the Samaritan did *not* do that are significant to our conversation about current U.S. immigration issues. Record list on a board or poster paper.

Through Your Eyes (10 minutes)

- Break into small groups of three participants, and share a time a new neighbor, coworker or relative entered your life.
 - What were your fears? Joys?
 - How did you get to know the person?
 - In what ways did you or others help the newcomer feel a sense of belonging?
- Identify 2–3 of your group's responses to each question to share with the large group.

Immigration Terms

Lawful Permanent Residents

Typically foreign-born individuals seek to become lawful permanent residents in one of three ways:

- *Family Sponsorship.* Adult U.S. citizens can sponsor their foreign-born spouses, parents, children and siblings. Lawful permanent residents can sponsor their spouses, children under age 21 and unmarried adult children.
- *Employment Sponsorship.* U.S. employers can sponsor individuals for specific positions when there is a demonstrated shortage of available highly skilled workers.
- *Diversity Lottery.* Immigrants from certain countries can register for 50,000 visas made available each year.

Naturalized Citizens

Legal permanent residents are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship through a process called naturalization. To qualify for naturalization applicants must meet these qualifications:

- They must have resided in the United States for five years, or three years if they are married to U.S. citizens, without having committed any serious crimes.
- They must show that they have paid their taxes and are of "good moral character."
- They must demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history and government as well as an ability to understand, speak and write basic English.

- Share these responses with the large group. Record the responses from each small group on board or poster paper. Circle words that are identified more than once.

Through the Eyes of Daniel and Brenna (15 minutes)

Back in small groups, read the following story aloud and discuss the questions at the end.

The courtroom is packed with the family and friends of Daniel and Brenna. Even their pastor has come to support them as they wait for the judge to rule on their appeal of a deportation order for Brenna. If the judge grants the appeal, Brenna can remain here in the country with Daniel and their children. This day in court may bring an end to years of forms, legal proceedings and living in fear.

When they met six years ago, Brenna was in graduate school. An Irish citizen, she had come to the United States on a student visa. When she married Daniel, who was born in the United States, two years later, she applied for U.S. citizenship. She has always had proper documentation.

So why the fear? Brenna's application for citizenship was denied because the government discovered that while she was in graduate school, she was paid under the table when she worked in a restaurant to make ends meet. The government issued an order for deportation.

The family's attorney asked the court to stay the order of deportation and allow Brenna to become a citizen so the family can stay together. Brenna knows what she did was not legal and has asked for forgiveness. Is deportation a proportionate response? How does a family comply with the law and remain together? Should Brenna go back to Ireland? She may be barred from re-entry or separated her from her family for years. Should Daniel and the children go with her and try to become citizens there? Will there be work for both of them there? Or should they disobey the order for deportation and remain in the United States, ever fearful?

Immigration Terms, continued

Mixed-Status Families

Mixed-status families are those with one or more members who are not U.S. citizens. The noncitizen family members may or may not be documented. For example, a mixed-status family might comprise a U.S. citizen married to an undocumented immigrant with U.S.-born citizen children.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)

LIRS has been a champion for uprooted people since 1939. In partnership with a national network of affiliates, partners, congregations and volunteers, LIRS resettles refugees, protects unaccompanied refugee children, advocates for fair and just treatment of asylum seekers, and seeks alternatives to detention for those who are incarcerated during their immigration proceedings.

Through the Be Not Afraid project LIRS works with congregations to debunk myths about immigration, provide practical care for vulnerable immigrants and create welcoming communities.

- How is this family's experience different from or similar to other stories you know?
- What aspects of this story could be addressed through better border control and immigration law?
- What aspects of this story could be addressed by human care from churches both in the United States and in Ireland?
- How would you encourage Daniel and Brenna as they wait for the judge's ruling? What is your prayer for families in this situation?
- If Brenna had been from Guatemala rather than Ireland, would your opinion of the situation change? Why or why not?

Rejoin the large group and discuss these questions:

- What surprised you about Daniel and Brenna's story?
- Sometimes knowing someone's plight makes us want to bend laws, and sometimes knowing that someone has broken the law makes us want to withhold compassion. How do we guard against both extremes? What is the faithful response?
- Look at the list of actions the Samaritan did *not* do and at the fears and joys you listed earlier. What are we already doing as a congregation to welcome newcomers? How can we reduce fears? How can we be more welcoming?

Closing Prayer

God of might and God of mercy, we praise your holy name. Thank you for the new life we receive through your Son Jesus Christ. Thank you for the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to do all good things. Help us to remember all the families struggling with immigration issues. Give them wisdom and courage to make decisions and keep their families safe. Give us wisdom and courage to walk beside them, finding ways to support all of your children according to your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

Bible Study Guide: Part Three

Much to Give



Learn More About Immigration

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)

www.lirs.org

- History
- FAQs
- Study Tools

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

www.unhcr.org

- Global Trends
- Info by Country
- Articles

United States Center for Immigration Services (USCIS)

www.uscis.gov

- Procedures and Forms
- Case Tracking
- Articles

Before the conversation starts we agree that

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- there are strongly held, differing opinions among us,
- we will seek to understand how best to serve, and
- we will speak respectfully about both immigrants and those who enforce immigration law.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the hearts and minds of every person in this room. Thank you for the gifts you grant us to faithfully administer your grace in so many ways. Help us to listen to each other. Help us to seek what you would have us understand and to serve according to your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

Through the Lens of Scripture (5 minutes)

Matthew 22: 21b—"Then [Jesus] said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'"¹

- In terms of immigration, what belongs to "the emperor" and what belongs to God"? List 3–5 items for each on a board or poster paper. *Optional: Consider additional Scripture passages to answer this question: Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13–17, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 24:17, Isaiah 58:6–7.*
- If you are a U.S. citizen, you have responsibilities to "the emperor" such as paying taxes and obeying laws. What privileges do you have? List 3–5 things on a board or poster paper. [Expected answers include voting, speaking with legislators and participating in government.]

¹ All Scripture passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright 1989, 1993 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Learn More About Immigration, continued

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

www.dhs.gov/ximgtn

- National Trends
- Info by State
- Forms and Resources

National Immigration Forum

www.immigrationforum.org

- Policy Trends
- Advocacy Tools
- Articles

Detention Watch Network (DWN)

www.detentionwatchnetwork.org

- Detention and Deportation Trends
- Stories
- Action Alerts

Through Your Eyes (10 minutes)

- Break into small groups of three participants. Imagine that a new prohibition movement has begun and that Congress is considering a bill that would outlaw the making and selling of all alcoholic beverages again.
 - How would the United States be a safer place to live?
 - What would be required to enforce the law?
 - What are the potential negative effects?
 - Is it possible for two Christians to each arrive at different positions, pro and con, on this proposed legislation?
- List 2–3 of your group’s responses for each question to share with the large group.
- Share your responses with the large group. Record the responses from each group on board or poster paper. Circle words that are identified more than once.

Through the Eyes of Cora (15 minutes)

Back in small groups, read the following story aloud and discuss the questions at the end.

It is 8:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. Cora is getting ready for church and with a sigh remembers that there are several people she won’t see this morning, and might never see again. The usual Sunday dinner at her aunt’s house has probably been cancelled because too many friends and family are afraid to meet.

In the 12 years Cora has been in America, first on a work visa, then as a permanent legal resident and now as a citizen, she has seen a great deal of the immigration system. She’s seen people without documentation who are doing well here and others who are exploited. She’s seen people arrested and deported. Recently she has seen more raids on workplaces and even on families’ homes.

People in her mostly immigrant neighborhood are going to church, going to restaurants and meeting in public less often. It doesn’t seem to matter if a person

***They Are Us:
Lutherans and Immigration***

Augsburg Fortress 2009

Read the new book by the Rev. Stephen Bouman and LIRS President Ralston H. Deffenbaugh, Jr. Explore the biblical, historical, theological and cultural foundation for Lutheran participation in the conversation about immigration today. Study questions accompany each chapter to celebrate immigrant roots, discuss immigration reform, and reflect on the church's mission of evangelical hospitality.

can show documentation or not—anyone could get swept up in a raid.

Cora is proud of her legal status and believes everyone should follow the laws. She also knows that for everyone who receives legal immigration status, there are thousands of others waiting in our broken system. Some people at Cora's church think that the congregation should provide sanctuary—protecting people without documentation or those at risk of deportation. Others want to hold legal clinics and organize emergency care for families when there are immigration raids. One of Cora's pastors has asked her what she thought the church should do.

- How is Cora's experience different from or similar to other stories you know?
- What aspects of this story could be addressed through better border control and immigration law?
- What aspects of this story could be addressed by human care from churches both in the United States and in other countries?
- How would you encourage Cora? What is your prayer for people in her situation?

Rejoin the large group and discuss these questions:

- What surprised you about Cora's story?
- Sometimes knowing someone's plight makes us want to bend laws, and sometimes knowing that someone has broken the law makes us want to withhold compassion. How do we guard against both extremes? What is the faithful response?
- Look at the list of ways to give to the emperor and to God and at the earlier responses to the prohibition questions. What factors are the same in the conversation about immigration? What might individuals and congregations pray about doing?



Support the Be Not Afraid Project

Your financial support helps LIRS protect vulnerable immigrants. Through the Be Not Afraid project, we equip congregations like yours to respond to challenging immigration issues. We help newcomers understand their rights. We assist families and communities as they prepare for immigration enforcement actions. And we encourage concerned friends and caring congregations to speak up for fair and just immigration policies.

If this study has been a blessing to you, please visit www.lirs.org to donate now!

Closing Prayer

Most Holy Lord, you are perfect in your laws and perfect in your mercies. Thank you for the freedom we receive through Jesus Christ to walk in the newness of life. Empower us to see all people through your eyes and serve as you would have us serve. Bless families and congregations being torn apart by immigration issues. Grant those involved in the Be Not Afraid project wisdom and compassion to care for the stranger according to your will. In Jesus' name, amen.