WELCOMING THE STRANGER

Discovering and Living God's Heart for Immigrants

[A LEARNING GROUP EXPERIENCE]

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[A LEARNING GROUP GUIDE]

world relief™

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IMMIGRATION ISSUES can be complicated, controversial and emotional. We often get so caught up in personal experience and political arguments that it is difficult to understand what the Bible is teaching. Even the Bible can seem confusing as emphasis is variously placed on law and on grace.

It's been helpful to me to realize that immigration is not just an American concern. I imagine myself in another part of the world today or in another century long ago and wonder how I would read and teach what the Bible says about immigrants and aliens.

For example, consider the Christians who have fled Iraq. Before the United States became militarily engaged in Iraq there were about 1.5 million Christians who were normally protected by the government. These Christians traced their history back to the time of Jesus. Then, with the war and a new government there was increased persecution of Christians. Approximately one million Christians fled Iraq and entered neighboring Middle East nations like Jordan and Syria. Because so many of them didn't have permission to immigrate they became undocumented immigrants or "illegal aliens." Because of their undocumented status they are unable to get legal jobs and enjoy the protections and privileges that come with legal status. They face a seemingly impossible choice between staying where they are illegally and returning to Iraq to face persecution and threats of death for their families. As Christians teaching from the Bible, what would we say to these fellow Christians?

As you travel the journey of this Learning Group guide, look first to what the Bible says for other places and times and then bring that biblical truth into 21st century America.

Leith Anderson
President
National Association of Evangelicals

At the base of the Statue of Liberty, we read these words: *"Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free/ The wretched refuse of your teeming shore/Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me/I lift my lamp beside the golden door."* Yet, today, immigrants are scorned and considered an invasion, or threat, by many Americans—even by many Christians. Fear abounds on all sides of the national debate over immigration. As refugees and other immigrants enter the United States, many Americans are afraid of the effects that these newcomers—with their different languages and cultures, and often coming from situations of poverty—will have on our national economy and culture. But fear is not isolated within the receiving communities: refugees escape the terrors of war and persecution only to face new fears as they land in a strange, sometimes hostile culture. Victims of human trafficking fear the very real threats of the modern-day slaveholders who force them to work with little or no compensation. Other immigrants fear being split apart from their families or deported to a situation of danger or poverty. And many churches, mindful of the reality that immigration has become a divisive political issue, are afraid to even discuss the topic.

As believers committed to the authority of God's Word, though, the Church needs to wrestle with this complicated, sticky issue, because the Bible commands us repeatedly to care for immigrants. In fact, we're reminded that we *ourselves* are immigrants—that we are "foreigners and strangers" on this earth, seeking a heavenly kingdom (Hebrews 11:13). We also need to face the reality—a hopeful occurrence, really—that immigrants are joining our local churches in great numbers. Demographers suggest that immigrants and their children from Latin America, Asia, and Africa will be the majority of American Christians within just a few decades. They bring a new vibrancy to our local churches, but—since the Church is one Body, with many members (1 Corinthians 12)—they have also entangled the Body of Christ in the morass of the U.S. immigration system. That means that we cannot give in to fear and avoid or avert our eyes from this issue: it's sticky, but it's ours.

Fortunately, as followers of Christ, we have been given something more powerful than fear: we are promised that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18 NKJV). Our God loves the immigrant (Deuteronomy 10:18), and he calls us to love them—the refugee, the victim of trafficking, even the undocumented—as well. Love does not eradicate the many worthy questions of immigration policy—what about those who are here illegally?, what about the economic realities?—but it does require us to engage. Loving our immigrant neighbors starts with learning, and that's the purpose of this Learning Group guide. We hope this serves as a resource to spark your interest and inspire you to action.

Stephan Bauman
President & CEO
World Relief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[WHAT IS A LEARNING GROUP?]

The Purpose

The purpose of a Learning Group is to create an environment that moves a group of people towards action as an expression of faith. It is an experiential opportunity—a chance to engage with one of the great causes of our day and to live out the calling God has placed upon his Church.

We've designed this Learning Group to be adaptable to a number of purposes: it can be used by an informal group of friends or colleagues, by a church small group, by an Adult Education Class, or by a family. Our intention is that this will be more than just a small group curriculum, but rather a tool to launch you—as a group—on a learning journey together. We've provided some information and some cues, but we hope that you'll go even beyond what we've provided, seeking God's heart as you wrestle with a complex topic. We don't know exactly where this Learning Group will lead you, but we hope that it will be a life-altering experience.

The Structure

Each Learning Group session is designed with five main components:

1. **[LEARNING]**—ideas, Scriptures, facts, and a few opinions to guide your thinking
2. **[DISCUSSION QUESTIONS]** — an opportunity to share your perspective and listen to others
3. **[PRAYER POINTS]**—suggestions for how you might pray as you study this topic
4. **[EXPERIENCE]**—a possibility for an action step—small or large—that will facilitate your further learning and/or begin to address the issue
5. **[GO DEEPER]**—recommended resources to explore the topic in depth

You are invited to use these components in whatever order or manner you would like. You may want to have each group member read the LEARNING component first on an individual basis, then gather together after to talk through the DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, or you may prefer to read aloud together. We encourage you to use the PRAYER POINTS to close each session with corporate prayer and as an aide in your personal times of prayer.

The EXPERIENCE component is intended to bring home a particular aspect of each session in a more personal way, encouraging you to identify with and walk alongside the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed. The experience will apply to the topic of the following session, and the discussion questions for the subsequent session will also facilitate discussion of that experience activity.

This Learning Group can be adapted to your group's schedule, whether that means meeting once a week, once a month, or once a day. There are seven sessions in this Learning Group guide, but you can feel free to condense two lessons into one week or spread one out into two. The sessions are designed to be flexible. You may also want to pair the Learning Group with other learning materials or experiential components. Individuals interested in a particular topic may want to read a book or watch a film recommended in the GO DEEPER component and share what they've learned with the rest of the group.

The Rules

You have chosen a complex, controversial topic about which to learn, one which tends to evoke passion and sometimes disagreement. For many individuals—particularly those who are immigrants themselves—this topic can be intensely personal, and talking about these topics could make some people feel very vulnerable.

To go through this Learning Group together, you'll need to agree up front to some basic rules.

1. **CIVILITY** While you're welcome to disagree with others in the group—or with the content of this Learning Group guide—please be respectful of others' statements, not mocking or dismissing them.
2. **LISTEN FIRST** Allow others to fully express their thoughts before interrupting to refute—and focus first on carefully listening to their ideas, before forming your response.
3. **TRUST** Some individuals may want to share personal stories, or stories of friends or relatives, that may be sensitive. All participants should agree in advance that, to encourage an atmosphere of vulnerability, any personal information shared within the context of the group will stay in the group and not be shared without explicit permission in any other context.

[LEARNING]

The Immigration Problem

Immigration is one of the most complex and controversial issues of our time. Everyone seems to agree: the United States has an immigration problem. No one thinks that the current state of immigration in our country—where an estimated 11.5 million immigrants are present unlawfully[1]—is an ideal situation. But that's sometimes as far as the agreement goes. And many forget about the majority of immigrants in the United States, including refugees, who *do* have legal status or are naturalized U.S. citizens.

Much of the debate on immigration focuses on those present in the United States without legal status. From one perspective, immigration is a problem because it represents an "invasion" of "illegal aliens" who are responsible for any number of social woes: unemployment, budget deficits, disease, crime, gangs, global warming—even cruelty to animals. From this perspective, the problem is usually the immigrants themselves.

From a drastically different perspective, others see a problem because they consider the current situation to be unjust. They blame arbitrary laws for driving undocumented immigrants into the shadows and dividing immigrant families.

Many Christians find themselves in the tension between the desire to love and welcome immigrants and the obligation to uphold the law. The issue gets even more complicated because illegal immigration is not just a problem for our society: it's an issue within the Church, as many immigrants—including many without legal status—have joined local churches across the United States. How are we to sort through this complex issue?

VIDEO RESOURCE If you're able, we suggest watching a short film that will help to frame some of the fundamental questions that we want to wrestle with as we explore this issue of immigration. "Send These" is a 15-minute film from the Urban Entry project; you can order it online directly from Urban Entry at **http://bit.ly/oDvFFB** for digital download or on DVD.

Fundamental Questions

Scott Lundeen of the Urban Entry project suggests that we each need to ask at least three questions as we think about the immigration issue:

1. Am I thinking about immigration as a Christian?
2. Do I have my facts right?
3. Do I know any immigrants?

We hope that over the next several sessions, we'll help you to answer these questions. Immigration is a political issue, an economic issue, and a social issue—but we need to view it first and foremost as a Christian issue, not merely through the lens of political or economic ideology. In our first few sessions, we'll explore how the Bible might inform the way that we think about this complex issue.

Eventually, though, we do need to get to those policy and economic questions, because if we apply a biblical worldview to a mistaken understanding of the facts, we might still end up in the wrong place. In Sessions Four through Eight we'll explain the facts about immigration.

We also need to keep in our mind that this "issue" is fundamentally about people—human beings whom Scripture tells us are made in God's image[2] and for whom Jesus Christ died.[3] It's much easier to generalize and dismiss people when we're dealing with statistics; it's harder to do so when we're talking about a friend, a sister, a brother. In Session Three, we'll look closely at how the issue of immigration is affecting the Church in the United States and get to know a few immigrant stories.

Finally, we're going to add one more question: how do we respond? This Learning Group is not meant to be an academic exercise but rather preparation for action. We're going to read a lot of Scripture in the course of wrestling with this issue from a Christian perspective, but knowing what the Bible says is of very limited value if we do not apply it. "Do not merely listen to the word," James says, "and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."[4]

A Missional Opportunity

Many in our society see immigration as a threat, but, as followers of Christ, immigration may actually present a beautiful missional opportunity for the Church.[5] According to Asbury Theological Seminary president Tim Tennent, "The immigrant population actually presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America."[6]

"The immigrant population actually presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America."

Dr. Timothy Tennent, President, Asbury Theological Seminary

Interestingly, we find two contrasting views of immigrants—either as a threat or as an opportunity—exemplified in Scripture itself. At the end of Genesis, we encounter a Pharaoh who sees a great opportunity in Joseph—an immigrant. This immigrant, Pharaoh recognizes, is "discerning and wise" and filled with God's Spirit, and so the Egyptian ruler gives Joseph a great deal of

responsibility.[7] That trust is more than rewarded: Joseph goes on to save the Egyptian society in the midst of a terrible famine.

Made in the image of their Creator, immigrants have the potential to contribute in spectacular ways, and to greatly bless the country that receives them. When Joseph's famine-ridden family arrived in Egypt—hunger, then as now, is a great motivator for migration—Pharaoh received them warmly, and "gave them property in the best part of the land."[8] A wise leader, Pharaoh extended hospitality, but his motives were more than simple altruism: he sought the blessing of the newly-arrived elderly immigrant Jacob[9] and put Joseph's most-skilled brothers in charge of his livestock.[10] This Pharaoh knew, as evangelical columnist Michael Gerson has observed in the contemporary context, that immigrants are "not just mouths but hands and brains."[11]

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." *Matthew 28:19-20, NIV*

A few pages further into the Bible, however, at the beginning of Exodus, we find a very different response to immigrants: one grounded in fear. A new Pharaoh came to power: he did not know Joseph or Jacob, but he saw in their many descendants a serious threat. The Israelites had "become far too numerous" and imperiled Egypt's national security.[12] Pharaoh was not willing to deport the Israelites, though, because they played too important a role in the Egyptian economy; he wanted the Israelites' labor, but did not appreciate them as people—and certainly did not consider, as his predecessor had, that they might present an opportunity. He decided to subject them to hard labor, and then went so far as to destroy families, decreeing that all male Hebrew infants should be killed.[13]

Moses was born into this genocidal context; under the law, he should have been killed. His parents did all that they could to subvert this unjust law, though, just as most parents would in a similar situation. In the end, of course, Pharaoh's hardheartedness cost him and his country dearly, as Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, and Pharaoh's army was drowned in the Red Sea.

We are presented with the same choice as the Egyptian leaders of a few millennia ago: to view immigrants as a threat or as an opportunity. Beyond the economic opportunity for the United States—economists almost universally agree that immigration, and even illegal immigration in particular, is beneficial for the United States[14]—immigration presents an incredible missional opportunity for the Church.

Jesus left his disciples with the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations."[15] With immigration, the nations show up in our

own communities, bringing that mission right to our doorsteps. Many immigrants come into our country having never heard the good news of a transformational relationship with Jesus Christ, a message that we have the privilege to share as we reach out to our new neighbors in welcome. Other immigrants come into the United States with a vibrant Christian faith—and are able to share the hope of the gospel with others, both other immigrants and with the many US citizens in need of the transformation possible through Jesus Christ. Those who study mission refer to this global phenomenon—which is happening all over the world, not just in the United States—as diaspora missiology, with ministry occurring to immigrants, through immigrants, and then beyond the immigrant experience, as some migrants who find faith as an immigrant eventually return to their countries of origin and become extremely effective, culturally-competent missionaries.[16]

"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, NIV 1984

This movement of peoples is not an accident. The book of Acts tells us that God "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."[17] There is a sovereign purpose in this design: "God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him."[18] While there are economic, social, and environmental reasons that people decide to migrate—we will read about these "push" factors in the coming sessions—above them all is God's hand in the movement of people, so that people he loves will find him.

We have a role in that process, if we choose to accept the mission God has put right at our doorstep. If, like the Pharaoh of Moses' time, we choose to view immigration as a threat and respond with fear, though, we will miss out on the opportunity and the blessing that God has for his Church in the arrival of immigrants. How will you view this situation: as a threat, or as a missional opportunity? If we have the eyes to see, "the harvest is plentiful."[19]

[DISCUSSION QUESTIONS]

The Immigration Problem

1. What has your perspective, if any, been on the issue of immigration? What voices or ideas have influenced your position?

2. Do you think it is possible to reconcile the ideas of welcoming immigrants and upholding the law?

Fundamental Questions

3. Have you ever thought about the issue of immigration from a distinctly Christian perspective? How might (or might not) that change the tone of the conversation?
4. What have been your primary sources for information about the issue of immigration? As we begin a learning process, do you feel like you understand the issue well, a little bit, or not at all?
5. How have personal relationships with immigrants shaped your views, if at all? Do you have many friends who are themselves immigrants, and have you heard their personal stories?

A Missional Opportunity

6. What do you think of the comparison between the two Pharaohs—one who viewed immigrants as a threat, the other who viewed immigrants as an opportunity? Is it fair to apply this idea to our immigration situation today?
7. Missiologists have found that immigrants are one of the most receptive groups of people to believing in the gospel. Why do you think that immigrants are more open to the gospel than those who do not migrate?

[PRAYER POINTS]

- Pray for this Learning Group, for openness to the voice of the Holy Spirit as you learn, pray, and act together.
- Pray that you would be able to view this issue of immigration first and foremost from a Christian perspective, setting aside politics at least as the group begins.
- Pray for immigrants in your community and for opportunities to get to know them.
- Pray that the gospel would go forth all over the world, especially to, through, and beyond immigrant communities.
- Pray for a sense of shared mission with one another as your group works through a series of complex issues over the next several sessions.
- Pray together this Prayer for the Mission of the Church, from the Book of Common Prayer:

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.[20]

EXPERIENCE: SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Our challenge this session has been to think about the topic of immigration from a distinctly Christian perspective. If we want to know how, as followers of Christ, we should think about any topic, our first resource should be God's Word. Next session, we'll be focusing more intensively on what the Bible has to say about immigration. In preparation, try the following simple activity, either on your own or with others:

See how many times you can find immigrants in the Bible and in what contexts; you can start with the list of Scripture passages in Appendix 1 or use a concordance or an online Bible search (such as www.biblegateway.com). Depending on which translation you prefer, you may need to try a few different words: alien, immigrant, sojourner, foreigner, stranger. Write down what you find and look for trends.

As you begin this Learning Group, also keep your eyes open for immigrants throughout the biblical narrative as you study the Scriptures on your own. You may find that some of your favorite stories in Scripture are the stories of immigrants—even if you never previously thought of them that way.

GO DEEPER

- Book: *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate* (InterVarsity Press, 2009)

  This book, authored by World Relief staffers Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang, serves as a primer on the immigration issue from a Christian perspective and would serve as a helpful parallel resource to this Learning Group.

- Booklet: *Scattered to Gather: Embracing the Global Trend of Diaspora* (LifeChange Publishers, 2010)

  This short booklet, prepared for the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Capetown, South Africa in 2010, explains a new paradigm in global missions: ministering to, through, and beyond global diasporas. It is available online at http://bit.ly/j0bLuZ.

- Online video: Bill Hybels Interviews Matthew Soerens

  Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, interviewed *Welcoming the Stranger* co-author Matthew Soerens in 2010, along with Heather Larson, who serves as Willow Creek's Director for Compassion and Justice Ministries. The video is available online at http://vimeo.com/24770501. As their own local church has wrestled with how to respond to the issue of immigration—and the many immigrants who have joined the church, some of them undocumented—Bill and Heather ask Matt to help them frame the issue from a biblical, fact-based perspective.

- Book: *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* (Biblica, 2012)

  This book by pastor and missiologist J.D. Payne examines the missional opportunities presented by immigration to the West, including research on unreached people groups, and provides a number of practical suggestions for cross-cultural ministry.

- Book: *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice (Institute of Diaspora Studies,* 2001)

  This collection of essays by both academic researchers and practitioners of diaspora mission is edited by Dr. Enoch Wan, president of the Evangelical Missiological Society

[LEARNING]

"You Must Also Love Immigrants"[21]: The Old Testament and Immigration

Many American Christians do not think of immigration as a major theme in Scripture. It's not a common subject of sermons, and polls suggest that most Christians do not think of immigration primarily through the lens of their faith, but rather think of it as a political or economic issue.[22]

Actually, though, immigrants appear throughout the Scriptures, and God gives specific and repeated commands to his people about how immigrants (also referred to as foreigners, strangers, sojourners, or aliens, depending upon your English translation) are to be treated. In fact, the Hebrew word *ger*—which is one of several Hebrew words for a foreigner, but the one closest to our idea of an immigrant, one not just passing through but residing, at least temporarily, within a foreign nation—appears 92 times just in the Old Testament.[23] Willow Creek Community Church pastor and author Bill Hybels' experience is typical of many believers who begin to look for immigrants in the Scriptures: "I read verse after verse about how God desired his followers to treat the foreigners in their midst. How had I not noticed all these passages before? The single thought that kept swirling in my mind was, 'Immigrants matter to God.'"[24]

The frequency of Old Testament references to immigrants is due in part to the fact that many key characters in the biblical narrative themselves cross borders at one point or another. The patriarch Abraham migrates on multiple occasions: he leaves his homeland following a divine promise that God will make him into a great nation and through him bless many nations.[25] Later, he travels into Egypt in search of food.[26] Repeatedly in the biblical story—as is often the case today—hunger motivates migration.[27]

Ruth presents another immigrant story. When famine hits her native land of Moab, Ruth follows her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Israel.[28] Ruth goes to the fields and distinguishes herself by her hard work.[29] Eventually, she finds favor in the eyes of the field owner, Boaz, "even though she is a Moabite, to whom the law was less than favorable."[30] In God's divine plan, this immigrant woman goes on to become the grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus.

In addition to the many stories of immigrants within the Old Testament, God also has very specific instructions to his people about how to treat immigrants. In fact, he commands the Israelites not to mistreat or oppress an immigrant precisely because they should "know what

it's like to be an immigrant, because [they] were immigrants in the land of Egypt."[31]

God commands his people to treat immigrants very differently than the way they saw modeled by the Egyptians, who abused the Israelites living in their midst. He tells the Israelites that the immigrant living amongst them "must be treated as one of your native-born."[32] As he lays out the law for his people, God repeatedly states that "the same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you."[33] While we think of "equal justice under the law" as an American ideal, God established the principle for his people millennia before the founding of the United States. He commands the Israelites to love their neighbors as themselves and then—as if anticipating the question of whether this means loving even immigrants—specifically mandates that they do so: "Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself."[34]

God's concern for the immigrant is consistent with his concern for those who are vulnerable: repeatedly, immigrants are referenced together with three others groups as what Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff has called the "quartet of the vulnerable": the resident alien, the orphan, the widow, and the impoverished.[35] "Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor," God tells his people through the prophet Zechariah.[36] "The LORD," writes the psalmist, "watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow."[37] The prophet Ezekiel condemns Israel's rulers because "they oppress immigrants and deny the rights of orphans and widows,"[38] and Malachi lumps those "who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice" with adulterers and sorcerers, saying each will face God's judgment.[39] God tells his people through the prophet Jeremiah that they will be allowed to live in the land he has promised them only "if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow."[40]

God's command to care for immigrants and others who are vulnerable goes beyond generic commands: he also legislates specific rules for his people to ensure that they provide for the needs of the vulnerable. He tells them to go over their wheat, grape, and olive harvests just one time, then to leave what was left over "to the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows."[41] In many of our churches today, we are encouraged to set aside a tithe of our income to help compensate pastors and other church staff for their service, but God mandated the Israelites that the tithe of their first fruits be given "to the Levites" (the religious officials) but also to "the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows so they can eat in your cities until they are full."[42]

As authors Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang note, "caring for immigrants is a central theme in Scripture… God does not suggest that we welcome immigrants; he commands it—not once or twice, but over and over again."[43]

"I Was a Stranger and You Invited Me In": The New Testament and Immigration

A repeated theme in the New Testament is the command to "practice hospitality."[44] While many of us may think of hospitality as making a nice meal for our friends or having a comfortable guestroom available for traveling relatives (and those are good things to do), the biblical concept of hospitality goes far beyond that. The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*: literally, "the love of *strangers.*"[45] As pastor Rich Nathan notes, it's the exact opposite of *xenophobia*, the fear of strangers. It's not particularly difficult to love our friends—even the tax collectors and pagans of Jesus' time did that[46]—but Christ's call is to love those who are different and unknown to us, even when that radically challenges our cultural norms.

"I read verse after verse about how God desired his followers to treat the foreigners in their midst. How had I not noticed all these passages before? The single thought that kept swirling in my mind was, 'Immigrants matter to God.'"

Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

In showing kindness and love to immigrants and others who may be strangers to us, we are presented with the possibility that we might unexpectedly find a blessing. Scripture suggests that, by extending hospitality to a stranger, we may be entertaining angels, unaware.[47] Jesus takes the idea even further: he tells his disciples that by welcoming in a stranger who is "one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine," they have welcomed him, and will thus be welcomed by Jesus himself into his kingdom; (and, conversely, by failing to welcome a stranger, they have snubbed him and will face judgment).[48]

These strangers we are called to welcome, says pastor and author Tim Keller, "were immigrants and refugees, and they were… to be 'invited in.' They were not merely to be sent to a shelter but were to be welcomed into the disciples' homes and lives and, it is implied, given advocacy, friendship, and the basics for pursuing a new life in society."[49]

"Let Everyone Be Subject to the Governing Authorities," or "What Part of Illegal Don't You Understand?"

The commands to welcome, advocate for, and love immigrants are unequivocal and numerous throughout the Bible. What the Scriptures never specifically address, though, is how to interact with immigrants who have violated the law. How, many Christians wonder, can we reconcile these commands toward hospitality with the equally-valid mandate to obey the government, and how should we respond to immigrants whose presence in the United States is unlawful?

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority," the Apostle Peter writes to the early Christians, "whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."[50] The Apostle Paul sets a similar standard in his letter to the church at Rome: "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" and "do not bear the sword for no reason."[51]

For many Christians, these passages are where a Christian discussion of how to respond to undocumented immigrants starts—and then stops.[52] Undocumented immigrants have, by definition, violated the law and thus, some would say, should be deported and shown no mercy.

Romans 13 and other passages commanding us to submit to the governmental authorities have important ramifications for thinking biblically about immigration, but they cannot be viewed separately from the rest of Scripture.

"Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself."

Leviticus 19:34, CEB

Romans 13 need not really concern the US citizen or others with legal status, at least within most states, because none of the activities that a citizen might take part in with his or her undocumented neighbors—sharing a meal, helping them to learn English, teaching a Bible study, helping kids with homework, providing legal advice (with the proper governmental accreditation)—are unlawful, nor is there any law mandating that citizens report those present unlawfully. We can—and, as Christians called to love our neighbors, should—minister freely and still be fully in submission to the governmental authorities. As Rick Warren says, "The church must always show compassion, always… A good Samaritan doesn't stop and ask the injured person. 'Are you legal or illegal?'"[53]

It is also important to hold out the caveat that there are times when civil disobedience may be appropriate: Peter and the other early apostles refused to obey the authorities when they demanded that they cease to preach the gospel, declaring that "we must obey God rather than human beings."[54] In some states—Arizona and Alabama, for example, under provisions of their tough new anti-illegal-immigration laws that make it illegal to transport someone who is present unlawfully—this question of civil disobedience is a challenging question facing local churches. The youth pastor in Arizona who picks undocumented kids up for youth group in a church van may have, under this new law, violated the law himself.[55] Almost anyone would agree that there are certain situations, such as when a government makes it unlawful to read

the Bible or share one's faith with others, when civil disobedience is permissible and perhaps even required of the Christian. Those who live in states where Christian ministry is still fully legal should be grateful—and should pray for wisdom for our brothers and sisters in states like Arizona and Alabama.

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it". Hebrews 13:2, NIV

The undocumented believer reads Romans 13 from a different perspective than the citizen. They *are* here unlawfully and many undocumented Christians have anguished over this. They desperately want to be right with the civil authorities, but they also want to provide for their family, something that many struggled to do and ultimately determined was impossible for them in the impoverished regions of the world from which they emigrated. In fact, providing for one's family is a strongly-worded divine command ("Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."[56]) Many feel torn between this command and the mandate in Romans 13 to submit to the governmental authorities. Christians may disagree which is the right decision—to stay and provide for one's family or leave in order to fully comply with U.S. law—but we all should be able to agree that a system that puts individuals in this dilemma is flawed, and that a better, more just system is needed.

Finally, legislators who are Christians should allow this passage to guide their thinking as well. Their God-given role is to serve God for the good of the governed—for citizens and immigrants alike.[57] Many evangelical leaders have come to the conclusions that our current immigration laws are *not* good: they're bad for our economy, our national security, the social cohesion of our country, and immigrants themselves. Moreover, the current situation makes a mockery of the rule of law, which is held up for us in Romans 13, because the laws are so out-of-sync with the movement of our free market economy that, rather than deal with the economic maladies that would result from enforcing an illogical law, the government only rarely penalizes either the employers or the immigrants who violate the law—and the law itself begins to lose its meaning. In a democracy like the United States, this reflects poorly on all of us: part of submitting to the governmental authorities in a democratic context is actively engaging in democracy, advocating with our legislators to reform our immigration laws in ways that make sense for our economy and security, putting into place a system that, as pastor and theologian John Piper says, "gives honor to the law and… gives mercy to the immigrants."[58]

"The church must always show compassion, always… A good Samaritan doesn't stop and ask the injured person. 'Are you legal or illegal?'"

Rick Warren, Senior Pastor, Saddleback Church

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Experience: "Searching the Scriptures"

1. What common themes did you find as you searched through the many references in the Bible to immigrants and immigration? Did anything surprise you?

"You Must Also Love Immigrants": The Old Testament and Immigration

2. What other individuals in Scripture can you think of who lived as immigrants in a foreign country at one point or another?
3. How do you think that God's commands to the Israelites with respect to immigrants should inform how we, as American Christians, interact with immigrants (if at all)?

"I Was a Stranger and You Invited Me In": The New Testament and Immigration

4. How have you understood the idea of hospitality? How does the biblical idea of welcoming strangers—not just friends—challenge our cultural norms?
5. Tim Keller suggests that hospitality toward immigrants should go beyond a referral to temporary assistance, arguing that immigrants should be "welcomed into the disciples' homes and lives." What would this look like for you and your family? What about for your church?

"Let Everyone Be Subject to the Governing Authorities," or "What Part of Illegal Don't You Understand?"

6. Do you think that the command to welcome immigrants and the command to be subject to the governing authorities can be reconciled together? How can we best extend compassion to immigrants while seeking to honor the law?
7. Suppose that federal or state laws were changed in such a way that would make your ministry to undocumented immigrants illegal: how would you respond?

PRAYER POINTS

- Pray that, as your group thinks about this issue, your thinking would always be informed and governed by the truth revealed to us in Scripture and that we would be able to hear what the Bible says even when it is challenges our personal or cultural worldviews.
- Pray for the vulnerable in your community, particularly for immigrants, orphans, widows, and the poor, that God would provide for them and that local churches would prioritize ministry to the most vulnerable both locally and globally.
- Pray for elected officials—including the President, your state's two Senators, and the Member of the House of Representatives who represents your region—that they would, as Romans 13 says, serve God for the good of the governed. (If you do not know who your elected officials are, you can find their names by entering your address and zip code at www.votesmart.org).
- Pray for wisdom to know how to apply the Bible's teaching about hospitality in your context.
- Pray for churches and individuals ministering in places where some elements of their ministry (such as transporting undocumented immigrants to church) have been made unlawful, that God would make clear to them how they should respond.

EXPERIENCE: KNOW THY NEIGHBOR

The second half of the Great Commandment, found in Luke 10:27, is to love our neighbor as ourselves. It's pretty difficult to love our neighbors, though, if we don't *know* them—but for whatever reason, many native-born citizens never interact with immigrants on a deep relational level. So, sometime before your Learning Group's next meeting, our challenge to you is to try to get to know an immigrant.

One idea would be simply to invite someone over for a meal or out to coffee. You likely know someone whom you suspect has immigrated to the United States from another country, even if only as a casual acquaintance. Maybe there's a family at your church, your work, or your school (or your kids' school). Set a time, prepare some food, and invite them over! We know this seems a bit awkward, but allowing yourself to be uncomfortable is where the deepest learning happens.

Don't make this a project, but a chance to build a relationship with someone who might really be blessed by your hospitality, and from whom you might have a lot to learn. Without being obtrusive or asking anything that you think might make them feel uncomfortable, ask what made them decide to come to the United States, what it took to get here, and how their experience has been while in the United States. Keep an open mind—you're here to learn, not to judge—and most of all, have fun.

If you can't think of anyone to invite over—or that sounds too intimidating—here's another possibility: visit an immigrant church this next week. Even if they worship in a language other than English that you cannot understand, take the opportunity to observe. We expect that you'll find some folks who are eager to greet you and to help you understand.

GO DEEPER

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

  This book, authored by Denver Seminary Old Testament professor M. Daniel Carroll R., provides an in-depth look at what the Bible has to say about immigration.

- Book: *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (Dutton, 2010)

  Pastor and theologian Tim Keller provides a biblical framework for thinking of issues of justice. While not focused on immigration issues specifically, Keller's analysis of the biblical mandate to seek justice highlights immigrants as vulnerable individuals for whom God has a special concern.

- Audio: Daniel Carroll on "Immigrants, the Church, and the Bible" (Mission on Your Doorstep conference, 2011)

  Dr. Carroll, author of *Christians at the Border*, spoke to the annual Mission on Your Doorstep conference in March 2011. His talk, available online at http://bit.ly/jfupG3, provides an overview of the immigration issue from a biblical perspective, with a particular focus on the Old Testament.

- Article: "Thoughts on Immigration Reform" (Vineyard USA website: http://bit.ly/kA5ZrK, 2010)

  This article by Vineyard Columbus pastor Rich Nathan provides a review of major biblical issues that speak to the Church's response to immigration issues.

[LEARNING]

They Are Us

How many churches are there in your community? 10? 50? 500?

The Bible actually has an exact answer to that question, whichever community you may live in: "in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."[59] While we may worship in different local church buildings on Sunday and be divided by ethnicity, language, denomination, and the finer points of doctrine, Scripture makes clear that there is just one universal Church. In fact, Jesus' prayer for us, as his disciples, is that we would be one just as he is one with the Father, "so that the world may believe."[60] If we want to live out God's mission for us, we need to do so in unity.

This has some important ramifications for us as we think about the issue of immigration, because immigrants are a significant and quickly-increasing segment of the Church in the United States. Research by Dr. Todd Johnson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary finds that immigrant congregations are growing more quickly than any other segment of American evangelicalism, a reality that many denominations are experiencing as well.[61]

The growth of the "immigrant" church (which usually includes immigrants' US-born children as well) has happened quickly and has not necessarily been on the radar of most American Christians. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, in his book *The Next Evangelicalism*, notes that as he prepared to move to Boston several years ago, his home church prayed fervently that he would not lose his faith in a region of the United States that was presumed to be "spiritually dead" and a "post-Christian region."[62] In reality, the Church has grown rapidly in Boston in the last several decades—from 200 churches in 1970 to 412 in 2000—but the growth and vitality of the Church in Boston has gone largely unnoticed by many English-speaking Caucasians because more than half of Boston's churches worship in a language other than English. This sort of immigrant-fueled growth is happening in evangelical churches and denominations across the United States, and not just in major urban centers that have historically served as immigrant gateways, but increasingly in small towns, rural areas, and suburbs.

The arrival of immigrants to our country is thus much more than a complex issue for the society outside of our church walls, but an internal challenge that has become very personal: as National Association of Evangelicals president Leith Anderson says, "They are us."[63] The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that each part of the church is indispensible and interdependent, so that "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say

to the feet, 'I don't need you!'"[64] Likewise, the local church composed primarily of Caucasians cannot say to the Hispanic church, "I don't need you," nor the African-American church to the Korean church, or vice versa. Each part needs the other.

We're also told that "If one part [of the Church] suffers, every part suffers with it."[65] If many in our churches are unaware of the suffering that comes about because of a broken immigration system—families divided by lengthy backlogs to reunification, the trauma of a member of the church being deported, the economic challenges of providing for children left behind when a parent has been detained by immigration authorities—it is because churches in the United States are still relatively segregated. Despite the enormous growth of the immigrant church, there are still many American Christians who have no meaningful relationships with an immigrant believer—which makes it easier to form opinions about immigrants based on television, radio, or Internet reports that may or may not be accurate.

We—whether immigrants or native-born citizens—need to be intentional about getting to know our brothers and sisters who share a common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but who may worship in a different language, with a different cultural style, and in different buildings. While it's possible to learn a lot about immigrants and immigration by reading and discussing in a mono-ethnic group, deeper learning can happen only in the context of relationship with those whose experiences have been very different than our own. When we befriend someone whom we once thought of as an alien, as psychologist Mary Pipher explains, "that person stops being a stereotype and becomes a complex human being like oneself."[66]

The presence of immigrants within the Church and the mutual relationships that should form across ethnic and legal status lines as the Church diversifies do not resolve the complicated questions of how to respond to immigration policy, but they do mean that if we are followers of Christ, we cannot simply ignore the discussion because it is "not our problem."

Meet the Family: Liuan's Story

VIDEO RESOURCE We've shared below the story of a Christian family who is facing dramatic challenges in their journey as immigrants to the United States. We'd also recommend watching a 10-minute film, "A NEW DREAM," that profiles another mixed-status family at a local church. It is available online at http://www.vimeo.com/18808927.

There's nothing equivalent to a personal relationship with an immigrant to help understand the issue of immigration, but we wanted to share a story with you to help highlight how this issue affects one of your sisters in Christ:

Liuan is a naturalized US citizen. She came to the United States as an immigrant from China at the age of 3, accompanied by her parents. They came lawfully, as Liuan's father had been granted a student visa to study in the United States. Upon graduation, the family was granted temporary work status through an employer sponsor, and eventually an employer sponsored Liuan's father for Lawful Permanent Residence—a "green card"—for which he qualified as a highly-skilled worker. As his daughter, Liuan received her green card at the same time.

Liuan's mother, though, did not receive that green card. Having been in lawful temporary status, she was not eligible for permanent status because, shortly before the Permanent Resident Status was finalized, her husband decided he no longer wanted to be married and filed for divorce. Since the divorce was finalized before the employer-sponsored visa application, she was no longer the spouse of a highly-skilled worker. In fact, she had no options to stay lawfully in the United States.

Liuan's mother faced a very difficult choice: legally, she should have returned to China. But Liuan was in school by this point and had just been granted a green card. So Liuan's mom made a difficult—and unlawful—choice: she stayed beyond the time when her temporary visa expired, and she became an undocumented immigrant.

Without a Social Security card, it was very difficult for her to find work, but Liuan's mom—as is typical of many immigrants—was entrepreneurial and hard-working. She started a Chinese restaurant that, with years of hard work, became a successful business. She paid her taxes, provided for her family, and even provided employment to US citizens in the community.

Eventually, Liuan's mother remarried. The man she married had entered the United States unlawfully from China, having paid nearly $20,000 to be smuggled into the country on a boat. Together, they worked hard to run the restaurant, paying off that debt and eventually buying a car and even a house—without a mortgage! They also had two more children, and they emphasized to their kids the importance of education.

Liuan went off to Wheaton College in Illinois after finishing high school. As a student, she never told anyone about her parents' legal status problems: she was ashamed and embarrassed. To her peers, she was just like any other student. But that changed mid-way through her college experience: while participating in ministry trip abroad to South Africa over the summer of 2008, Liuan got a devastating telephone call. Her mother called to tell her that officers from the Department of Homeland Security had come to their house in Texas and detained Liuan's stepfather. They allowed her mother to stay, temporarily, because

she had small children at home, but they informed her that she too had a deportation order.

Liuan's stepdad spent about nine months in an immigration detention facility. Though he had no criminal history, he was kept in a privately-operated "detention facility" (for which taxpayers probably paid the corporation that operated the facility about $122 per night).[67] Without her husband to help run the business, Liuan's mother eventually had to close their restaurant, laying off their employees. Liuan's brother and sister had to apply for food stamps (for which they were eligible as US citizens, but which they had not needed when part of a self-sufficient family).

"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Ephesians 4:4-6, ESV

After nine months, Liuan's stepfather was deported to China, where he has struggled to find work and where he faces a ten-year bar to re-entry to the United States. He missed Liuan's wedding.

Liuan's mother has been battling in court for years in an effort to gain permanent legal status, which would allow her to continue living in the United States with her children, and make it possible for her to visit her husband in China and then lawfully return to the United States.". While her case lingers on, Liuan and her family have been forced to wrestle with the reality that her mother could also be deported, and to think about what will happen to Liuan's brother and sister if that happens. While they hope and pray for a positive decision from the Immigration Judge, the legal struggle has been draining both emotionally and financially.

Liuan's faith has given her solace as she seeks to comfort her family and think through an uncertain future. She trusts that God will provide even while she yearns for the reunification of her family.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Experience: "Know Thy Neighbor"

1. If you were able to share a meal with an immigrant, what was the experience like? How did the story of this particular immigrant affect the way that you think about the topic?
2. If you visited an immigrant church service, how did it feel to be an "outsider" in that environment? How was the experience similar to your own church, and how was it different?

They Are Us

3. Why do you think that, despite the rapid growth of the American church within immigrant communities, so many American Christians lack relational connections with immigrants?
4. How does the biblical idea that Christ's followers collectively form one Body, with each part interdependent on the other, inform the way that you think about the issue of immigration?
5. Has a relationship with a Christian brother or sister from an immigrant background affected the way that you think about the issue of immigration?

Meet the Family: Liuan's Story

6. How does the story of Liuan and her family challenge—or reaffirm—your thoughts on immigration?

[PRAYER POINTS]

- Pray for the Church in the United States, that we would reflect God's heart for the immigrants in our community.
- Pray for your local church (or for each local church represented within your Learning Group) and specifically for your leaders, that they would have God's wisdom and courage as they respond to the arrival of immigrants to the United States.
- Pray for Christian brothers and sisters whose families are divided either while waiting for backlogged family reunification visas to become available or because one family member has been deported, that God would grant them grace and hold their families together.
- Pray specifically for Liuan and her family, for individuals you know personally within your local church, and for other immigrants within your community.
- Pray for national leaders within the Church, for clarity as to how they should respond and for creative and courageous leadership.

"Immigration continues to transform the evangelical landscape. In twenty years, African, Asian, and Latin American... evangelicals will likely be at the forefront of both these global movements and within the US." *Dr. Todd Johnson, Director, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary*

EXPERIENCE

Activity 1: Immigrating the Legal Way

The key to understanding why illegal immigration occurs—and why there are undocumented immigrants even among our brothers and sisters in the Church in the U.S.—is to first understand how legal immigration works under current U.S. law. Many Americans have never had any reason to consider how immigration law works today, and those whose ancestors immigrated more than a century ago might mistakenly think that the law functions much the same as it did when our ancestors came to the U.S.

To help understand the current system, we're going to let you play a game. Everything that you need is found in Appendix 2, "Immigrating the Legal Way." Each person in your group should choose a different number between 1 and 24; your number will correspond to a brief, typical would-be immigrant's story (if you have more than 24, you can give multiple people the same identity). You can then use the flow chart included to determine what the best options are for your character. You can discuss the experience with your group when you meet next.

Activity 2: "My Father Was a Wandering Aramean..."

Immigration is not a new phenomenon for the United States. In fact, unless your ancestry is completely Native American, you have an immigration story in your own family, whether that was last week, last century, or 500 years ago.

"Why is immigration policy important to evangelicals? Certainly because we believe what the Bible teaches about treatment of 'aliens in the land.' It is also because so many Hispanic, African and Asian immigrants are evangelical Christians who are in our denominations and churches by the millions. They are us." *Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals*

We read last session how God commanded the Israelites to remember their history as an immigrant people. In fact, they were commanded to rehearse their ancestral immigration narrative as part of their religious ceremony, reciting aloud their story: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous..."[68] If they would consistently remember God's grace in bringing them from where they were—a place of desperation as slaves in Egypt—to the Promised Land, the Israelites would avoid the mistaken boast that they had delivered themselves.

Though each of our stories is different, we too need to remember

God's faithfulness in bringing us and our ancestors from where they were to where we are now. For next session, do a bit of research into your own immigrant story. When did your ancestors first come to the United States? Where did they come from and why? What was their experience like when they first arrived? If you're not sure, try asking a parent, grandparent, or other older relative who might have a better grasp on your family's heritage—and come back next session ready to briefly share with others.

"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." 1 Corinthians 12:26, ESV

To make this more fun, why not also bring along some food next time from your ancestral homeland?

GO DEEPER

- Book: *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (InterVarsity Press, 2009)

  This book, authored by pastor and professor Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, highlights the shifts happening within American evangelicalism as the result of immigration—and challenges believers to see these changes as a blessing, not something to be feared.

- Book: *Brother, I'm Dying* (Alfred Knopf, 2007)

  This memoir by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat beautifully narrates the story of her family, including her uncle, Joseph, a Haitian pastor who encounters the worst side of the U.S. immigration and detention system as he seeks to flee persecution in Haiti.

- Online Resource: Evangelical Immigration Table (www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com)

  The Evangelical Immigration Table has prepared a basic statement of principles for immigration policy reform that has been endorsed by denominational leaders, college and seminary presidents, executives of parachurch ministries, key pastors, and other nationally prominent evangelical leaders.

- Film: *Tony & Janina's American Wedding* (Ruthless Films, 2010)

  This documentary, directed by Ruth Leitman and available at www.tonyandjanina.com, describes itself as a "deportation love story." It follows a Polish family in Chicago from their marriage through the deportation of the wife, Janina, illustrating the many challenges faced by the family.

[LEARNING]

The History of Immigration to the United States[69]

The United States of America is known for being a nation of immigrants, a country in which all but those relative few of entirely Native American ancestry can trace their heritage to another country. Immigration is a central theme in the national lore, and many Americans are proud of their own immigrant history. Indeed, as historian Nancy Foner describes, the common American sentiment toward one's own ancestors' immigrant experiences has been embellished and glorified by its depiction in literature, film, and other popular culture: our ancestors, many Americans would say "worked hard; they strove to become assimilated; they pulled themselves up by their own Herculean efforts;... they had strong family values and colorful roots. They were, in short, what made America great."[70]

Those romanticized ideas of the U.S.'s immigrant past, however, do not necessarily translate into warm feelings toward contemporary immigrants. Roger Daniels suggests that American attitudes toward immigration—and immigrants themselves—are marked by a dualism, "on the one hand reveling in the nation's immigrant past and on the other rejecting much of its immigrant present."[71]

In reality, even from the pre-colonial era, immigrants to the United States have always been "simultaneously praised and resented, welcomed and scapegoated."[72] Benjamin Franklin expressed concerns about immigrant acculturation to the British colony of Pennsylvania decades before the United States even came into independent existence:

> *Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion?*[73]

Despite the concerns of individuals such as Franklin, federal policy remained entirely open to new immigration to the U.S. throughout the first century of the nation's existence. President Chester A. Arthur signed the first federal restriction on immigration—the Chinese Exclusion Act—into law in 1882.[74] The Chinese Exclusion Act, which forbade further legal migrations of Chinese nationals to the United States until it was repealed in 1943, was the culmination of growing anti-Chinese sentiment, focused in the western United States, amongst U.S. citizens who believed that the Chinese, who had been recruited to the U.S. by promises of economic opportunity when the region

needed laborers, were unable to assimilate and lacked "sufficient brain capacity... to furnish motive power for self-government."[75]

Concurrent with growing nativist concerns about Chinese immigrants on the West Coast, public opinion on the East Coast was souring toward the immigrants—mostly Italians, Poles, and Russian Jews—who were entering through New York in unprecedented numbers. Between 1881 and 1920, more than 23 million immigrants entered the U.S., such that the foreign-born percentage of the total population reached 15 percent, significantly higher than it has been at any other time in U.S. history.[76]

This new wave of European immigration sparked a backlash that eventually inspired more restrictive federal immigration policies. The Immigration Restriction League, founded in 1894, effectively advanced the pseudoscientific theory that these recent immigrants—mostly not from the Protestant, western European countries from which most earlier immigrants had come—were "biologically inferior to, and thus less capable of assimilation than, the races that had populated America in the previous centuries."[77] Influenced by this rhetoric, a congressional commission published a report in 1911 that found that "certain kinds of criminality are inherent in the Italian race"[78] and that "the high rate of illiteracy among new immigrants was due to inherent racial tendencies."[79]

Eventually, after a series of incremental restrictions, Congress passed a far-reaching federal immigration policy in 1924 that created strict immigration quotas based upon the national origin of the would-be migrant. The new law capped admission at two percent of the foreign population from a given country that existed in the U.S. in 1890; the 1890 decennial census was used, rather than the recently completed 1920 census, precisely so as to provide a baseline of ethnic origins that would precede the recent influx of Italian, Jewish, and Polish immigrants. The effect was to limit new immigration to the United States to 180,000 people per year, mostly from those northern European countries such as England, France, and Germany that nativists considered to be capable of assimilation.[80] In effect, it became practically impossible to immigrate to the United States for anyone in the Eastern Hemisphere except for Northern Europeans.

Despite some vocal opposition—President Truman called this national origins system "a slur on the patriotism, the capacity, and the decency of a large part of our citizenry"[81]—this policy continued essentially unchanged until 1965. In the early 1960s, in the context of the Civil Rights Movement that challenged many Americans' ideas about race and nationality, President John F. Kennedy proposed a new federal immigration system that replaced a nationality-based preference system with a system that limited immigration based primarily on one's family connections and employable skills.[82] While immigration would still be tightly limited, the bill, eventually signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 after Kennedy's assassination, opened immigration to individuals from Asia and Africa. To this day, the 1965 reforms make up the backbone of our current immigration legal system.

Immigrating the Legal Way Today

A lot of Americans have strong opinions about *illegal* immigration, believing that immigrants ought to come "the legal way" to the United States. That seems like a reasonable expectation—and it means that we need to understand how the American immigration legal system functions.

Under current law, there are four basic ways that a person might become a Lawful Permanent Resident (a "green card"-holder), which is the prerequisite to becoming an American citizen. The two largest categories—family-based immigration and employment-based immigration—have been the center of our immigration legal system since 1965. The other two categories—the refugee program and the Diversity Lottery—were codified into law subsequently. While there are a few small programs for individuals from specific countries—such as Cuba—almost all immigrants who are currently Lawful Permanent Residents or naturalized U.S. citizens got their status through one of these four processes (the largest exception would be those who were allowed to legalize their status under legislation signed by President Reagan in 1986).

Family

Family reunification is one of the primary goals of our immigration legal system, so the law sets aside a minimum of 226,000 permanent resident visas per year for close relatives of U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents.[83] This system works fairly well if you're what's considered an "immediate relative" of a U.S. citizen—a spouse, parent (of a child at least 21 years of age), or a child (under the age of 21). Citizens can petition and, in most cases, expect these relatives to be able to emigrate within six months to two years—as quickly as the paperwork is processed.

The family-based system can take much longer for other family relationships, though. If a Lawful Permanent Resident applies for his or her spouse or minor children, for example, it will likely take four to five years before that relative might be eligible to emigrate. Since it is very difficult in most countries in the Global South to obtain a tourist visa, the Lawful Permanent Resident's spouse and kids are also very unlikely to be able to visit during that wait time, meaning a long separation for the family in many cases. The worst backlogs are for siblings of U.S. citizens residing in the Philippines: they are currently waiting on cases filed in 1988—a wait time of more than two decades.[84] Those backlogs are simply a function of the fact that Congress has placed tight caps on how many immigrants can enter in each family-based category each year, and the demand (the number of immigrants) is much higher than the supply that Congress has allotted.

Employment

The second major category of migration is employer-sponsored immigration. If a company in the U.S. cannot find adequate workers

within the U.S., they can petition for an immigrant worker to enter the U.S. to take a job. At least 140,000 immigrant visas are available under the law each year for employer-sponsored immigrants. The vast majority of these visas are specifically designated for "highly-skilled" immigrants with advanced degrees or exceptional professional abilities.

"Don't oppress an immigrant. You know what it's like to be an immigrant, because you were immigrants..." *Exodus 23:9, CEB*

Corporations which rely on highly-educated immigrant workers—such as Microsoft,[85] Google, Apple, and Intel[86]—argue that the number of these visas available is inadequate. There is an even more extreme shortage among immigrant workers who are *not* "highly-skilled." Employer-sponsored visas for immigrants who do not qualify as "highly-skilled" are capped at a mere 10,000 per year, and 5,000 of those are pre-designated under a special law benefitting a few Central American countries.[87]

The effect is that just 5,000 employer-sponsored workers per year can enter lawfully as immigrants to work in jobs that do not require a high degree of education and training, jobs in vital sectors of our economy like agriculture, hospitality, construction, and manufacturing. The fact is that those industries require many more workers. To put that figure into context, a century ago, 5,000 immigrants, very few of whom would be considered "highly-skilled" under today's classifications, would regularly be processed through Ellis Island in a single day; now just 5,000 such laborers are lawfully allowed to enter as employer-sponsored immigrants in an entire year.[88]

Because lawful migration is so limited for this vital category of workers—and because those who come unlawfully readily find work in these sectors that do not require a high degree of education or training—unlawful migration has become widespread.

Humanitarian Immigration

An additional number of immigrants—80,000 annually in recent years, though the cap varies year to year at the discretion of the President—enter the United States as refugees. Under U.S. and international law, refugees are individuals who have fled their country of origin with a credible fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. While the U.S. accepts more refugees for resettlement than any other country, the 80,000 refugees resettled annually in recent years represents less than 1% of the 10.4 million refugees in the world registered with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, meaning that the fact that one qualifies as a refugee certainly does not guarantee his or her admission to the U.S.[89]

Whereas refugees are identified abroad and resettled to the U.S., asylum-seekers are individuals who arrive in the U.S. without permanent

legal status—either entering with a temporary visa or unlawfully—and then claim that they fear persecution for the same reasons as a refugee. Asylum claims can be very difficult to win, but if asylum status is granted, asylees are eligible for Lawful Permanent Resident status one year after their asylum approval. If their cases are denied, though, asylum-seekers are generally deported back to their country of origin: some, for whom deportation could literally mean death, choose to live unlawfully rather than risk applying for asylum and being denied.

It is also important to note the legal distinction between refugees—whose fear of persecution must be for one of the reasons designated by international law—and immigrants fleeing poverty, a natural disaster, or violence directed at them for reasons other than their race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Diversity Lottery

Finally, up to 50,000 individuals each year are admitted to the U.S. as Lawful Permanent Residents after winning a free online lottery operated by the U.S. Department of State called the Diversity Lottery. To be eligible to enter, an individual must have at least a high school education or two years of professional experience, qualifications that exclude many in the Global South who were not afforded the opportunity to study.

The intention of the Diversity Lottery is to diversify the immigrants who come to the United States beyond the countries that already send the most immigrants, so individuals from any country that has sent 50,000 immigrants or more in the past five years to the U.S. are also excluded from the lottery—Mexico, the Philippines, India, China, Canada, the United Kingdom, Guatemala, Pakistan, Poland, El Salvador, and a few others.

Admissibility

Even if a would-be emigrant qualifies through one of these categories, they must still satisfy the U.S. government that they are not "inadmissible." For example, individuals with certain contagious diseases, those who have committed serious (and, sometimes, very minor) crimes, those who have been unlawfully present in the United States in the past, and those who have falsely claimed to be a U.S. citizen are all likely to be found inadmissible, even if they meet other eligibility requirements.

"Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Poet Emma Lazarus, in 1883

The reality is that, under our current immigration system, we can tell folks to "wait their turn and immigrate the legal way," but for a great

many would-be immigrants there is no legal way to come. If they do not have the right family relationship, are not highly-skilled, are not fleeing persecution (though they may be fleeing poverty), and are from an "over-represented" country, there is simply no line to get into. It does not matter if they wait five years, fifteen years, or fifty years: under the current law, they will probably never be eligible to immigrate to the U.S. While the U.S. will never be able to take in all of those who might like to migrate, we could take in at least enough to satisfy the needs of our economy, rather than maintaining arbitrary quotas on lawful migration and thus relying on unlawful migration to sustain our economic growth.

[DISCUSSION QUESTIONS]

Experience: "My Father Was a Wandering Aramean..."

1. To which country do you trace your immigrant roots? What do you know about your immigrant ancestors? (If you're entirely Native American: how do your ancestors' experiences inform your views of immigration?)
2. How do you think your ancestors were similar to contemporary immigrants, and how were they different?

The History of Immigration to the United States

3. Historian Roger Daniels observes a dualistic divide between the way that Americans view the immigrants of a century ago and the way that we view immigrants today. Do you agree?
4. What elements of our country's immigration history do you see repeating themselves in the current national dialogue about immigration?

Immigrating the Legal Way Today

5. What was your scenario, and how did your immigration experience work out in the "Immigrating the Legal Way" experience?
6. Has anyone in the group had personal experience with the U.S. immigration system, either recently or a long time ago? What was that experience like?
7. If you've never interacted with the immigration legal system before, what were your presumptions about how it worked before participating in this exercise and reading about it?
8. How is the system different than you expected?
9. How would you change the current legal system, if at all?

PRAYER POINTS

- Pray that, as a nation, we would learn the lessons of our history, living into the best of our national heritage and avoiding the mistakes of our past.
- Thank God for his provision for your ancestors to come to this country and for the many blessings inherent in living in the United States.
- Pray for your Senators, Representative, and the President, that God would grant them wisdom as they craft the laws that affect so many people (you can find out who they are, if you are not sure, by entering your zip code at www.votesmart.org).
- Pray for the individuals scattered around the world who, due to poverty, conflict, natural disaster, or persecution, are desperate to find a safer, healthier situation, but are unable to do so.

EXPERIENCE: BECOME THE STRANGER

Next session, we'll be learning about undocumented immigrants—those individuals who have either entered the U.S. unlawfully or overstayed their visas and, as such, are present unlawfully in the U.S. Illegal immigration is perhaps the most controversial element of the national debate over immigration, but when we talk about "illegal aliens" it's easy to lose sight of the fact that each undocumented immigrant is a human being, made in God's image with inherent dignity and with, as C.S. Lewis says, a sacred "weight of glory."[90]

To help us recognize the humanity of undocumented immigrants, we'd challenge you to put yourself in the shoes of an undocumented immigrant for a day, to experience a small taste of what it might be like to live in your community without legal status. Of course, you can only simulate that vulnerability on a very small scale, but it might help you to extend compassion to others—and maybe begin a few interesting conversations, too.

To help you with simulation, you may want to order a "Become the Stranger" hand stamp at http://g92.org/experience/become-the-stranger/." Once your stamp arrives, choose a day to "undocument" and wear the stamp on your hand that entire day. Alternatively, you can write the word "Undocumented" on your hand with a marker, or simply engage in the simulation without a tangible reminder. For that day, pretend that you were brought to the United States unlawfully as a child. While you still know English, know this culture, and know

your way around, you do not belong here, at least not according to the government.

As you glance at your hand throughout the day, let it remind you of how a lack of legal status would affect your thinking and your actions: how would it change the way that you feel when you see a police officer? If you're a college student, think about if you'd be at your school if you were ineligible for all federal financial aid, even student loans—and if you knew that a college degree was unlikely to change your job prospects after graduation. If you've got a job, think about if your employer would have been likely to have hired you without a valid Social Security card—and if they would have, how you would respond if they decided they wanted to lower your wage to $4 or $5 per hour.

To take things a step further, leave your driver's license and all other government-issued IDs at home—and then go to the bank and try to cash a paycheck or withdraw money. We take these things for granted, but many in our society cannot.

The stamp on your hand might also cause others to ask you some questions—use it as a conversation starter: tell them you're trying to think about what it would be like to live without legal status. See what responses you get, and think about how hearing what people have to say about undocumented immigrants would sound to you if you were undocumented yourself.

At the end of your day, take some time to write down your thoughts and reflections, so that you'll be able to discuss the experience with your Learning Group next time that you meet.

This is just a small simulation and can at best give us a small taste of the challenges and difficulties that folks who are actually undocumented go through on a daily basis, but attempting to walk a mile in their shoes might help us obey the biblical command to "be compassionate,"[91] As author Henri Nouwen notes, compassion literally means to "suffer with."[92] Christ—the ultimate Model of compassion—entered into our broken world in the Incarnation and suffered with us and for us. By walking a mile in the shoes of an undocumented immigrant, perhaps we can better love these neighbors and be reminded to pray for them.

GO DEEPER

- Book: *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigration Since 1882* (Hill and Wang, 2004)

  This survey by historian Roger Daniels traces U.S. immigration policy since the beginning of federal immigration policy in 1882 up through the present day.

- Booklet: "Congregational Ministry & Advocacy: The Angel Island Immigration Station Era 1910-1940"

  This booklet was prepared by Grace Urban Ministries of San Francisco and the Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice of California and is available online at http://bit.ly/ncKVXK. It highlights the migration of Chinese immigrants on the West Coast and, in particular, the role of the Church in ministering to them.

- Book: *Not Fit For Our Society: Immigration and Nativism in America* (University of California Press, 2011)

  This book, authored by Peter Schrag, documents anti-immigrant attitudes in the U.S. from the pre-colonial era to the present day.

[LEARNING]

Who Are Undocumented Immigrants?

Much of what we have learned thus far in this group applies to the way that we, as followers of Christ, might respond to immigrants generally, but a tough question for a lot of Christians is how to respond to those immigrants who are present in the United States unlawfully. Of the approximately 34 million immigrants present in the U.S., about one-third—11.5 million, by the best estimate of the federal government—are here unlawfully, so we cannot discuss the issue of immigration and ignore such a sizable percentage of immigrants.[93] (We also should not presume, however, that all immigrants are here in violation of law: most are not).

It's very easy to find competing information about who these individuals are: depending upon what media you consume, you'd either think that they are nefarious criminals intent on destroying the U.S. or cherub-like innocent victims oppressed by an unjust system. The reality is that undocumented immigrants are, like every other human being, made in the image of God[94]—with inherent dignity and great potential—and also sinners.[95]

Not everything that you hear on the television or radio or from a politician is accurate, and we should be particularly discerning with what we read on the Internet or in forwarded emails. Before we pass on disparaging information about other people, we need to verify its veracity, lest we fall into the sin of slander.[96] In this session, we're going to look at some of the facts—from governmental and non-partisan sources whenever possible (we encourage you to follow the footnotes, to make sure what you're reading here is accurate)—about undocumented immigrants in particular.

Each undocumented immigrant living in the U.S. has violated the immigration laws in one way or another, but that is really the only common thread across what is otherwise a very diverse group. Some have committed crimes, many others have not (technically, unlawful presence in itself is a civil infraction, not a crime).[97] Some—about half—illegally crossed a border to enter the U.S., but many others entered entirely lawfully, with a valid visa, and then overstayed or violated the terms of that visa.[98] Some have come recently—14% came in the past five years, and another 29% between 2000 and 2005—but 56% of the undocumented have been here for at least ten years.[99]

A slight majority of undocumented immigrants are from Mexico—59%—but that leaves a great many undocumented immigrants from other parts of the world as well.[100] For example, there are more than 1 million

undocumented Asian immigrants in the U.S., and legal status is a major issue in many Asian immigrant communities: about about two out of every nine Korean immigrants, one out of every six Filipino, Chinese, and Vietnamese immigrants, and one out of every seven Indian immigrants is undocumented. Clearly, this is much more than just a Latino issue.

To make sure we are speaking accurately as we discuss this issue, we want to address some of the most common misconceptions about undocumented immigrants.

VIDEO RESOURCE The This Is Our City project of *Christianity Today* magazine has produced a six-minute film profiling Ricardo, a young immigrant in Phoenix, Arizona who has not allowed his lack of legal status to keep him from ministering to others. It is available online at http://bit.ly/UfyCIt.

Economics and Taxes

Many of the most common concerns about undocumented immigrants come down to money. Our goal has been to view this issue first and foremost from a Christian perspective, not just from an economic perspective; as Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang write, "the scriptural witness is that we are to care for the immigrant stranger living among us, without any caveat that exempts us from this responsibility if it is not in our individual or national economic interest."[102]

It turns out, though, that almost all economists agree that immigration is in our national, and very likely your individual, economic interest: a survey by the *Wall Street Journal* found that 44 out of 46 economists "believe that illegal immigration has been beneficial to the economy."[103] The only group that some economists think might be negatively impacted by competition with undocumented workers is native-born citizens at the lowest end of the education achievement scale, such as those who have not completed high school, but most economists—four out of five in this survey—think that there is either no effect or that it is insignificant.

Immigration—even illegal immigration—is good for the economy because immigrants tend to do jobs that complement the jobs that American citizens want and are able to do, especially jobs at the very high and very low ends of the educational achievement spectrum. Highly-skilled immigrant engineers and scientists allow American businesses to grow even though our country does not produce sufficient skilled workers in these sectors, and low-skilled immigrants, many of them undocumented, do jobs for low wages that very few Americans are willing to do, particularly in the agriculture and hospitality sectors. Were it not for their presence, we would all have to pay more for basic goods and services.

Another common concern about undocumented immigrants is the belief that they drain our economy by using public benefits but not paying taxes. In fact, the exact opposite is true: most undocumented immigrants do pay taxes, but they are ineligible for almost all public benefits. All undocumented immigrants pay sales taxes. They also pay property taxes, either directly if they own a home or indirectly through rent payments. Payments in those two categories amounted to more than $10 billion in 2010.[104] Furthermore most undocumented immigrants—about three out of four, according to Stephen Goss, the chief actuary of the Social Security Administration—are also having payroll taxes (federal and state income taxes, Medicare taxes, and Social Security taxes) deducted from their paychecks.[105] In 2007 alone, that accounted for $12 billion in Social Security taxes paid into the system.[106] Immigrants can even file taxes with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), using a special "Individual Taxpayer Identification Number" since they are ineligible for a Social Security number, with a promise from the IRS that their legal status will not be turned over to the Department of Homeland Security. In the words of IRS commissioner Mark Everson, they "want your money whether you are here legally or not and whether you earned it legally or not."[107]

Undocumented Immigrants by the Numbers

- *Estimated 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.*
- *56% have lived in the U.S. for at least a decade*
- *40-50% entered on a lawful visa, not illegally*
- *59% are from Mexico, but many others from other countries*
  - *2 in 9 Korean immigrants,*
  - *1 in 6 Filipino immigrants, Chinese, and Vietnamese immigrants, and*
  - *1 in 7 Indian immigrants to the U.S. are undocumented*

But how, one might wonder, can an undocumented immigrant have income taxes withheld without a valid Social Security number? The reality is that most undocumented immigrants work with a false Social Security card—made with what looks like blue construction paper and a typewriter, the Social Security card is not the most difficult government document to falsify—and employers then withhold income for taxes and send them on to the federal and state governments. The Social Security Administration figures out pretty quickly that the name on that card does not match the number in their system, of course, but they are more than happy to keep the money. Some employers might not realize what is going on, but others certainly understand that the employee is not authorized to work—but they value a hardworking employee, so they look the other way (in some cases, unscrupulous employers actually prefer undocumented workers

because they can be paid less than the minimum wage or will work in conditions that do not meet safety regulations but are unlikely to complain because of their status).

The trick is that those undocumented immigrants can then pay into the Social Security system throughout a career, but when they hit retirement age, their falsified Social Security number will not be valid to obtain any benefit from the Social Security Administration. Similarly, though most immigrants are paying the taxes that fund such programs, low-income undocumented immigrants are ineligible for all federal means-test public benefits, including Temporary Aid for Needy Families (welfare), food stamps, public housing, or Medicaid.[108]

That's not to say that undocumented immigrants do not bring some costs to the society—they do, especially for public education (which the Supreme Court has ruled must be provided for children through 12th grade, regardless of legal status) and for emergency healthcare expenses, because hospitals are required to treat someone in an emergency regardless of their legal status or their ability to pay. It is also true that the children of undocumented immigrants born in the United States, who are U.S. citizens by nature of the 14th Amendment, may be eligible for public benefits. Those expenses are significant, but economists do not look at costs without looking at benefits, and they consistently find that the benefits of immigration outweigh the costs on balance. In fact, the Cato Institute found that, over the course of a lifetime, the average immigrant will pay in $80,000 more in taxes than he or she takes out in benefits from the government.[109]

English and Cultural Integration

Another concern about immigration is cultural: these immigrants do not share our values, some say. To verify that statement, we'd have to identify exactly what constitutes "American" values, but most undocumented immigrants bring values with them that are consistent with biblical values.

For example, Hispanic immigrants in particular are more likely than the average U.S. citizen to attend church on a weekly basis[110] and more likely to be pro-life.[111] Immigrants tend to have a very strong work ethic, too, with a labor participation rate of 96% for undocumented adult male immigrants, higher than for either U.S. citizens or immigrants with legal status.[112]

Contrary to popular misperception, immigrants are also significantly less likely to commit crimes or to be imprisoned than native-born U.S. citizens.[113] (That's not necessarily because immigrants are more virtuous than citizens, but probably has to do with the fact that the potential consequences for an immigrant who commits a crime—deportation in many cases—are much steeper than for U.S. citizens).

Finally, echoing concerns that Americans have had throughout our history about the newest immigrant arrivals, many are concerned that immigrants today are simply not learning English and fitting into the fabric of our society. When they first arrive, of course, most immigrants do not speak English

fluently, and many immigrants, particularly those who arrive at an older age, never successfully learn English. By the second generation, though, almost all immigrants speak English well (including, for example, 88% of second-generation Hispanics).[114]

Even amongst first-generation immigrants, English language fluency increases with time: while only one-third of those immigrants in the U.S. for less than a decade speak English, about three-quarters of those who have been in the U.S. for more than thirty years speak English well.[115] Immigrants want to learn English—they almost all recognize that English is crucial to advancing economically in the U.S.—but learning a language is tough, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are often wait-listed in many parts of the country.[116]

The Church has historically been one of the primary institutions through which immigrants integrated into the larger society, and it can continue to be. Providing technically excellent ESL classes or tutoring is a great way for churches or others who want to reach out to immigrants to both meet a tangible need and build relationships. An even more basic need is for friendship: many immigrants leave their families behind as they come to a new country; by building relationships with immigrants we can help them adjust to a new country—and find that we have a lot to learn from them, too.

[DISCUSSION QUESTIONS]

Experience: Become the Stranger

1. Describe your experience of simulating what it would be like to be an undocumented immigrant for one day.
2. How do you think that your life would be different if your circumstances were different and you were an undocumented immigrant?
3. Did anyone notice your "undocumented" hand stamp? What was the response, and did you have any interesting conversations?

Who Are Undocumented Immigrants?

4. What are some of the ideas about undocumented immigrants that you've heard that might not be accurate? Where did you hear them?
5. Do you know any undocumented immigrants? Do they fit, or defy, the stereotypes?

Economics and Taxes

6. What do you think of the statement that Christians "are to care for the immigrant stranger living among us, without any caveat that exempts us from this responsibility if it is not in our individual or national economic interest"? Do you agree or disagree?

7. Why do you think our government has such a duplicitous response to immigration, with one part (the IRS and Social Security Administration) accommodating payments from undocumented immigrants while another part (the Department of Homeland Security) maintains that they should not be present?

8. How might you either benefit or be harmed economically by the presence of undocumented immigrants in the US, and how does this affect your view of how we should respond to undocumented immigrants?

English and Cultural Integration

9. How could you help immigrants to integrate into society?

PRAYER POINTS

- If appropriate, ask God's forgiveness for times when you might have slandered undocumented immigrants, whether out of malice or just out of ignorance.
- Pray for the undocumented immigrants in your community as they face unique challenges, and particularly for those who do not know the Lord. Pray for the specific undocumented immigrants that you may know.
- Pray for employers faced with ethical challenges as they consider whether they will employ undocumented immigrants.
- Pray for churches and other ministries seeking to help immigrants to learn English and integrate into society, that they would effectively express God's love.

EXPERIENCE: REFUGEE SIMULATION

Another uniquely vulnerable group of immigrants are refugees, individuals who have been forced to flee their countries of origin because of persecution. Most of us have probably never experienced persecution—and never thought much about how we would respond to it.

Next session, we will learn about the unique challenges and resilience of refugees. Prior to your next session, think through the following hypothetical scenarios, jot down some notes, and be prepared to share your thoughts.

Imagine that the United States government has become increasingly hostile towards Christians, resulting in violence and persecution. Last

week, during a church service, government agents stormed your church and arrested your pastor. Last night, they came to the homes of three other families from your church, arresting the men and raping the women. You fear that they will come to your house tonight. You have to flee immediately with your family in order to remain safe.

- Where would you go?
- What would you take with you? What would be the hardest for you to leave behind?
- What would you miss the most about home?

Your new country of asylum does not have many places for the many refugees that have fled the United States to live, so you have to remain in a refugee camp where your home consists of a small tent. Aid workers occasionally come by to give you food, but it's not enough to feed your whole family.

- What skills do you have that you could use to better provide for your family?
- Where would you look for resources?

The country to which you fled, where you were living in the refugee camp, has just elected a new president who campaigned on removing the American refugees, and they're now closing down the refugee camp where you were living. You have the option of trying to go back to the U.S., where the persecution has subsided a bit but still seems to be a serious threat, or living without legal status—but able to practice your faith freely—in the second country.

- What would you choose?

Eventually, the United Nations interviews you in the second country and determines that you are eligible to be resettled as a refugee. They inform you that you'll be resettled to a country in the Middle East where most people speak Arabic and are Muslims. You'll be provided with an apartment to live in that the government of the host country will pay for temporarily, but you're expected to find a job and begin supporting yourself within a few months.

- Do you speak Arabic? How quickly do you think you can learn?
- How would it feel to be a religious minority as a Christian?
- What would be the hardest part of adjusting to your new home?

[GO DEEPER]

- Book: *Let Them In: The Case for Open Borders* (Gotham, 2008)

  This book—with a somewhat misleading subtitle (the book's argument is for more open immigration policies, but not for unlimited or unregulated immigration)—is written by Jason Riley, a member of the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial board with a distinctly conservative perspective grounded in the discipline of economics.

- Book: *Just Like Us: The True Story of Four Mexican Girls Coming of Age in America* (Scribner, 2009)

  Journalist Helen Thorpe's insightful book follows four young women—including immigrants both with and without legal status—as they finish high school and begin college in Denver, Colorado.

- Film: *The Visitor* (Overture Films, 2008)

  This fictional but very realistic film tells the story of a college professor who befriends an immigrant from Syria—and quickly finds himself face to face with the dysfunction of the U.S. immigration detention system.

[LEARNING]

We've focused thus far on immigrants generally and then on immigrants who are here unlawfully, but we also want to highlight two other distinct groups of immigrants who we believe are uniquely vulnerable: refugees (this session) and victims of human trafficking (Session Seven).

Who is a Refugee?

Millions of refugees throughout the world are forced to flee their homes because of violence and persecution, often leaving everything behind and crossing international borders in order to find safety. Refugees have a difficult journey as they leave what's familiar, often with only the clothes on their back, and find themselves in vulnerable situations in the country to which they flee. A refugee is defined by the United States as "a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or last habitual residence and is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."[117] Someone who flees persecution but stays within their country of origin is not considered a refugee but rather an internally displaced person (IDP); also, someone who flees desperate poverty, a natural disaster, or anything else other than persecution on account of one of the reasons outlined in the law is not considered a refugee.

Some 43.7 million people were displaced at the end of 2010, the largest number in over 15 years. There are an estimated 15 million refugees around the world and 27 million IDPs.[118] Many have suffered great trauma and distress due to war and conflict, often having seen family members killed or tortured. Others have been targeted by their own government for their religious beliefs. Many refugees have been persecuted by repressive regimes because they are an ethnic minority.

Even as refugees flee violence and persecution in their home countries, they often find themselves in very vulnerable situations in the country to which they first flee (the "country of first asylum"). In fact, four-fifths of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries with a gross national income of less than $4,000 per person.[119] Many refugees seeking safety in another country thus find themselves in refugee camps, where international assistance is critical to provide food, shelter, and water to the refugees. These camps are often composed primarily of plastic tents, where food is scarce and crime is rampant. Other refugees find themselves in urban settings where they do not speak the local language and need to find employment to support themselves and their families. Many refugees find themselves

having to navigate the difficulties of adjusting to their new lives in another land while waiting for their home countries to become peaceful again. In the meantime, refugees are often discriminated against in countries of asylum—particularly when they do not have legal status in that country—and live on the margins of society.

The Three Durable Solutions

Once they cross a border to seek safety, refugees face one of three long-term possibilities: integrate in their country of asylum, return to their home country, or be resettled to a third country. These options are known as "durable solutions." Refugees can usually only return to their country of origin when there is peace or they feel safe from persecution, which can often take years. In some cases, refugees have been able to locally integrate in their country of asylum, where they were welcomed enough to have employment, housing, and basic legal rights in the country to which they fled. With legal status and protection by the host government, these refugees can forge a new life for themselves and locally integrate. Often, however, refugees cannot stay in the country of asylum or return to their home country. For these refugees, resettlement is key to ending their limbo state. Resettlement is the least common possibility—in fact, less than one percent of refugees are ever resettled in a third country—but nonetheless it is an important tool of refugee protection, both for individual refugees and as a means of encouraging countries of initial asylum to keep their doors open.[120]

History of U.S. Resettlement Program

The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees. Since 1975, the U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees.[121] The U.S. Resettlement Program (USRP) was formalized with the Refugee Act of 1980 and since then annual admissions have ranged from a high of 207,116 in 1980 to a low of 27,100 in 2002. In fiscal year 2011 the U.S. admitted 56,424 refugees.[122] Each year, the President, in consultation with Congress, determines the maximum number of refugees who may be admitted to the United States from overseas. The President has set that level for fiscal year 2012 at 76,000 refugees.[123] In recent years, most of those resettled have been refugees from Iraq, Burma, Bhutan, Iran, Somalia, Burundi, the former Soviet Union, and Cuba.[124]

The Resettlement Process

Once refugees are identified for resettlement, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refers these refugees to resettlement countries including the United States (which resettles the largest number of refugees in the world), Canada, Australia, Denmark, Sweden and seventeen other countries. (The United States also can directly resettle certain refugee groups of humanitarian concern to the U.S. without relying on the UNHCR.) The refugee then has to go through a series of security screenings: every single refugee is interviewed in-

person by a Department of Homeland Security official, fingerprinted, and medically screened before their arrival to the United States. This process can take years.

Once a refugee passes the security screenings and medical checks, they are assigned to one of about ten non-profit "voluntary agencies" (or VOLAGs) in the United States, one of which is World Relief, which will help with the arrival of the refugee and transition to life in the United States. A refugee is then assigned a flight to come to the United States and takes out a travel loan which the refugee will have to pay back upon arrival in the United States. Right before their arrival, refugees have a short cultural orientation overseas which provides them with a basic English lesson and rudimentary cultural understandings of life in the United States, including what to expect upon arrival.

Integrating in the United States

When the refugee arrives in the United States, these voluntary agencies provide services including locating housing, reception at the airport, orientation to the community, facilitation of health screening, follow-up on health issues, enrollment of children in school, enrollment for public benefits that will help support the refugees until they reach self-sufficiency, help finding employment, assistance with cultural adjustment, and English language instruction. Refugees, unlike most other immigrants, are eligible to receive limited cash assistance through different governmental programs, but the goal of these programs is for refugees to achieve self-sufficiency in a short period of time, limiting dependency on welfare programs.

Most refugees have a strong desire to succeed and to build a better life for themselves in their new homes. However, refugees face many challenges upon arrival to the United States. The first challenge for many refugees is acculturating themselves to a new community, including settling themselves into a new home, enrolling their children in school, and trying to learn English. Another great challenge for refugees is finding a job to be able to support themselves and their families.

Refugees are diverse and come from a variety of backgrounds to the United States. Some refugees are very well-educated and have a good grasp of the English language, while others come to the U.S. with little education and may need assistance in navigating basic amenities such as escalators, running water, stoves, and microwave ovens. All refugees who come to the United States, regardless of their educational background, face similar challenges in terms of integration and often have to overcome tremendous mental and physical distress—including, in many cases, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—from their previous persecution.

The Role of the Church in Welcoming Refugees

Churches can play an integral role in welcoming refugees to the United States and helping refugees integrate fully into American life. This can include picking up refugees at the airport with a "Welcome to America" banner, helping to furnish an apartment, or cooking a hot meal for them as their first meal in the U.S. Arriving to a new country is certainly daunting, especially if one does not speak the language and is not familiar with the culture. Such a warm greeting can help refugees feel instantly welcomed in their new country of residence and allow them to feel the love of Christ in tangible ways.

Churches can also get involved in various ways after a refugee's initial arrival to the United States. Many refugee children are in need of school supplies, so World Relief runs an annual "Back to School" campaign in which churches collect donated backpacks and school supplies for refugee children. Other churches have started sports clubs in which refugee children can create a soccer league and compete against each other for a "Refugee Cup." One of the most important ways that a local church can walk alongside refugees is by simply befriending them. There are refugees resettled throughout the United States, but many have minimal contact with Americans. Befriending a refugee by helping him or her navigate public transportation, filling out school forms, or inviting the refugee into your home for a meal can make a critical and lasting impression on newcomers to our country.

Though they may have many needs when they first arrive, the relationship between local churches and newly arrived refugees is certainly not one-directional: refugees often give back tremendously to the communities that welcomed them. They become hard workers, business owners, and community leaders. Many are open to sharing their personal testimonies of how they arrived to the United States, what they struggled through, and what they are grateful for, which creates a tremendous learning opportunity. And many are strong believers—or come to faith in Jesus after arriving in the United States—contributing the unique gifts God has given them to serve local churches.

Durmomo Gary is one example of this phenomenon. Durmomo was born in the southern part of Sudan, where a civil war raged for nearly fifty years between the mostly Muslim northern part of the country and the mostly Christian southern region. A strong believer, Durmomo worked as a Bible translator and—so that people could read the translated Bible—in developing literacy curricula. The government in Khartoum—which at the time was the capital city of all of Sudan, prior to South Sudan's independence in 2011—systematically persecuted Christians in the southern part of the country. Eventually, the threat of violence became so severe that Durmomo fled, going north to Egypt in

2002. He lived as an urban refugee in Cairo for several years, fending for himself and—after getting married and having two children—for his family.

Eventually, in 2006, Durmomo and his family were given the opportunity to be resettled to the United States. They were met at the airport in Chicago by staff and volunteers from World Relief, which helped them to begin a new life. Though the adjustment was challenging, Durmomo and his family were grateful to be safe. Within a couple years of their arrival, Durmomo also took on two very meaningful jobs: he became the pastor of the Sudanese Community Church in Wheaton, Illinois, and he also joined the staff at World Relief, helping newly arrived refugees to access public benefits. "My job was an answer to my prayers. It is my chance to give back to God and World Relief by serving others," says Durmomo, who recently became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Two millennia before Durmomo fled to Egypt, another refugee made a similar journey. When Jesus was a small child, just after the visit of the Magi, Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, was warned in a dream that the tyrannical King Herod was killing all of the young Jewish boys in Bethlehem, "so he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod."[125] The gospel account does not tell us how Joseph, Mary, and young Jesus were received in Egypt, but it was likely both a harrowing journey and a difficult cultural adjustment once they arrived. Jesus can personally identify with the challenges faced by refugees. Welcoming refugees is a tangible way to follow Jesus' command to welcome strangers.[126]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Experience: Refugee Simulation

1. If you had to flee your home because of persecution, where would you go to? What would be the hardest part of the experience?
2. If forced to choose between living without legal status in a relatively safe country or returning to a place where you risked persecution for your faith, which would you choose?
3. What would it be like to be resettled to an entirely different country, where you did not understand the language, there were few people who shared your Christian faith, and you had very few resources?

History of the U.S. Resettlement Program

4. What do you think are some of the foreign policy, national security, and humanitarian implications of the resettlement program?

Integrating in the United States

5. What are some of the greatest challenges refugees have when they are resettled to the United States, and particularly to your community? How accommodating do you think our society is—in terms of our educational systems, transportation systems, health systems, housing and local churches—to those who have fled persecution?

The Role of the Church in Welcoming Refugees

6. Durmomo's story illustrates some ways that one refugee has given back to the community that resettled him; what are some other ways that you think refugees contribute to their adoptive homelands? Do you think that most in your community look primarily at refugees' strengths and contributions, or at their needs?

7. What are some creative ways that your church could welcome a refugee into your community? In what ways could refugees use their own voice to share their stories?

[PRAYER POINTS]

- Pray for those persecuted in their home countries, that safety might follow them and that the violence might end, as well as for those waiting to relocate, that they will remain safe until they have found refuge.
- Pray for those who have recently resettled to the United States, that they would acclimate well and find friendly Americans willing to help them in the process of learning English and starting their new life.
- Pray for leaders around the world, that they may recognize the plight of the refugees, sympathize with them, and be spurred to support and protect refugees, and for organizations that work to resettle refugees and cooperate with governments to promote resettlement as a durable solution.
- Pray for churches and individual Christians to be welcoming and hospitable to the refugees relocating to their communities, that they would provide assistance and friendship and ultimately be enriched by mutually-beneficial relationships with these newcomers.
- Pray for those refugees who have been separated from their families, that they might soon be reunited in a safe manner, and for those who do not know Jesus, that he would draw them to himself.
- A Prayer for Refugees

  Almighty and merciful God, whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own; look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger, homeless and hungry. Bless those who work to

bring them relief; inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts; and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.[127]

EXPERIENCE: SLAVERY FOOTPRINT

Having learned about undocumented immigrants and refugees, we'll now turn to one final group of immigrants who are uniquely vulnerable: foreign-born victims of human trafficking. Though most of us think of slavery as a horror of the past, the reality is that almost every American benefits in one way or another from the trafficking of human beings who are forced, coerced, or tricked by fraud to labor so that we can enjoy inexpensive goods and services. While acknowledging this reality is disturbing, it is also a first step toward ending this injustice, which we'll learn much more about in the next session.

Before your next session, we encourage you to visit a website, www.slaveryfootprint.org, which provides a brief, interactive survey about the goods and service that you consume, and then tells you, worldwide, how many individuals are likely enslaved on your behalf. Take the survey and remember your results for next session, which will focus particularly on foreign-born victims of human trafficking in the United States.

GO DEEPER

- Book: *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* (Mariner Books, 2003)

  Psychologist Mary Pipher reaches out to various refugee populations resettling in America: the "Lost Boys" from Sudan, survivors from Kosovo, and those who were forced to leave Afghanistan and Vietnam. Pipher follows each of them as they search for the American dream.

- Book: *Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference* (Spiegel & Grau, 2009)

  Journalist Warren St. John describes a soccer team called the Fugees made of refugee boys, their charismatic coach, and how a town in Georgia learned to accept them as their own.

- Book: *What is the What* (McSweeney's, 2006)

  This book, authored by Dave Eggers, is based on the real life story of Valentino Achak Deng, one of the "Lost Boys" of Sudan, who fled hardships and tragedy in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya before resettling in the United States.

- Book: *Of Beatles & Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard* (Little, Brown & Company, 2001)

  This short autobiographical book was written by Mawi Asegdom, a refugee from Ethiopia who was resettled into Illinois as a child and, eventually, made it to Harvard University, where he delivered the speech at his graduation ceremony.

- Film: *God Grew Tired of Us* (National Geographic Films, 2006)

  This documentary follows the Lost Boys, who had to leave their homes in Sudan due to violence, through the many challenges of their flight, of life in a refugee camp, and of being resettled in the United States.

- Organization: World Relief (www.worldrelief.org)

  World Relief has more than twenty offices located throughout the United States that resettle refugees in partnership with local churches and the U.S. government. Each office has a variety of volunteer opportunities for those wishing to personally come alongside a newly arrived refugee. For a full list of World Relief's offices in the U.S. and contact information, please visit www.worldrelief.org/us.

- Organization: Refugee Council USA (www.rcusa.org)

  Each of the voluntary agencies that partners with the U.S. government to resettle refugees within the United States, as well as various other support organizations, are part of the Refugee Council USA. Their website provides links to each of the member organizations, reports on refugee issues, and advocacy suggestions.

[LEARNING]

The Realities of Human Trafficking

We've focused in the past two sessions on two uniquely vulnerable groups of immigrants: refugees who have fled persecution and those who are undocumented. This session, we'll focus on a third group of people—which often overlaps with one of these other categories of immigrants—whom we believe are uniquely vulnerable: those who are victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is basically a new name for the very old and sinful practice of slavery. Since at least the time of Joseph—who was sold by his brothers to Midianite slave traders, then transported to Egypt and sold to Potiphar[128]—human beings have oppressed other human beings. The history of the United States is stained by the horrific realities of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, when millions of Africans were abducted from their homeland, transported involuntarily to the Americas, and sold as property.[129] Not all migration to the United States has been voluntary. But even after the slave trade and the institution of slavery were legally abolished, forced migration across borders and enslavement of individuals within a given country continues throughout the world, including in the United States; in fact, there are more individuals enslaved today than at the height of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.[130]

As defined by U.S. law, human trafficking is when people are made—through force, fraud, or coercion—to work against their will so that another can profit. Globally, the U.S. State Department estimates that there are as many as 27 million women, men, and children enslaved today.[131] The U.S. government estimates that there are about 100,000 victims of trafficking living within the United States.[132]

Under U.S. law, victims of trafficking are divided into two primary classifications: sex trafficking and labor trafficking.[133] Sex trafficking is when women, men, or children are forced to perform commercial sex acts against their will. Labor trafficking includes situations of debt bondage, of forced labor, and of involuntary child labor; victims of labor trafficking are often found in restaurants, factories, in agricultural settings, in traveling sales crews, or within a household as a domestic worker. Victims of human trafficking are often kept in bondage because they are afraid to report the offenses against them. They are often so isolated that they do not know how to report their situations or they have been so psychologically marred by abuse, mistreatment, and shame that they think of themselves as unworthy of rescue.

It's important to note that, while this Learning Group is focused on immigrants, not all victims of human trafficking living in the U.S.

are foreign-born: many are native-born U.S. citizens; in fact, based on prosecutions in recent years, most victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. are American citizens, with African-American women the most likely to be victims.[134] While the term "trafficking" sounds like forcibly transporting a person, the legal definition of trafficking in persons does not require that the victim be moved across a border or even be transported at all. Many of the victims are foreign-born, however, including 95% of labor trafficking victims (based on Department of Justice prosecution data).[135] The State Department estimates that as many as 17,500 individuals are trafficked into the United States each year (though exact statistics are very hard to verify).[136] Foreign-born victims of trafficking come from every part of the world, but victims identified by the U.S. government have most frequently been from Thailand, India, Mexico, the Philippines, Haiti, Honduras, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic.[137]

"You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns."

Deuteronomy 24:14, ESV

It is also important to understand that most foreign-born victims of human trafficking are undocumented, so this session really overlaps closely with what we learned in Session Five. Recent U.S. Justice Department prosecutions suggest that about 79% of non-citizen victims of human trafficking did not have valid legal status at the time they were identified (though victims of trafficking are, in some cases, eligible to acquire legal status once identified as victims).[139] The lack of legal status—and the resultant fear of law enforcement officers—is one factor that keeps victims of trafficking from escaping their situations. Our broken immigration system, which keeps millions of immigrants living in the shadows, is a trafficker's best friend.

Behind Every Statistic is a Person

The reality is that statistics about human trafficking (including those cited above) are hard to verify, because victims of human trafficking very seldom self-identify, and the traffickers who benefit from their enslavement are very effective at keeping victims isolated and afraid. Behind the numbers, though, are human beings, each one made in the image of God.[139] As InterVarsity Christian Fellowship evangelist York Moore says, "Modern day slavery doesn't just represent a human catastrophe on a global scale; it is an affront to the Gospel and the mission of the Church… Slavery not only creates a new class of unreached people, but also a class of unreachable people kept out of the light of civil society, and sometimes even turned into illegal commodities—bought, sold, and exploited."[140]

One such person is Shyima Hall.[141] Shyima was born in Egypt, but as an eight-year-old was sold into slavery—for $30 a month—by her desperately poor parents. At ten years old, she was smuggled into the United States, where she was forced to work sixteen hour days cooking and cleaning inside the home of a wealthy family in Orange County, California. She slept on a dirty mattress in a windowless garage and was seldom allowed to leave, even to go to school or a doctor. Her captors threatened to beat her if she ever called the police and turn her in as an "illegal."[142] In 2002, through a tip from a concerned neighbor, Shyima was rescued; her captors were eventually prosecuted. Shyima, who had been undocumented, was granted legal status under a special provision of law for people in her situation, and she recently became a naturalized U.S. citizen. She has spoken to groups around the country about her experience, helping to raise awareness.

Gabriella was struggling to support her mother and younger sisters by working in a grocery store in Colombia after her father's death.[143] Desperate, she decided to take up the offer of a childhood friend who had since moved to the U.S., who promised to help her find a restaurant job. Upon arrival in the U.S., though, Gabriella's "friend" told her that she owed him $10,000 and forced her into prostitution to repay the debt. She was told that if she left, her family in Colombia would be harmed. After five hellish years, being moved to a different brothel on a nearly weekly basis, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid discovered her, and a non-profit organization helped her to recover, learn English, and find a job.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed." *Luke 4:18 ESV*

Mariano Lucas Domingo crossed the border into the United States unlawfully in hopes of finding work to support an ailing parent in his home country of Guatemala. He found work as a tomato-picker in Immokalee, a small town in Florida, where ninety percent of domestically-produced tomatoes that Americans consume during the months from December to May are produced.[144] Paid less than two cents per pound of tomatoes that he picked, Mariano could earn $200 per week during the harvest season.[145] However, his employer, Cesar Navarrete, charged him $20 per week for "room," which meant the locked back of a box truck shared with two other workers, without running water or a toilet, and $50 per week for "board," which was two meager meals a day. Showers—from a garden hose—cost $5 each. Though he worked ten-hour days, Mariano found himself deeper and deeper in debt to his employer; when he complained, he was threatened with violence. Locked in the truck at night, he and his roommates finally broke through the ventilator hatch

of the truck and escaped. Eventually, Mariano was granted legal status as a victim of human trafficking, and Cesar Navarrete was convicted and jailed. Unfortunately, Mariano's case is not unique: more than 1,000 enslaved agricultural workers—most of them immigrants—have been freed as a result of seven cases in Florida since 1997; no one knows for sure how many others are still in similar conditions, but tomatoes are still cheap.[146]

The Role of the Church

Stories like Shyima's, Gabriella's, and Mariano's are horrifying. As followers of Christ—who came "to proclaim freedom for the captives"[147]—we cannot sit idly while such injustice exists in our society. There are a number of ways that we can respond.

The first step is awareness. Had a neighbor not been "nosy" enough to call the authorities upon observing a suspicious young girl who never seemed to go to school in the home where Shyima was enslaved, she might still be in that situation. Leave the confronting of potential traffickers to law enforcement, but watch for signs of human trafficking—when you encounter someone who works without pay or whose sole income is from tips, who owes a large debt that they cannot pay off, who was recruited to work under false promises, or who is not free to leave—and call the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-3737-888).[148] Law enforcement officials will research credible tips, and victims of human trafficking—even those who are undocumented—may be eligible for legal status by being granted a special "T" visa for victims of trafficking or a "U" visa for crime victims who are helpful to law enforcement in the prosecution of a criminal. And, of course, awareness can lead us to prayer, pleading with God to intervene on behalf of trafficking victims.

Just as importantly, though, we must do everything within our power to lower the *demand* for slave labor. When we buy cheap tomatoes and don't know—and probably don't want to know—the conditions under which they were picked, we are very likely benefiting from labor trafficking. The same is true with many other goods and services that we consume, which rely on slave labor either in the U.S. or abroad. The question of demand relates to sex trafficking as well: while Christians are quick to acknowledge the immorality of viewing pornography (which is often produced using trafficking victims[149]) or purchasing sex, surveys find that about half of Christian men *admit* to viewing pornography,[150] and, though it's hard to find exact statistics, many of the men who visit strip clubs or purchase sex also attend local churches.

As law enforcement officers rescue victims, the Church has a vital role in ministering to the physical, psychological, legal, and spiritual needs of trafficking survivors. In partnership with local churches and volunteers, for example, World Relief's office in Tampa, Florida aids trafficking survivors by providing or helping to locate emergency housing, food, clothing, medical care, counseling, legal assistance and job training to help victims begin restoring their lives. We also have the opportunity to bring the hope and healing found only in Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Church can stand against human trafficking by advocating for better public policies. While human trafficking is illegal at the federal level, there is much more that governments could do to crack down on human trafficking both within the U.S. and abroad. Anti-human trafficking legislation at the state level also varies widely. And, ultimately, our broken immigration system perpetuates human trafficking, so we can advocate to reform our immigration laws in ways consistent with biblical values.

[DISCUSSION QUESTIONS]

Experience: Slavery Footprint

1. According to the Slavery Footprint website, how many people are likely enslaved to meet your consumption habits? How does this make you feel, and what could you do to lower this number?

The Realities of Human Trafficking

2. Were you familiar with the concept of human trafficking before beginning this study? Does the scope of human trafficking within the United States surprise you?

3. How do you think that our nation's immigration policies impact the problem of human trafficking in the United States?

Behind Every Statistic is a Person

4. Shyima's story illustrates the unique vulnerability of children to situations of trafficking; what other characteristics do you think makes a person vulnerable to being trafficked?

5. Gabriella's experience—being trafficked by someone who was a friend or acquaintance—is relatively common; why do you think that is?

6. Mariano's story illustrates how mundane products like tomatoes might be linked to human trafficking; where do you get the food that you consume, and do you know under what conditions it was produced?

The Role of the Church

7. In what ways do members of local churches contribute to the demand for human trafficking—both labor trafficking and sex trafficking—and what could our churches do to minimize this demand?

8. What other specific steps could your Learning Group take to help the Church respond to human trafficking?

PRAYER POINTS

- If appropriate, ask for repentance for the ways that you may have contributed to human trafficking, such as by contributing to demand for goods and services that might be produced by victims of trafficking, by creating demand for sex trafficking, or by pre-judging people who are prostituted.
- Pray for victims of human trafficking in your local community and throughout the world, for their liberation from captivity and that even in the midst of horrific situations they would know God's love for them.
- Pray for courage, diligence, and protection for law enforcement officers tasked with disrupting situations of human trafficking and prosecuting traffickers.
- Pray that the Church would stand against human trafficking by raising awareness, by advocating for more just laws, by extending love and compassion to victims of trafficking, and by minimizing the demand for sex, products, and services that create a market for human trafficking in the first place.
- Pray for the perpetrators of human trafficking, that God would change their hearts and draw even these individuals guilty of horrific offenses to repentance, grace, and redemption.
- Pray for legislators in the United States and around the world, that they would pass wise and just laws that would dramatically reduce the instances of human trafficking.

EXPERIENCE: THE $2 A DAY CHALLENGE

Next session, we're going to look at some of the "push" factors that inspire people to migrate—lawfully or unlawfully—to the United States and other countries. While there are a number of factors that influence individuals' decision to emigrate, the most common is poverty. Across the globe, about half of the world's population—2.5 billion people—live on less than $2 a day and struggle to provide their families with food and other basic necessities.[151] Given that even someone considered poor in the U.S. lives on about $30 a day,[152] it's really not surprising that individuals living in desperate poverty would consider migrating to a place where their hard work would translate to a better life.

The reality is that most Americans will never be able to really comprehend what it is like to live in the desperation of extreme poverty, but our experience for this session aims to give you a small, limited taste of what it is like for the other half of the world.

For the next week, if you accept this $2 a Day Challenge, you'll follow three basic rules:

1. Spend only $2 per day per person on all food and beverages. (If you want to make this more realistic, add to that a day's portion of your rent or mortgage expenses, your transportation expenses, etc., but we think you'll find it challenging enough just to limit what you consume to $2 per day).
2. Only eat what you buy during the week of the challenge—stocking up the week before is cheating.
3. If you spend more than $2 in one day, you have to deduct that amount off of what you spend the next day.

   Keep your receipts, make notes about the experience, and be prepared to talk about it with your Learning Group.

GO DEEPER

- Book: *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today* (University of California Press, 2009)

  This book, authored by Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter, provides an in-depth assessment of human trafficking in the U.S. and also provides guidance for how individual citizens can respond.

- Film: *Sex + Money: A National Search for Human Worth* (PhotogenX, 2011)

  In this documentary film, a team of journalists travel the United States to discover the disturbing realities of sex trafficking of both U.S. citizen and foreign-born victims. It is available online at www.sexandmoneystore.com. (Please note that, given the subject matter, the film contains content that younger viewers and some adults may find objectionable).

- Book: *Hands that Heal: International Curriculum*

  Produced by the FAAST (the Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking, an alliance that includes World Relief, the Salvation Army, and several other Christian ministries), Hands that Heal is a comprehensive, Christian curriculum to train global caregivers who are frontline providers of aftercare for women, children, and men that have been trafficked into the commercial sex industry. The curriculum includes a CD with additional resources. It can be purchased online at http://bit.ly/QhDIZ8.

- Video: "The New Christian Abolition Movement" (CNN, February 5, 2012)

This short video produced by CNN profiles Danielle Mitchell, a World Relief staffer in North Carolina who works to raise awareness about human trafficking locally and to care for survivors of human trafficking. It is available online at http://bit.ly/zsHPAA.

- Organization: Polaris Project (www.polarisproject.org)

  Polaris Project is committed to the abolition of human trafficking worldwide. In partnership with law enforcement and other non-profit organizations, they operate the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline at 1-888-3737-888, a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week hotline for victims of trafficking or those who suspect a situation of trafficking to make anonymous reports or get more information.

[LEARNING]

Push and Pull Factors

Economists and sociologists who study immigration find that they can predict when migration will occur based on two primary factors: the "push" factors that make reasonable people want to leave their country of origin, and the "pull" factors that help attract them to a particular location.[153]

These factors have been at play throughout U.S. history. When unprecedented numbers of Irish immigrants came to the U.S. in the mid-1800s, many were pushed out of Ireland by a severe potato famine; they were pulled to the U.S. in particular because of the opportunity presented by a growing economy with an expanding frontier. Around the same time, Germans who were disappointed and afraid after an attempted revolution failed were pushed out by a harsh government and pulled to the U.S. by the promise of liberty and democracy.

We also see push and pull factors at work in Scripture. Jacob's children were pushed out by famine—a common push factor—and were pulled to Egypt, initially, by the rumor that there was grain available there.[154] Ruth was pushed out by widespread hunger in her native land of Moab and pulled to Judah by the desire to stay united to her mother-in-law, Naomi:[155] family unity is a common pull for many immigrants today as well.

These push and pull factors continue to control migration. Both those who believe that the U.S. should warmly welcome as many immigrants as possible and those who believe that we should tightly limit immigration should be able to agree that, as the Church, loving our neighbors requires us to try to alleviate situations of poverty and violence that would push people out in the first place.

Migration is, in many ways, a tragic choice. Even when it is undertaken voluntarily, not under duress, desperation, or compulsion as is often the case, migration involves a profound displacement, taking a person away from all that is familiar. The psalmist's lament in exile—"how can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?"[156]—speaks to the emotional and psychological trauma that displacement can cause. That people so often leave behind all that they know and all that they have speaks to the desperation they feel at the point they make the decision to migrate. While heeding the biblical commands to extend hospitality to immigrants, the Church also has a vital role in addressing these "push factors," the realities of poverty, conflicts, environmental degradation, and natural disasters that drive people out of their native countries.

Push Factor: Extreme Poverty

If you've ever spent even a short amount of time in the Global South, you know that poverty is a daily reality for most people there. For the approximately 2.5 billion of the world's residents who live in poverty, on the equivalent of less than $2 a day, daily survival can be a struggle.[157] Low income levels are closely correlated to high rates of disease and high rates of mortality, particularly amongst children, and to low levels of educational achievement.

Beyond just a lack of material resources, poverty is the result of broken relationships: with God, with neighbors, and with God's creation.[158] It is "the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable."[159]

Poverty is also defined by a lack of decent options, when people are forced to choose between bad and worse.[160] It is the father who has to decide whether to send his daughter or his son to school, because there is not enough money to pay school fees for both. It is the woman who has to cut down the trees that would become valuable timber with a decade's time because she needs firewood to keep warm tonight, and the HIV-infected mother who is forced to choose between life-saving anti-retroviral drugs or having enough food to feed her children. Migration—fleeing to find greater opportunity—is sometimes the most rational choice for those faced with extreme poverty.

Global poverty affects an enormous percentage of the Body of Christ worldwide, particularly as the center of global Christianity shifts from Europe and North America to the Global South, to Latin America, Africa, and Asia.[161] Paul challenges the better-off church in Corinth to give generously for the sake of their impoverished brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, saying "our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality."[162] Given the incredible disparity between rich Christians in the Global North and impoverished Christians in the Global South, we have a long way to go before contemplating equality.

As Americans, it's also important to recognize that the choices we make—what we consume, the policies and politicians for whom we vote, the extent to which we give generously of the resources of which God has made us stewards—affect our impoverished brothers and sisters and neighbors in the Global South as well. Take U.S. agricultural policy, for example: while there have arguably been many benefits as the result of the North American Free Trade Agreement signed between the U.S. and Mexico in 1994, one group that has generally not benefitted is small corn farmers, who have struggled to compete with imported corn from the U.S.[164] Their woes come about not as the result of free trade, per se, but because the U.S. was not willing to actually make trade fully free: our government subsidizes corn production in the U.S. to such an extent that American farmers grow more corn than we could possibly

consume (though we try, using it to fuel our cars, sweeten our soda, and feed animals whose stomachs God originally designed to eat grass). The excess corn gets sold at very low prices in places like Mexico.

That may seem very humanitarian of us—cheap food for the hungry, courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer—but the effect is that many corn farmers in southern Mexico cannot sell their product at a price that would allow them to support themselves. Unable to compete, many quit farming and are forced to move to make ends meet. Some go to Mexico City, where they search for alternate means to support their families. If that doesn't pan out, they might move to factory jobs in northern Mexico along the border with the U.S. (many of which have been created as the result of NAFTA). There, they might earn $1 per hour, much more than they were earning farming corn. At that point, though, the laborer has very likely already left behind his family, so when he hears that he can earn $8 an hour if he goes a few miles further north across the border, there is a strong incentive to go. The job that, even without legal status, can be obtained relatively easily in the U.S. attracts the migrant in. But the U.S. government has been reluctant to seriously address the "pull" factor of job availability by more strictly enforcing work authorization rules, because—unless we are also willing to admit more immigrants lawfully—our economy would suffer dramatically without adequate immigrant labor. U.S. policies on both sides of the border influence the one-time-farmer's decision to migrate.

VIDEO RESOURCE Bread for the World, a Christian organization focused on ending hunger and extreme poverty by mobilizing the Church in favor of legislation that benefits the poor, has produced a helpful short film called "Stay" that we recommend. It highlights a family in Mexico which has emigrated in the past to the U.S., but who is now able to stay in Mexico because of improved economic opportunities. It is available online at http://vimeo.com/21720855.

Push Factor: War and Conflict

Another major reason that people are forced to migrate is when their very lives are at risk as a result of conflict. War and political repression force millions to flee their homes each year.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, more than four million people have lost their lives in the past eight years alone as the direct or indirect result of armed conflict.[165] Women are particular targets of violence, and rape is rampant. Desperate to survive, more than a million people have fled.[166]

Similar stories unfold elsewhere: in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Syria, in Sudan, and throughout the world. Refugees pour into neighboring countries—

often impoverished countries themselves without the capacity to care for a flood of refugees—and are regularly "warehoused" in refugee camps. A fortunate few might make it to the United States or another developed country to be resettled and replant their lives, but many others will simply wait—sometimes for decades—for it to be safe to return home.

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

Isaiah 58:6-7, NIV

The Church in the countries that receive refugees can extend hospitality to these new arrivals, but we can also help to stop conflicts from occurring. We can pressure our government—whose influence is felt around the world—to work through diplomacy to keep disagreements from erupting into violence. Examination of our own consumption patterns may reveal that some of our purchases are inadvertently helping to fund the warlords behind conflicts on the other side of the globe: two recent examples include so-called "blood diamonds" which have helped to fund civil wars in West Africa, and cell phones which utilize coltan, a raw material extracted in Congo. We can also make sure that we're not investing in companies that profit from selling weapons to those who inflict harm. In partnership with organizations like World Relief, we can train local church leaders to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation between different tribes and political parties. And we can work to alleviate the poverty that makes conflict more likely to occur.

Push Factor: Environmental Degradation and Natural Disasters

Finally, another common reason that individuals feel pushed to migrate is because of natural disasters—hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, wildfires—and because of environmental degradation. The International Red Cross estimates that as many as 25 million people worldwide have been displaced by environmental disasters (both natural and man-made) in a single year.[167]

When a massive earthquake hit Haiti in 2010, for example, desperate Haitians fled to the neighboring Dominican Republic, to the United States, and to as far as Brazil to find security, while many more were displaced internally.[168] While the Church cannot prevent natural disasters from occurring (except, perhaps, by prayer), it can help communities to build infrastructure that will minimize the loss of life; this sort of preparedness explains why the loss of life from Japan's earthquake in

2011, though larger in scale, claimed just a fraction of the number of lives as the earthquake in Haiti, where people were living in desperately unsafe conditions even before the disaster.[169] Churches in the U.S. can also come alongside local churches to provide relief when natural disasters do strike.

Our collective failure to adequately steward the creation that God has entrusted to us has also led to situations that push people to leave their country of origin. Pollution and overuse of natural resources have destroyed what were once sustainable agricultural and fishing industries in some parts of the world, forcing many to look elsewhere for employment. Scarcity of natural resources—particularly water—can also lead to violent conflict, as has been the case in the Darfur region of Sudan, where farmers of different ethnic groups have clashed over access to water in the midst of an extended drought.[170]

Just as God created Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden with the command "to work it and take care of it,"[171] we are called to care for God's creation, recognizing that "the earth is the LORD's, and everything in it"[172] and we are merely stewards entrusted with its care. Faithfulness to God's command to care for his creation can also help to minimize the instances when people are forced to emigrate as a result of environmental disasters.

The Role of the Church in Transformational Development

Our government's primary response to the illegal immigration that results from the push of poverty and the pull of work and safety in the U.S. has been to make it harder and harder to enter the U.S. illegally. In fact, our federal government has so dramatically increased spending on border security over the past five years that U.S. taxpayers now spend $7,500 for each immigrant who is caught and detained trying to unlawfully enter the U.S.[173] When the costs of apprehension, detention, legal processing, and transportation are all added up, we spend more than $23,000 to deport a single individual—and we deported more than 400,000 people in 2010.[174] While some of these expenses may be necessary, imagine how many fewer people would attempt to migrate unlawfully and how many fewer people would have to be deported, if we invested just a fraction of those resources in addressing the conditions of global poverty, conflict, and environmental issues that push people to migrate in the first place.

"We show tangible love for God in how we care for the poor and those who are suffering. He expects us to treat the poor and the desperate as if they were Christ Himself." *Francis Chan, Author,* Crazy Love[163]

The Church in the United States—composed principally of voting citizens in a democracy—can help to influence the government in this direction.

But the Church need not wait for the government to get its act together to respond to the push factors that motivate migration: the Church, as the folks at World Relief like to say, is "the broadest, most diverse social network on the planet," and when it functions as one Body under Christ's headship, it can be an incomparable force for change.[175]

Local churches in a relatively wealthy country like the U.S.—and the individuals that make up the church—can come alongside local churches throughout the Global South to combat the challenges of hunger, poverty, disease, conflict, and lack of opportunity. It's already happening all over the world, with church-based initiatives focused on health and nutrition, agriculture, microfinance, peace-building, and disaster response. When we come together as one Body, we can show the world the love and hope found only in Jesus Christ.

[DISCUSSION QUESTIONS]

Experience: $2 a Day Challenge

1. How was living on $2 a day? Were you able to go the whole week without cheating? Was it harder or easier than you anticipated?
2. How would you respond if you were born into a situation where living on $2 a day—not just for food, but for all of your expenses—was your lot in life?

Push and Pull Factors

3. What other "push" and "pull" factors do you think might influence people's decisions to migrate?

Push Factor: Extreme Poverty

4. The illustration of how corn subsidies have affected small farmers in Mexico demonstrates the complexity of how U.S. policies affect the poor abroad and, as a result, affect migration to the U.S. What other policy issues do you think affect this?

Push Factor: War and Conflict

5. What would you do if war erupted in your community or your country? Where would you flee to?

Push Factor: Natural Disasters and Environmental Degradation

6. In what ways might your consumption patterns affect the environment—and the livelihoods—of our global neighbors?

The Church and Transformational Development

7. How could the Church help to address these great "push" issues of poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation?

PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for the Church, that we would be united across geographic, socioeconomic, ethnic, and denominational lines to serve a broken world in Christ's love.
- Pray for those forced to flee their countries for reasons of poverty, conflict, natural disasters, or environmental degradation, that God would comfort them as they recognize all that is lost.
- Pray for peace in countries long plagued by conflict, lifting before the Lord particular situations of which you are aware.
- Pray for World Relief and other Christian organizations partnering with local churches to respond to natural disasters, to build sustainable livelihoods for the impoverished, and to seek peace.
- Pray for wisdom for legislators who set policies that affect both the "push" and "pull" factors that control migration.

EXPERIENCE: ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES

Next session, we'll consider various ways that we—as local churches and as individual Christ-followers—can respond to the realities of immigration in the United States. Prior to the next session, though, strategize about a way that you—or your group, working together—could help to address the root causes of migration: poverty, conflict, and environmental disaster.

"God longs for the broadest, most diverse social network on the planet—the Church—to rise up like never before to engage the great causes of our time. To feed the hungry. To heal the sick. To stand for the vulnerable." *World Relief*

You might organize a fundraiser to support World Relief or another faith-based organization empowering local churches to serve the vulnerable in impoverished and conflict-stricken regions of the world. Perhaps you could educate others at your church, on your campus, or even through local media about these challenges and how our consumption choices can improve—or worsen—the situations. Or you might organize others to advocate for public policies that would help to alleviate suffering and rectify injustice.

Come back next session with one or two ideas, and be prepared to discuss them with your group. Here are a few ideas that others have tried:

- In the wake of the devastating earthquake that hit the country of Haiti in 2010—leaving tens of thousands dead, many more injured and homeless, and driving many to embark upon a dangerous journey by boat to find hope in the U.S. and other parts of the world—a dozen local churches in Lansing, Michigan teamed up to form "Lansing for Haiti." They organized a variety of fundraisers—a 5-kilometer run/walk, a golf outing, the sale of water bottles at various churches—and together gathered more than $18,000, which World Relief Haiti distributed to local evangelical churches in Haiti to help with disaster response and with long-term transformational development in the community of Cité Soleil, Haiti.
- Students within the French Club at Maine South High School in Park Ridge, Illinois sold bracelets to their classmates for $1 each—and raised more than $500 to support World Relief's work empowering local churches to seek peace and stop gender-based violence in the conflict-plagued country of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country from which millions of refugees have been forced to flee.
- A pastor at Life Point Church in Maryland wanted to ensure that the coffee that his church offered at weekend services was produced in such as a way as to express Christ's love for the vulnerable, rather than just providing a cheap cup of coffee. He and his daughter, who has Down Syndrome, established a company, Furnace Hills Coffee Company, that purchases coffee beans at fair prices directly from farmers in Central America, creating jobs for farmers who are then able to support their families without being forced to migrate. Once the coffee arrives in the United States, Furnace Hills employs individuals with developmental disabilities to roast the coffee, providing them with dignifying work opportunities as well, and then sells it throughout the community. The coffee that Life Point serves each weekend is both a delicious way to welcome folks to church and a way to provide employment, both in the US and in some of the countries that send many immigrants to the United States.
- College students at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois organized a competition with rival Christian college campuses to see which campus could generate more hand-written letters to the Secretary of the Treasury advocating for debt relief for highly-indebted countries in Latin America and Africa, using resources from the ONE Campaign. Many countries spend such a large portion of their national budgets on interest on loans made decades ago to corrupt governments that they are unable to provide basic services to their people, which perpetuates poverty and leads many within these countries to migrate in search of better opportunities.

GO DEEPER

- Book: *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself* (Moody Press, 2009)

  Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett provide an easy-to-read review of the biblical call to care for the poor and of the best of both academic and practitioner perspectives on how to do so effectively.

- Film: *Reparando* (Athentikos, 2011)

  This gospel-centered film highlights the complex relationship between Guatemala and the United States, encouraging viewers to consider both the effects of immigration on a country like Guatemala and the root causes of poverty and conflict that motivate migration in the first place.

- Film: *The Other Side of Immigration* (Roy Germano Films, 2009)

  This films looks at the issue of immigration from the perspective of the Mexican state of Michoacan, which has sent many migrants to the U.S. over the last several decades. It examines the poverty that has compelled migration, initiatives to alleviate that poverty, and the effects of emigration—both positive and negative—on those left behind.

- Organization: World Relief (www.worldrelief.org)

  The humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals and a partner in the publication of this Learning Group, World Relief's mission is to empower the local church to serve the most vulnerable. They do so by partnering with local churches around the world to care for those who are most vulnerable, particularly those who have been devastated by natural disasters or conflict, those seeking economic opportunity, women, children, and the displaced.

- Organization: Bread for the World (www.bread.org)

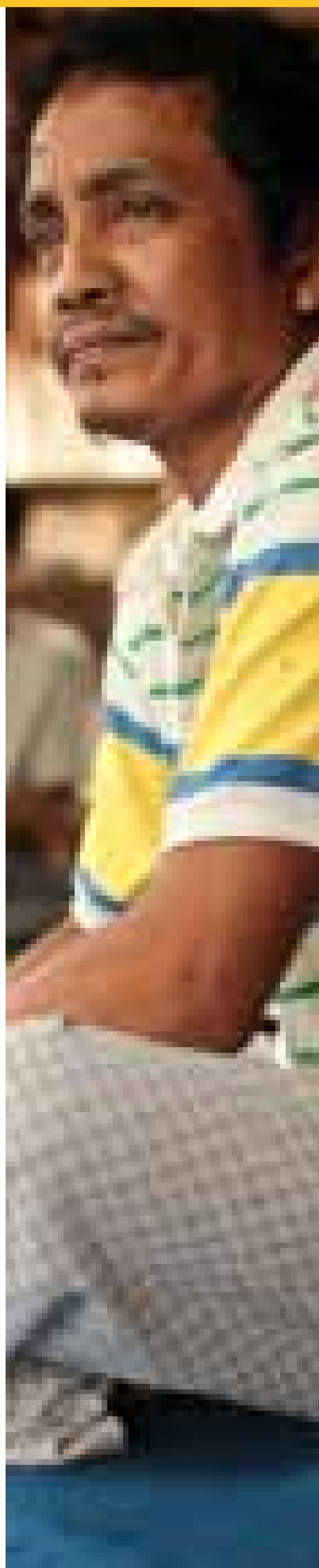
  Bread for the World is a Christian organization that advocates for public policies to eliminate hunger both internationally and domestically.

- Organization: The ONE Campaign (www.one.org)

  ONE is an international, grassroots campaign seeking to eliminate extreme poverty and save lives from preventable diseases by advocating for just public policies.

- Organization: Furnace Hills Coffee Company (www.furnacehillscoffee.com)

  Furnace Hills purchases coffee from farmers in Central America at rates above market rates, providing economic help to those families and allowing them to be economically secure without migrating. The coffee beans are roasted by developmentally disabled people in the U.S., and a portion of the profits from each bag of coffee helps developmentally disabled individuals abroad.



[LEARNING]

A Christian Response to Immigration

Over the past eight sessions, you've learned a lot about immigrants—how God views them, the effect that they are having on the Church, where they come from, why they come, and some of the facts about who they are—all of which, hopefully, prepares us to respond. Information is important, but knowledge is not particularly helpful if it does not compel us into action. As we seek and understand God's heart for immigrants, it should motivate a response. "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says," James writes.[176]

We've developed an acronym to suggest six ways that we might respond to what we've learned: PLEASE stands for Prayer, Listening, Education, Advocacy, Service, and Evangelism.

Prayer

Scripture tells us that we should "pray without ceasing," so prayer should not only be the first response to a tough issue, but an ongoing response that fuels any further action.[177]

We hope that the prayer points offered throughout this Learning Group guide have provided some helpful ideas as you begin to pray through this issue. Certainly we can pray for the immigrants in our country—especially those who do not yet know Jesus, and those facing family separation or economic strain—and also allow our hearts to be opened to those still in the countries from which they emigrated.

We can also pray for the Church, including for our local churches, that our leaders would have God's wisdom as they wrestle with how to approach a complex, potentially controversial topic and that they would have the courage to follow where God calls them. We can particularly pray for the local churches that minister to immigrants directly, and pray, as Jesus prayed in the hours before his crucifixion, for the unity of Christians across ethnic, denominational, and legal status lines.[178]

Finally, we are commanded to pray for "kings and all those in authority,"[179] which in our contemporary context might mean our elected officials such as the President, our Senators, and our Member of Congress. While it is up to these elected officials to come up with just policies that affect immigrants, Scripture teaches that, ultimately, these decisions fall under God's sovereignty: the king's heart is "in the LORD's hand."[180] We can plead with our Heavenly Father on behalf of the many affected by the flaws in current policy, trusting in Jesus'

promise that "if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven."[181] We are commanded to be "faithful in prayer."[182]

Listening

This Learning Group has, hopefully, begun a process of listening that we think is vital to understanding a complex issue like immigration from a Christian perspective: listening, first and foremost, to the Bible. Our session on "Thinking Biblically about Immigration" provides a start, but the Scriptures have much more to say on this topic than we have had time to cover.

As we listen to Scripture, we also would do well to listen to the voices of our Christian sisters and brothers who are themselves immigrants. It's very easy to form strong opinions about immigration as an issue without ever hearing the stories of those that the issue affects. Particularly when we have access to individuals who are fellow members of Christ's Body, we need to make a special effort to prioritize their voices as we think and pray through this issue.

"Our primary concern is, 'What does God's Word say?'... if you allow your authority to be a politician or a political ideology or talk radio or news media when it comes to any issue in life over the Word of God, you are outside the will of God." *Bryant Wright, President, Southern Baptist Convention* [183]

Finally, we have a particular responsibility as Christians to ensure that, as we talk about this issue, we are speaking the truth. We've included many references at the end of this Learning Group precisely because you can't, and shouldn't, believe everything that you read. We encourage you to check our sources to make sure that we're accurately representing the situation, and check others' sources as well whenever you read information—positive or negative—about immigrants. Look at a variety of sources and be particularly wary of organizations that have stated agendas that run counter to your values: many Christians do not realize, for example, that some of the groups advocating harsh restrictions on immigration and issuing reports critical of immigrants do so out of a belief in population control with which many Christians would sharply disagree.[184]

Education

As we understand this issue better on a personal level, we can help to educate others. Most Christians have simply never thought about immigration through the lens of their faith, so we need leaders—both pastors and lay leaders—who will help to educate their congregations.

Your group might decide to ask the leaders at your church if they would consider devoting a Sunday to highlighting the biblical call to hospitality toward immigrants. This might be through a sermon focused on one of the many passages related to immigrants, music that praises God for his love and provision for the immigrant and others who are vulnerable, and perhaps the chance to highlight for others ways that they can become involved in ministry with immigrants locally.

Perhaps you want to lead a new group of people at your church through this Learning Group—or to innovate your own curriculum based on what you think would best suit your group. Maybe you could bring in a guest speaker to your church, or host a special event open to the larger community highlighting stories of some immigrant neighbors who can help put a human face on this issue. It might be as simple as inviting some friends over to watch a film and then leading a discussion afterwards. Be creative, but don't keep what you've learned to yourselves.

Advocacy

Scripture commands us to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves."[185] While the immigrants in our community can speak for themselves in one sense—and we ought to help amplify their voices—those who are not citizens cannot vote, and that means that most elected officials do not particularly care what they think.

The Church, though, can be a voice for the many within the Body of Christ whose lives are affected by a broken immigration system—and for the many who do not yet know Christ. While most of the Church's response to immigrants will be on an individual level—meeting practical needs as an expression of Christ's love and making disciples—the command to love our neighbors might also lead us to speak up in favor of legislation that would benefit them.

Martin Luther King Jr. once explained it this way:

> *We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be beaten and robbed as they make their journey through life. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.*[186]

As we love our neighbors in practical ways, more and more Christians are convinced that the structures of our immigration laws simply do not work—not for immigrants, not for our economy and security as a whole, and not for a society that prides itself on the rule of law. Our current system is also a huge problem for those who recognize the value of intact families, because, as Focus on the Family president Jim Daly notes, "families are being torn apart" under current policies.[187]

There are many ways that Christ-followers in the U.S. can advocate on

behalf of immigrants. Anyone can pick up their telephone or take out a pen and paper to contact their elected officials: you can find their contact information by entering your address and zip code at www.votesmart.org. In some areas, pastors have signed on to a letter to their Senators or their Member of the House of Representatives, expressing their views. Others have followed up by requesting a meeting with their elected official where they can personally share their opinions. Some have submitted Op-Eds or letters to the editor of the local newspaper, expressing why, from the perspective of their faith, they believe that our immigration laws need change. Some in your church might have a personal relationship with a legislator and thus not need to set up a formal meeting: they could simply talk to him or her while playing golf or sharing a meal.

"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

James 1:22, NIV

We'll leave it to you to decide exactly what to advocate and what positions to take. The particular policy supported by many evangelical organizations—including the Southern Baptist Convention[188] and the National Association of Evangelicals (and member denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the Christian Reformed Church of North America, the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyans, the Vineyard, and others)[189]—is a policy that has become known as Comprehensive Immigration Reform. Essentially, this reform would make three major changes to U.S. immigration law:

1. Make it much more difficult to enter the U.S., overstay a visa, or work *unlawfully*, by investing in border security and workplace enforcement, while respecting due process for those detained. This only works, though, while keeping our economy strong if we concurrently...

2. Make it easier to enter the U.S. *lawfully,* by adjusting our present visa system—not to allow for unlimited immigration or open borders, but to provide adequate visas to meet the goals of keeping our economy growing (which requires adequate workers at both the high and low ends of the educational spectrum), keeping families united, and continuing to provide refuge for those fleeing persecution.

   Finally, we have to address what to do with the approximately 11.5 million people already living in the U.S. without legal status. Comprehensive Immigration Reform would...

3. Allow and require those currently present unlawfully to come forward, pay a fine, undergo a criminal background check and—except for those who have committed serious crimes, who would be deported—be granted probationary legal status. After several years in probationary status, they would be eligible for Lawful Permanent Resident status if they could demonstrate that they were contributing

to society, paying taxes, making efforts toward learning English and civics, and staying out of trouble.

Such a reform would avoid the extremes of either mass deportation—which would be extraordinarily costly (between $80 *billion*[190] and $200 *billion*[191] just to round everyone up and deport them, to say nothing of the much larger cost to our national economy of not having these individuals as workers and consumers in our economy) and would divide many families—or amnesty, which would simply forgive the offense of entering or overstaying unlawfully and, in the process, undermine the importance of the law.

While some commentators consider any policy that would grant legal status to any undocumented immigrants to be amnesty, the reform supported by most Christian leaders is distinct from amnesty—which is a synonym of grace, a free gift of forgiveness—in that it requires the payment of a penalty and strict criteria by which a once-undocumented immigrant could earn legal status. As Richard Land, head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has quipped, "Those who say that making someone pay a fine, get to the back of the line, learn English and take a civics class in order to get legal status is 'amnesty' need to take a remedial English class."[192]

Christian author Max Lucado calls this sort of proposal, including an ultimate pathway to citizenship for those who earn it, a "responsible, respectful, neighborly approach" to resolving our immigration problems.[193] Most Americans agree: 72% support these principles, according to a study by the Pew Research Forum, including a majority of respondents from both major political parties,[194] but Congress has not found the will to pass this sort of reform. That's because, legislators say, the calls and letters they get are most often from those strongly opposed to this sort of reform;[195] the majority who are supportive are too apathetic to make a telephone call or write a letter. Perhaps they view this as someone else's problem. As a result, we're left with the status quo. That's why it's so vital for U.S. citizens who want to love their neighbors to be good stewards of the rights and privileges entrustred to all citizens within this democracy.

Service

The Church has a unique opportunity to extend Christ's love in very practical ways to these immigrants, many of whom are amongst the most under-resourced individuals in our country. Many churches provide English as a Second Language classes, recognizing that learning English is a vital skill for those who want to succeed in the U.S. Others provide programs for those facing food insecurity, homework help and tutoring for kids whose parents may not understand English, or transportation for those who either cannot afford a car or are ineligible for a driver's license.

One huge need in the immigrant community is for legal services. Immigration attorneys often charge more than low-income immigrants can afford, and there are simply not enough authorized non-profit organizations to meet the demand for the many immigrants seeking to understand and, if possible, get right with the complex maze of U.S. immigration law. With adequate (and extensive) training, though, it is possible for a local church or other non-profit organization to become an authorized legal service provider, meeting this crucial need—and extending the love of Christ in the process.

Perhaps the greatest service that an individual within a local church can provide is simply friendship: for an individual who has left behind his or her family and community, finding someone who will love them, talk to them (and listen to them, patiently, as they learn a new language), and help them to adjust to a new culture can be an enormous ministry. In the process, many American citizen volunteers find that they also have a great deal to learn from their immigrant friends, and the relationship becomes one of mutuality.

Evangelism

As we advocate with and serve our immigrant neighbors, we have the opportunity to share the transformative hope of the gospel. While many immigrants arrive in the U.S. with a vibrant Christian faith, many others—including many from unreached people groups—will hear the good news of a relationship with Jesus Christ for the first time in the U.S. We have an incredible opportunity to "go and make disciples of all nations" without ever crossing a border.[196]

We can most effectively share the gospel by understanding the cultural and religious context from which our new neighbors come, and we would do well to look to the leadership of our brothers and sisters from those regions as we seek to effectively and sensitively present the hope of the gospel. We should also not be surprised to find that many immigrants—who tend to come from the Global South, where the Christian faith is more prevalent than it is here in the North[197]—will preach the gospel to us, too, and to the many native-born U.S. citizens who do not yet know the hope of a transformative relationship with Jesus.

"Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable." *Proverbs 31:8, CEB*

As we seek to see more and more immigrants become followers of Jesus, though, we also have to examine our attitudes. We cannot effectively convey the gospel message that Jesus loves and died for the immigrants we encounter if our words, actions, or support for particular policies lead immigrants to believe that we—the Church—hate them and want them as far from us as possible. Unfortunately, whether intentional or not, the rhetoric that some have used to talk about immigration has sent that message. As Southern Baptist theologian Russell Moore

notes, "It's horrifying to hear those identified with the gospel speak, whatever their position on the issues, with mean-spirited disdain for the immigrants themselves."[198]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Experience: Addressing the Root Causes

1. What ideas did you come up with for how you, as an individual or as a group, could help to address the root causes of poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation that lead people to immigrate? Discuss how you could put those ideas into action.

Prayer

2. How can your group encourage one another to be faithful in prayer?

Listening

3. What steps could you take to find more opportunities to hear the voices of the immigrants within your community?

Education

4. What could your group do to help educate others in your church and in the larger community about this issue?

Advocacy

5. What could your group do to influence the way that your Member of Congress and Senators vote on immigration issues?
6. What role, if any, do you think that your local church should take in public policy advocacy?

Service

7. What practical steps could you take to serve the immigrants in your community?

Evangelism

8. How do you think that the tone with which Christians discuss immigration affects the way that immigrants hear the gospel?

PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for God's guidance as you consider how you might respond to what you have learned over the past several sessions.
- Pray for your church, and for all the local churches across this country, that their response to immigration issues, and to immigrants themselves, would be grounded in God's love.
- Pray for your elected officials, that they would have God's wisdom as they consider various policy proposals and that they would have the courage to vote according to their consciences.
- Pray for local churches already actively engaged in ministry to and with immigrants, that God would use them powerfully to share Christ's love.

EXPERIENCE: COMMIT TO TAKE ACTION

To close this Learning Group, we want to encourage you to commit together to respond. Talk together, spend some time in prayer, and then write down below how you—as an individual or as a group—will respond:

With God's help I commit to... _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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GO DEEPER

- Online Resource: WelcomingTheStranger.com (www.welcomingthestranger.com)

  WelcomingTheStranger.com provides a plethora of resources for Christians seeking to understand the issue of immigration and to help others in their local churches and communities to learn about the issue, including online copies of this Learning Group guide, statements from key evangelical denominations and leaders, handouts, brochures, sermon guides, and adaptable presentations for Adult Education classes.

- Online Resource: G92 (www.G92.org)

  G92, which takes its name from the Old Testament's ninety-two references to the Hebrew *ger* (the immigrant), is a movement seeking to equip younger Christians, in particular, to respond to issues of immigration in ways consistent with biblical values. Its website includes a number of video resources, experiences, and a regularly updated blog, as well as information on various events.

- Organization: World Relief (www.worldrelief.org)

  World Relief works with local churches in various parts of the United States to serve refugees and other immigrants with resettlement assistance, immigration legal services, English classes, and many other vital services. They have lots of opportunities for churches, small groups, or individual volunteers to get involved.

Read through some of the following passages that might relate to immigration, either directly or indirectly. Look for common themes and think about how these principles might apply to the way that Christians should respond to issues of immigration today.

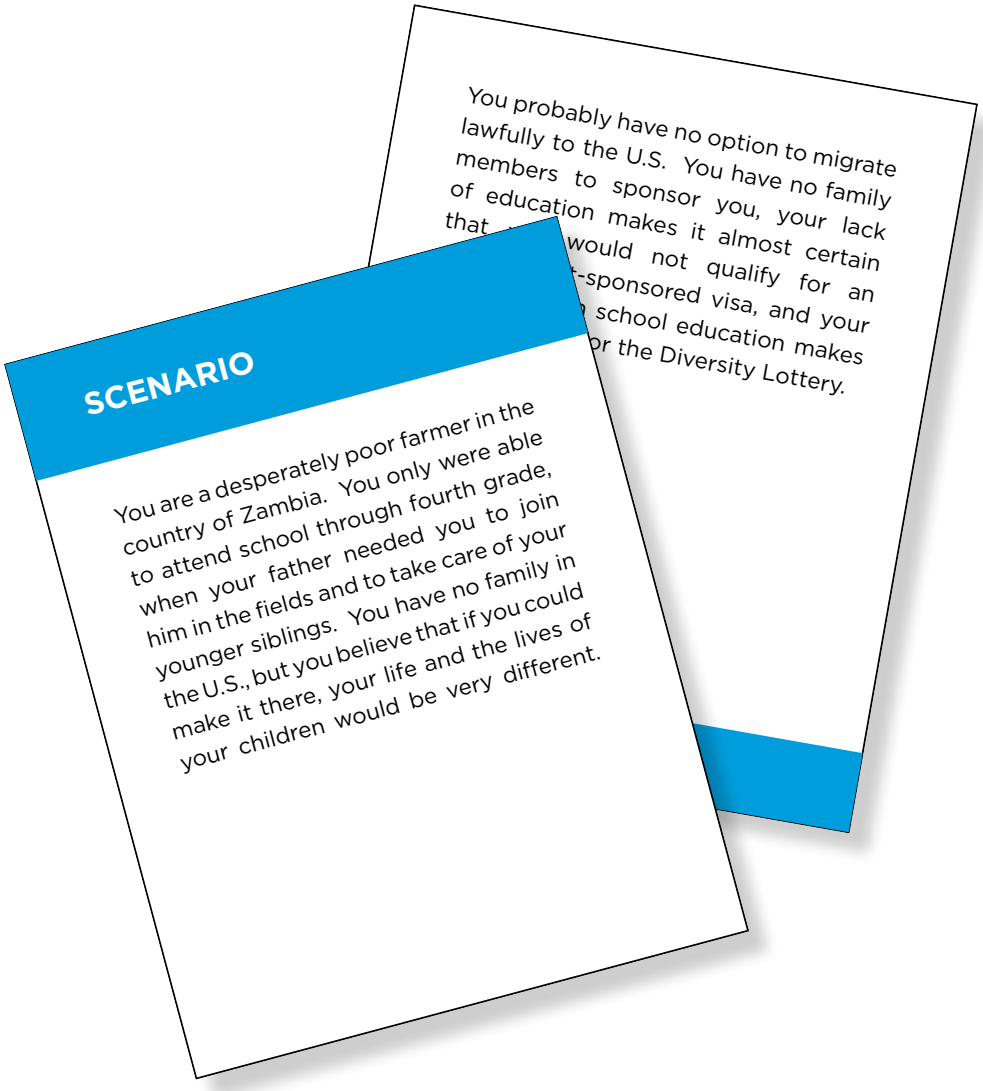
Genesis 1:26–27
Genesis 12:1–4
Genesis 12:10
Exodus 12:48-49
Exodus 18:3
Exodus 22:21
Exodus 23:9
Exodus 23:12
Leviticus 18:26
Leviticus 19:9-10
Leviticus 19:33-34
Leviticus 23:22
Leviticus 24:22
Leviticus 25:23
Numbers 9:14
Numbers 15:15-16
Numbers 15:29
Deuteronomy 1:16
Deuteronomy 10:18-19
Deuteronomy 24:14-18
Deuteronomy 24:19-21
Deuteronomy 26:12-13
Deuteronomy 27:19
Joshua 8:35
Joshua 20:9
1 Chronicles 29:14-16
Job 29:14-16
Psalm 39:12
Psalm 94:1-7
Psalm 146:9
Isaiah 14:1
Jeremiah 7:5-7
Jeremiah 22:3
Ezekiel 22:6-8
Ezekiel 22:29-30
Zechariah 7:10
Malachi 3:5
Matthew 2:13-14
Matthew 25:35-45
Luke 10:25-37
Acts 5:29
Acts 17:26-27
Romans 12:13-16
Romans 13:1-5
Galatians 3:28
Ephesians 2:11-22
Philippians 3:20
1 Timothy 3:1-3
1 Timothy 5:8
Hebrews 11:13-14
Hebrews 13:2
1 Peter 2:11
1 Peter 2:13-14
Revelation 7:9-10

For a more thorough analysis of what the Bible says about immigration, we recommend Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible *by M. Daniel Carroll R.(Baker Academic, 2008) as well as* Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate *by Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang (InterVarsity Press, 2009). For additional resources visit www.welcomingthestranger.com*

This experience is a simulation game. Cut out the 24 cards in the following pages: on the front side, each one provides you with a scenario. Imagine that you are the person described on the card who, for one reason or another, desires to immigrate to the United States.

Then, cut out and assemble the pages below into one large, complex flow chart. Try to navigate it to determine how you might be eligible to become an immigrant in the United States going through the legal channels. Your scenario may not give you all the information necessary to go through the flow chart; if the card does not supply the information needed to answer a question, you can make up a reasonable answer. If it's a frustrating and confusing process, know that this is actually a simplified, incomprehensive version of U.S. immigration law.

After you've done your best to work your way through the maze, turn the card over to see how well you did.



SCENARIO 1

You are a native of Mexico. You, your spouse, and your four kids all must live on your wages of about $8 per day, and you do not always have enough to eat. You have cousins in Los Angeles who are U.S. citizens, and they tell you that you could earn $8 per hour at a fast food restaurant near where they live. You have no other U.S. citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident relatives.

SCENARIO 2

You are a native of the Philippines. You have a high school education but no college degree. You have searched for months without a job and have found few options in your country. Your brother, Ernesto, went to the United States on an employment based visa as a nurse five years ago and now has his green card.

SCENARIO 3

You are a native of Canada. You recently earned your Ph.D. in chemical engineering, and a corporation in Seattle has offered you a job. You have no family in the U.S.

SCENARIO 4

You are a native of Nicaragua. You just graduated from college but still the best job you can find pays the equivalent of $1,500 per year, barely enough to get by. Your parents went to the United States in the 1980s fleeing political violence and were granted asylum, and they are now citizens, but they left you behind with your grandmother and have never previously petitioned for you. You're 22 years old and single.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. If your brother becomes a citizen—which in most cases is possible five years after he was granted his green card—he could file a petition on your behalf, but petitions for siblings of U.S. citizens are currently being processed at the U.S. Consulate in Manila after a wait of about twenty-three years.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. Your family members are ineligible to sponsor you, and, if you are earning $8 per day, you almost certainly are not "highly-skilled" enough to qualify for a work-based visa. There is no Diversity Visa Lottery for Mexico.

Your best option is probably that one or both of your parents file a family petition on your behalf. At present, the U.S. Consulate in Managua is processing cases filed eight years ago, so you can expect to wait quite a while.

You are a good candidate for an employment-based visa. Presuming that the employer who has offered you a job is willing to spend the money and time necessary to sponsor you, you will likely be able to come to the United States. You will probably have to get a temporary work visa initially—and that may not be possible immediately, as there are limited numbers for these visas as well—but eventually it should be possible, and you may then eventually be able to get a green card and, five years after that, citizenship should you choose.

SCENARIO 5

You are a forty-five year old woman living in Poland. Your twenty-two year old daughter, unable to find work, left Poland four years ago on a tourist visa; she married an American citizen and, three years later, has now become a U.S. citizen herself. You're struggling to find work in Poland, and are interested in living in the United States along with your husband and your fourteen-year-old son.

SCENARIO 6

You are a native of Mexico. You have a high school education, but you've worked very hard and grown a successful business in Michoacán. You now earn $15,000 per year—enough to comfortably support you, your spouse, and your two daughters. You love your country, but in the last few years, it has become much more dangerous to live in Mexico, as drug cartels and gangs seem more powerful than the government in some parts of the country. You've been told twice that if you didn't provide a bribe of $5,000 to a local drug-lord, your daughters would be killed. Scared, you complied—but you can't afford to keep living like this. Your brother-in-law lives in Chicago, and tells you that you'd be safe there.

SCENARIO 7

You are a native of Benin in West Africa. You have had no formal education and survive on less than $1 per day as a subsistence farmer. This year, there has been less rain than in the past, and your crops are barely surviving. Your entire extended family lives in your village. You left last year to go to the capital city and find work, but the situation wasn't much better than in your little village. You're desperate for any opportunity, and don't feel any option other than getting out.

SCENARIO 8

You are a native of Ireland and completed high school there. You had a factory job for the past twenty years that provided a decent wage, but that factory has recently closed and relocated to Cambodia. You've spent two years applying for jobs and have not found any stable work. Last year, your distant relatives from Boston came on a vacation to Ireland and met you, and they told you about the company they own in Boston, producing candy wrappers.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. Your fear of persecution is not on account of your race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, so you would not qualify for refugee or asylee status. Your brother-in-law cannot file a petition on your behalf. (If your sister is also there and is a U.S. citizen, she may be able to do so, but the wait time will probably be at least fifteen years).

Your daughter, now a U.S. citizen, could file a petition on your behalf and you should be able to enter the United States as a Lawful Permanent Resident within six months to two years, presuming that you've not done anything that would make you inadmissible (such as committing crimes, having a contagious disease, having ever been previously present in the U.S. without legal status, etc.) Presuming that your husband is also your daughter's father, he should be able to come through the same process, but you'll have to leave your son behind. At earliest, if you petition for him as soon as you arrive, he may be able to come in about three years.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. As an Irish citizen, you could visit the United States without the need of a visa through the "visa waiver" program, but it would be unlawful for you to work or stay permanently. It would be extremely unlikely that your relatives' company could successfully obtain an employment-based visa for you, since your potential job is considered "low-skilled." You could enter the Diversity Lottery online; your odds of winning are approximately 1 in 300.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. You do not meet the qualifications of a "highly-skilled" immigrant so as to be sponsored by an employer, and you have no family members who are U.S. citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents. Without a high school degree, you are also ineligible for the Diversity Lottery.

SCENARIO 9

You are a native of the Dominican Republican and a single mother of three children, aged fourteen, sixteen, and nineteen. Two years ago, while selling jewelry in the market, you met a nice US citizen who was on a cruise that stopped off in several places in the Caribbean. He seems like a genuinely nice guy, and you've stayed in touch via email. Eventually, you agree to marry him, so he flies down and you have a wedding ceremony.

SCENARIO 10

You are a native of Haiti. You are twenty years old and just got married. Your mother went unlawfully to Miami on a boat ten years ago and is still there, out of legal status, and sending you money occasionally. Your father—who was never married to your mother—went several years earlier, married a U.S. citizen, and was somehow able to obtain a green card in 1999. He is still a Lawful Permanent Resident. Now, after the earthquake in Port Au Prince, your home (built with the money your parents sent over many years) has been destroyed, and you're living in your wife's parents' one-bedroom home with six other people. You have only a primary education.

SCENARIO 11

You are a native of Cuba. You live on a minimal salary and have to use the black market to operate an illegal restaurant out of your house. You have cousins in New Jersey who have become very successful and who are now U.S. citizens, but no other U.S. citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident relatives. You have a high school degree.

SCENARIO 12

You are a native of Venezuela. You are in an abusive marriage, and you are afraid that your husband's physical and emotional abuse will never end. You have only a high school education, but you do have a sister in New Orleans.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. If your father is able to naturalize, and if he can prove a strong father-child relationship with you (since you were born out of wedlock), you may eventually be able to come. At present, the wait time for a married child of a U.S. citizen from Haiti is about nine years, and the good news is that your spouse would get to come with you at the same time (and any children you may have by that time, so long as they remain unmarried and under 21 years old). If you cannot prove that you ever had much of a relationship with your father, because he abandoned you shortly after your birth and never supported you financially, you will not qualify as his child even after he naturalizes. Haitian nationals are not eligible to apply for the Diversity Lottery, and with only a primary education you are very unlikely to qualify for an employer-sponsored visa.

As the spouse of a U.S. citizen, your husband can file a petition on your behalf so that you can live permanently in the United States with him. He can also file petitions for your fourteen- and sixteen-year-old children. However, he does not legally qualify as the stepfather of your nineteen-year-old son, since that child was over 18 years old when you were married. If you want your nineteen-year-old to come, your only option is to petition for him once you arrive in the U.S.—but it will likely take at least eight years under current law, and he should be informed that if he marries during that wait time, the petition will die. Also—as a warning—you should perhaps be suspicious of marrying someone whom you do not know well: many cases of human trafficking or marriages plagued by domestic abuse start like this.

You may be eligible to immigrate through your sister, eventually, but only if she is a U.S. citizen. If not, you probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. If she is a citizen, she can file a petition, but the U.S. consulate in Caracas is currently processing these sort of petitions only if filed eleven years ago or earlier, so this is not going to happen quickly. You could also enter the Diversity Lottery; your odds of winning are about 1 in 300.

You probably would have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law—except for that you're Cuban, and the U.S. treats Cubans very differently than folks of other nationalities. If you can manage to get to the United States—on a boat or, as a safer option, flying to Mexico and then reaching the U.S. border— you will be paroled in and eligible for a green card one year later.

SCENARIO 13

You are a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Your village has been devastated by war. You live in complete poverty and have never been to school, though you are now twenty-five years old. You subsist by selling pirated DVDs along the busy streets of your city. Your father fled to Tanzania three years ago and recently was accepted as a refugee to go to the United States, where he now has refugee status.

SCENARIO 14

You are a native of Rwanda. You come from a well-off family and were able to go to college in India. You've just returned to Rwanda, but your father was recently imprisoned, ostensibly because he committed a crime but actually because of his ethnicity. You apply to and are accepted to a Master's Program at a university in Chicago, but they have not offered you a significant scholarship, and at this point you only have $5,000 of savings.

SCENARIO 15

You are a native of Mexico and a member of a very prominent family in Mexican society. Your father owns seven car dealerships in Mexico City and is a multi-millionaire. You've got an inherited investment portfolio presently worth $5 million dollars, and think that if you invested that money in a car dealership in the U.S. that you could get a better return that in Mexico. You have no family members in the U.S., though you do have a tourist visa.

SCENARIO 16

You are a native of China. You recently finished a Master's Degree in Computer Engineering, and you speak English fairly well. You have found a job in your country, but the pay is a fraction of what you hear you could make in the United States. You have a husband and three kids whom you're primarily supporting, so you've tried to find a job in the United States, but with no success so far. You have no relatives in the United States.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law, but you might be able to obtain a temporary student visa if you can show that you have at least the first year's tuition in cash. Once you arrive, though, you should be aware that you will have very limited work authorization—not enough to earn the amount of tuition needed for a Master's Degree, and you will not be eligible for any federal financial aid or student loans. You could also enter the Diversity Lottery; your odds of winning are about 1 in 300.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law, unless you can convince the United Nations to accept you as a refugee—which cannot happen while you are living in the country of persecution. If you go to a third country, you might be designated as a refugee, but your odds of being resettled to the United States where your father is are still slim. Since you are older than 21 years old, your father cannot submit a petition for you at this time, though perhaps he could once he is able to become a Lawful Permanent Resident; the wait would then likely be at least eight years, and if you marry during that time it would terminate the petition.

Your best option is to try to find an employer in the United States who is willing to sponsor you; if you could find the employer, you may be eligible as a highly-skilled immigrant for an employment-based visa. You will likely need to accept a temporary work visa initially, but could eventually be eligible for a green card if you can maintain employment long enough. Then again, finding a job offer when the economy is down in the U.S. might prove very difficult—there are plenty of unemployed folks in the U.S. looking for jobs, so why would an employer spend the time and money necessary to petition for you?

You're in a good position—you are probably eligible for an investor visa, which is an employment-based visa for investors. You need to invest at least $1 million in the U.S. and employ several U.S. citizens, but you should be eligible for a green card (presuming that you have not committed crimes or done anything else that would render you inadmissible).

SCENARIO 17

You are a native of Pakistan. Your sister lives in the United States and recently became a U.S. citizen. With the violence that is increasing in your country, you worry that you are not safe, and you have an idea for a business to start. You have a college education, but very little money.

SCENARIO 18

You are a native of Slovakia. You've never known your father and your mother went on a tourist visa to the United States twenty years ago, at a time when she was struggling to support you. She has never returned because of her undocumented status in the U.S. She works as a cleaning lady for $70 a day. Over the years has saved up a good amount of money, and has bought a house, and paid for your school fees and housing from abroad. (You graduated from high school). She has not seen you since you were twelve years old and wants desperately for you to come to the United States—she says that if she deposits enough money into your savings account, you might be able to get a tourist visa. You would be more than willing to leave your job as a waitress, which you don't enjoy much anyway.

SCENARIO 19

You are a native of Burma. As an ethnic minority and a Christian, you were persecuted by the dictatorial military government of Burma/Myanmar. You only completed primary school before you were forced to flee your village. Eventually, you fled to Thailand, but there you are forced to live in camps; there is no work, you can never become a citizen, and, though you're safer than you used to be, your life is very difficult. You have no family connections in the United States.

SCENARIO 20

You are a native of Honduras. You have a fourth grade education. Your four children have all migrated illegally to the United States, though two migrated prior to 1982 and were granted legal status through the "amnesty" signed by President Reagan in 1986. They are now U.S. citizens. You are too old to work and too old to learn English, but you are lonely without your family.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law. If you are able to obtain a tourist visa, you could potentially enter the United States, but if you stayed more than six months or worked at all in the U.S. you would be violating the law. You would also qualify to enter the Diversity Lottery, but your odds of winning are about 1 in 300.

Your best option is probably through your U.S. citizen sister, but under current law you should expect to wait at least ten years before you would be eligible to come to the United States. Your good ideas alone will almost certainly not be sufficient in themselves to earn you an employment-based visa; if you could find an employer willing to hire you, you might be able to qualify as a highly-skilled immigrant, but your odds would be much better with a more advanced degree. Pakistani nationals are not eligible to apply for the Diversity Lottery.

One of your U.S. citizen children should be eligible to file a petition on your behalf, and you should be able to enter the United States in between six months and two years, presuming that you've never been there unlawfully previously, committed any crimes, or done anything else that would render you inadmissible.

You probably have no option to migrate lawfully to the United States under current law, unless you are fortunate enough to be designated as a refugee. Many Karen refugees from camps in Thailand have been resettled in recent years, so this may be a possibility. Still, the majority have not been resettled, so your odds are not good. Your lack of a high school education makes you ineligible to apply for the Diversity Lottery.

SCENARIO 21

You are a native of Honduras. You came to the United States on a tourist visa as a small child with your parents, but did not return to Honduras when your visa expired. You went through elementary and secondary school in Georgia, where you met your boyfriend, Tom. After high school, you understood what it meant that you were undocumented when you found out that, without a valid Social Security card, you were ineligible for any federal financial aid; you thus had to decline your admission offers to college. It was impossible to find a job without using a fraudulent Social Security card, which you prefer not to do. At age 19, you returned to Honduras, hoping to find work there. Having been there for six months, though, you haven't found good work yet. Tom came recently to visit and asked you to marry him; you agreed, and recently were lawfully married.

SCENARIO 22

You are a seventeen-year-old girl living in Jamaica. Your sister, a U.S.. citizen who was born in the U.S. prior to your birth, sponsored your parents to come to the U.S. as Lawful Permanent Residents. You are about to finish high school, but cannot afford to continue on to college, and you are very lonely since your parents left to go to the U.S.

SCENARIO 23

You are a university student in Chile. Last year, an American student named Shauna began attending your church when she was studying abroad in Santiago for a year. Over the course of the year, you fell in love and, before she left, you proposed to her. She said yes, and now you want to get married near her home in Baltimore next year.

SCENARIO 24

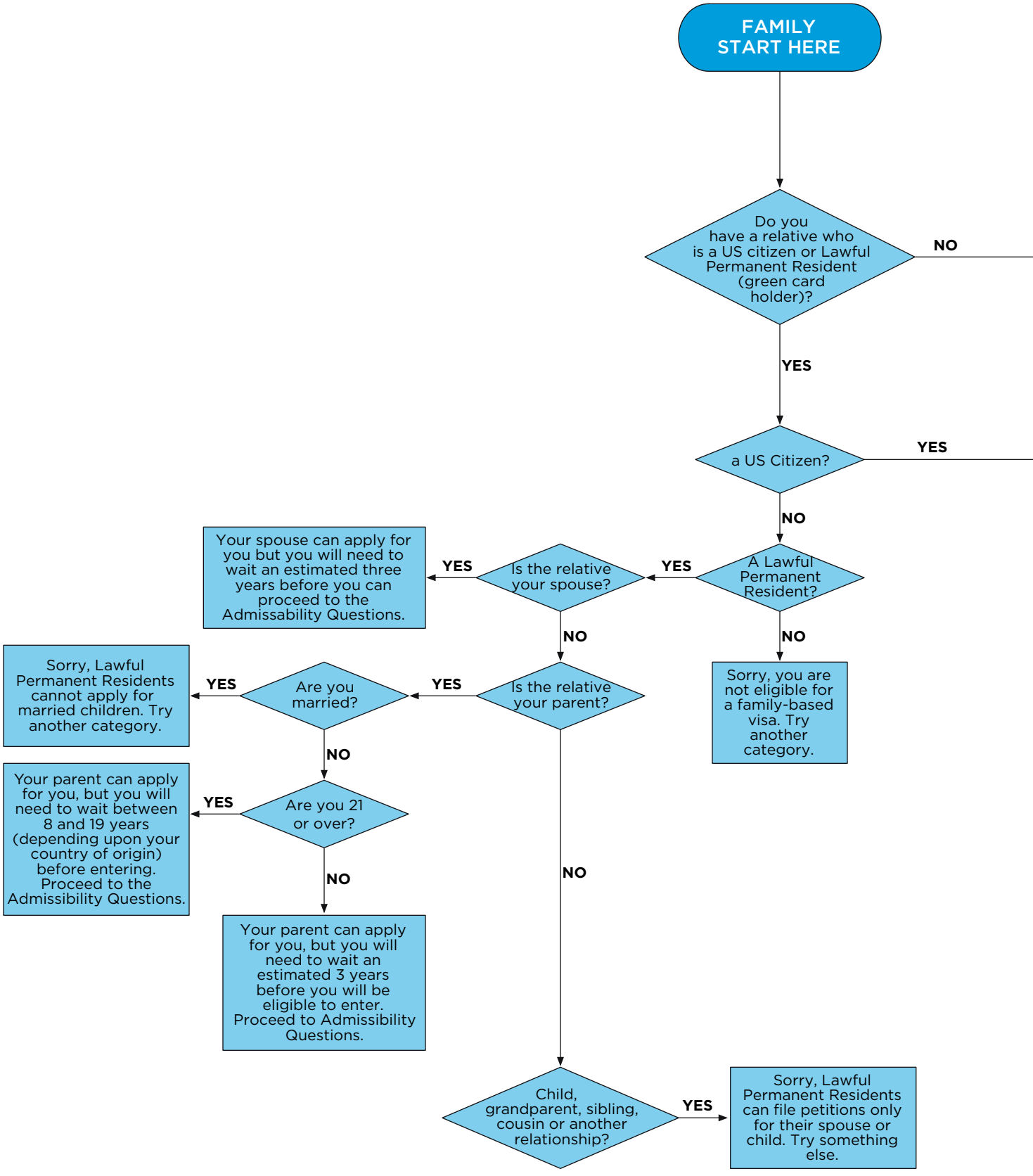
You are a citizen of Thailand. You met your husband, George, when he was working as a missionary in your country many years ago. You have now been married for nearly twenty years and have two children. You came to the United States once previously during a two-year long furlough for your husband, and were granted a green card. With that green card, you received a driver's license and even registered to vote while you were at the Department of Motor Vehicles. You've now been back in Thailand for a decade, but you would like to retire in the United States, where your children now live.

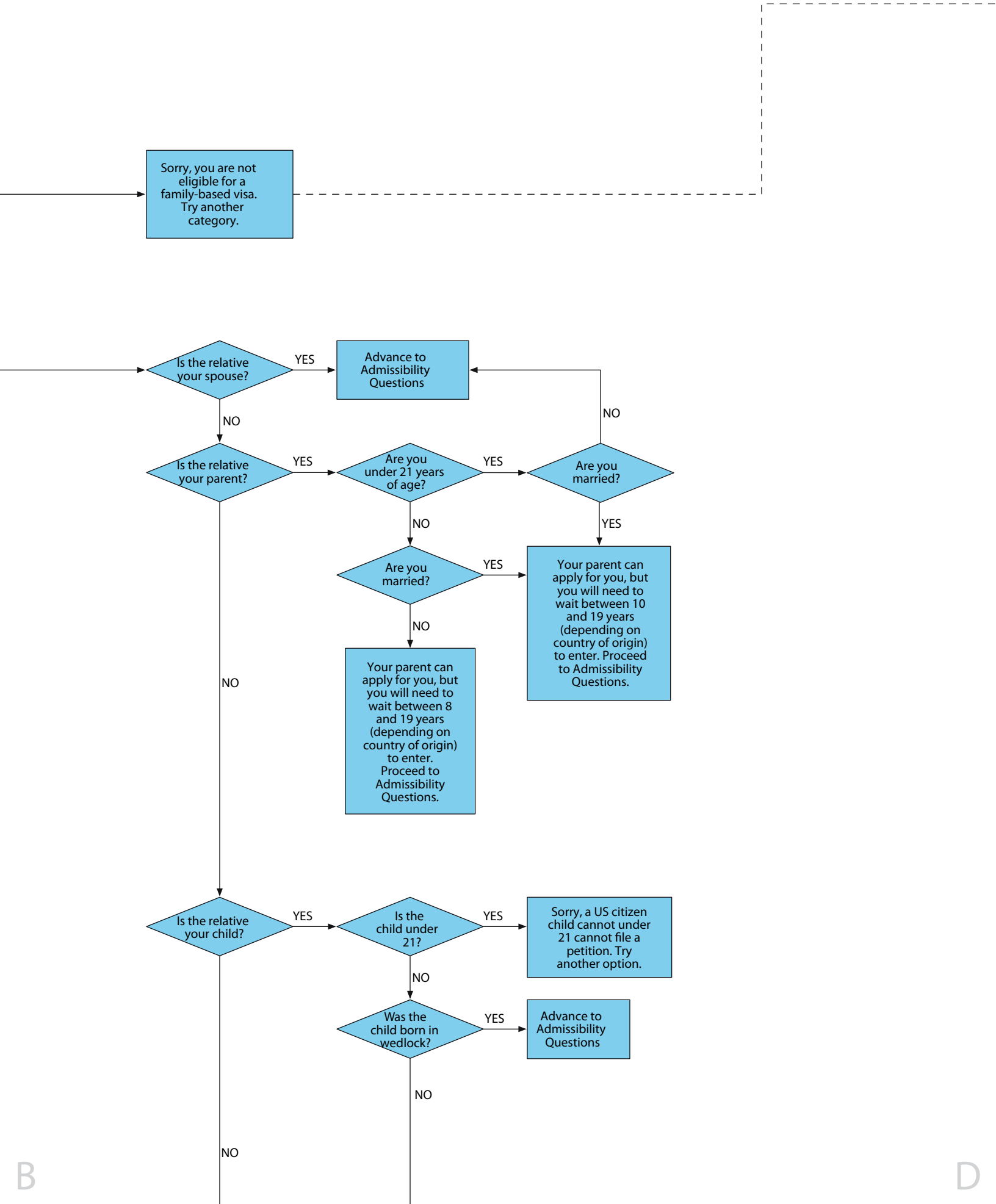
Your sister can also file a petition for you. Whereas your parents were considered Immediate Relatives under the law and able to enter the U.S. just eight months after the petition was filed, though, the State Department is currently adjudicating cases for siblings of U.S. citizens only if they were filed at least ten years ago, so you will have a long wait. If your mother or father filed a petition for you as Lawful Permanent Resident, it would be about a three to four year wait. If you turn twenty-one before the visa becomes available, though, you may "age out" and move into the category of adult children of Lawful Permanent Residents, for which the wait time is about eight years. And if you marry while that petition is pending (and before your sponsoring parent has naturalized), your petition will die. The Diversity Visa Lottery is not an option for Jamaican nationals, and with a high school degree only you're very unlikely to be eligible for an employer-based visa.

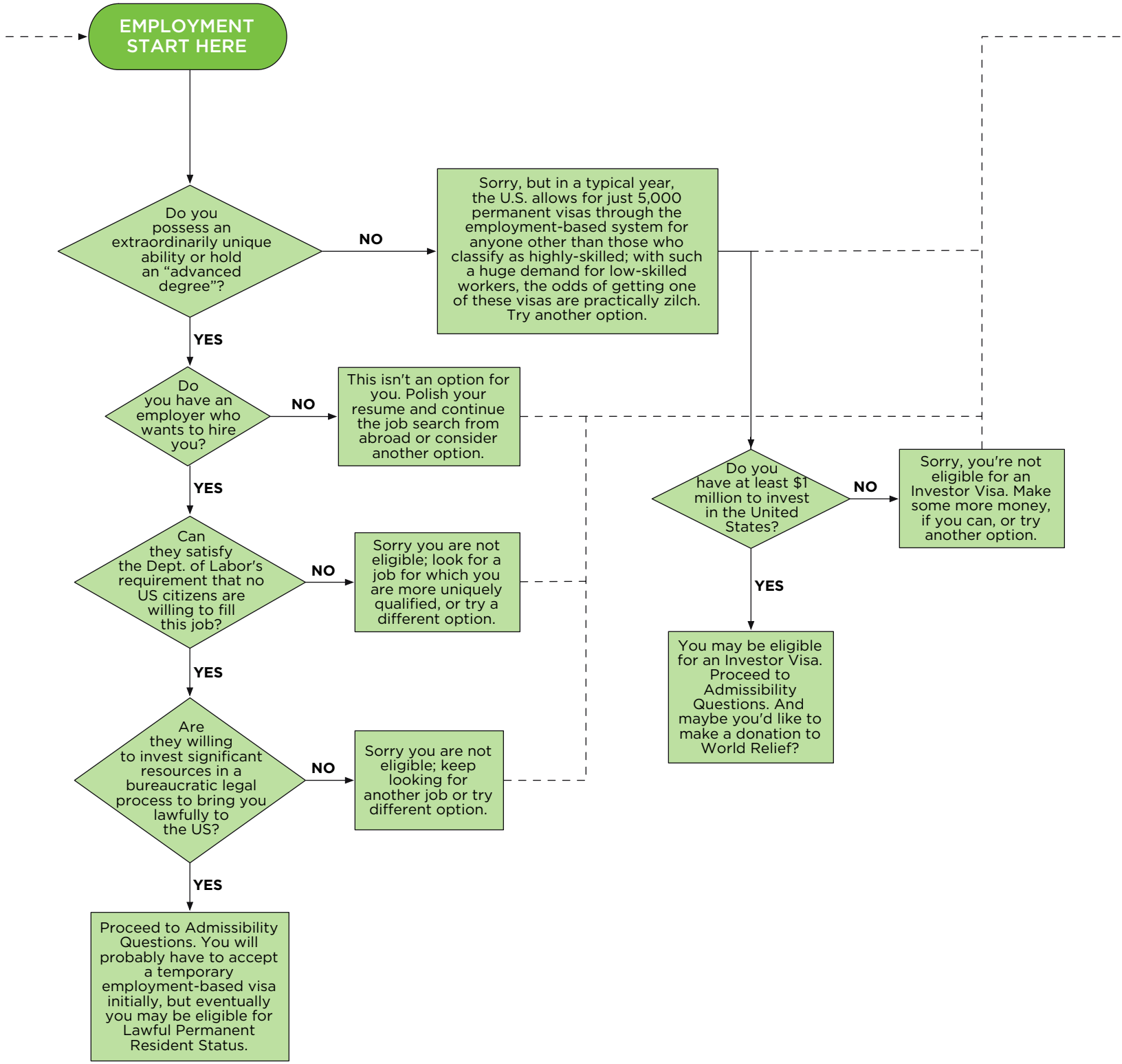
As the spouse of a U.S. citizen, your husband can petition for you and you will be eligible for your visa appointment in about six months to one year. But, because you have previously been unlawfully in the U.S. for more than one year after your 18th birthday, you are barred from entry to the United States for ten years from the time that you last departed. Your only hope is for the U.S. Consulate to grant you a waiver, if you prove that the decision to bar you from entry would cause "extreme hardship" to Tom, your U.S. citizen husband. That might seem obvious—living apart from your spouse for ten years would be "extremely hard"—but the majority of these waiver requests are denied in Tegucigalpa, so your odds are not good. After the ten year wait, though (if you're still married), you should be eligible to return to the U.S. (Employment-based visas or Diversity Lottery visas, if you could obtain them, would still face the ten-year bar because of your past unlawful presence).

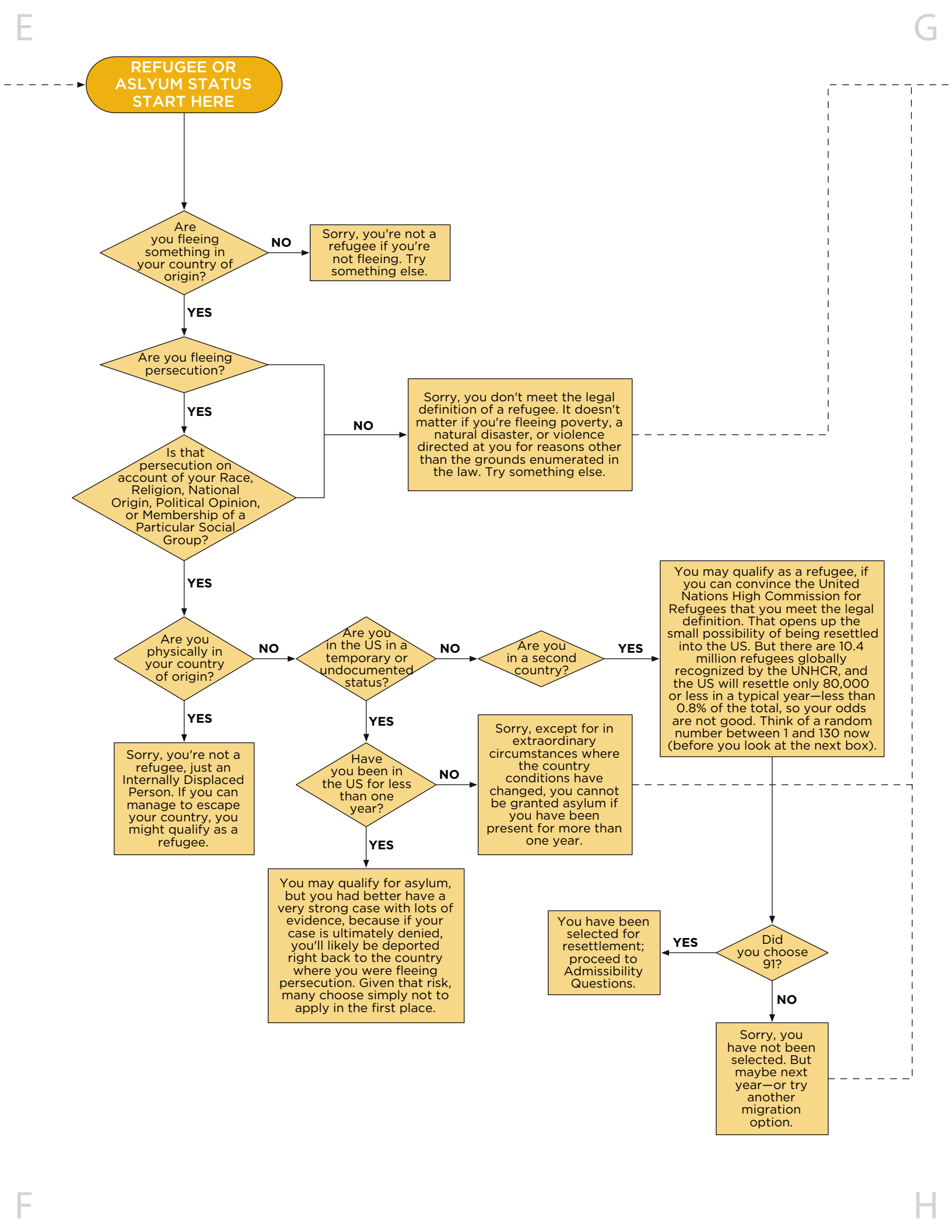
You probably abandoned your Lawful Permanent Residence granted with your first green card by staying abroad for many years in Thailand without returning to the U.S., but your husband could file a new petition for you and you should be eligible to enter within six months to one year as the spouse of a U.S. citizen... but the fact that you registered to vote while you were here last most likely implies that you signed a form, whether or not you understood it, that claimed that you were a U.S. citizen. That false statement, whether intentional or not, renders you permanently inadmissible to the U.S.

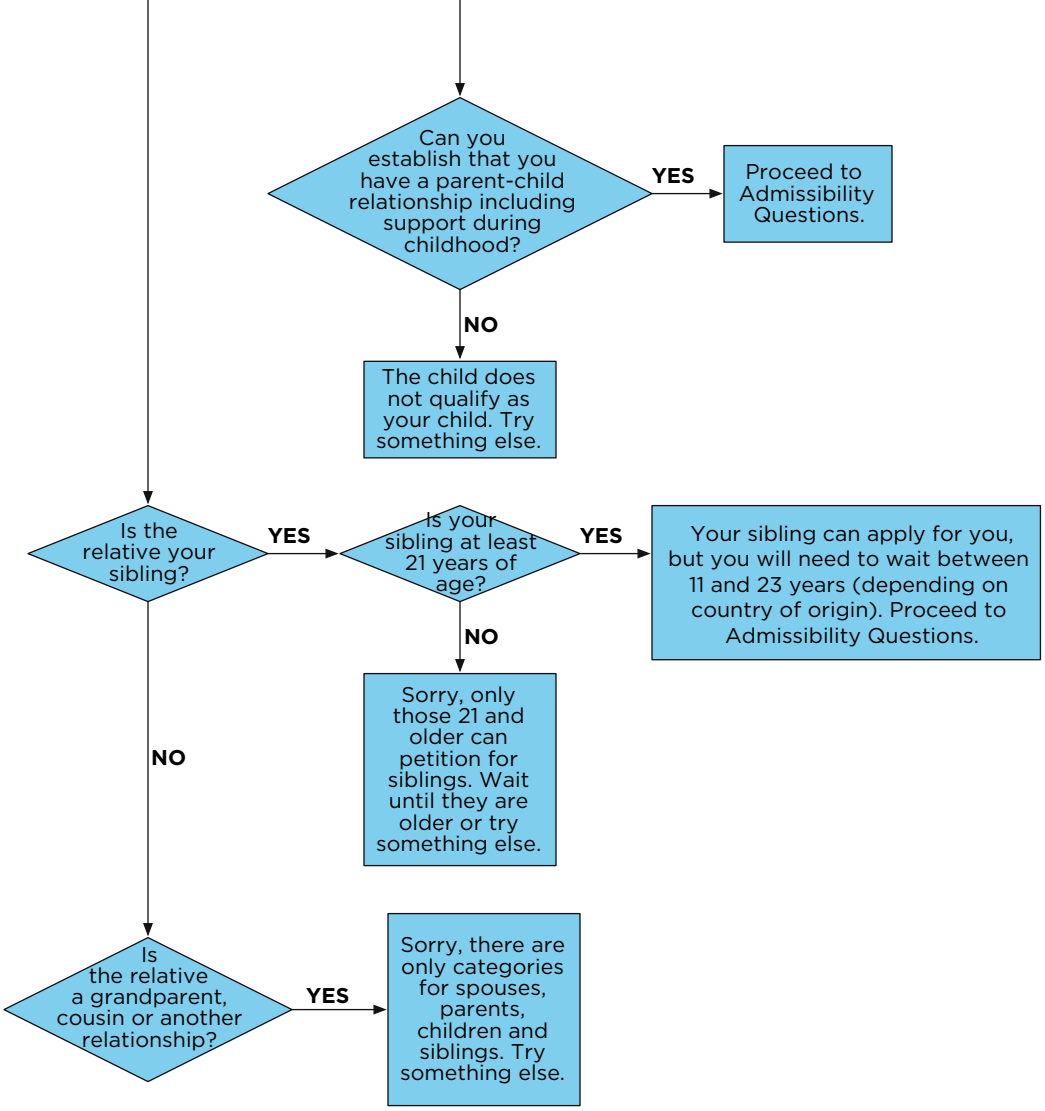
Presuming that you do not have a criminal history or any other problems that might render you inadmissible, your fiancée should be able to apply for a non-immigrant fiancée visa for you, allowing you to enter the United States. From there, once you are legally married, she can file for your green card, and it should arrive within six months to one year.

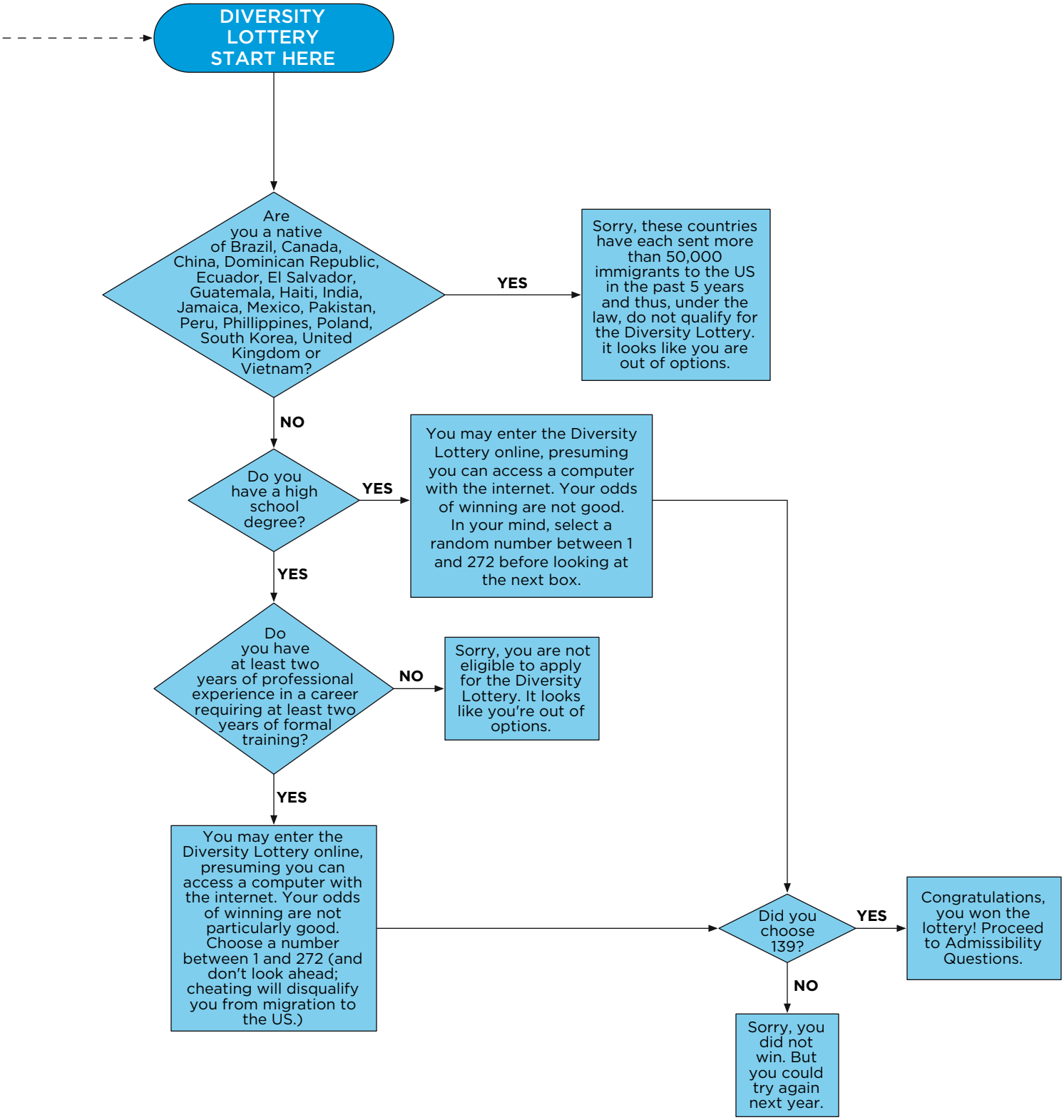

FAMILY START HERE
Do you have a relative who is a US citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident (green card holder)?
NO
YES
a US Citizen?
YES
NO
A Lawful Permanent Resident?
YES
Is the relative your spouse?
YES
Your spouse can apply for you but you will need to wait an estimated three years before you can proceed to the Admissability Questions.
NO
NO
Sorry, you are not eligible for a family-based visa. Try another category.
Is the relative your parent?
YES
Are you married?
YES
Sorry, Lawful Permanent Residents cannot apply for married children. Try another category.
NO
Are you 21 or over?
YES
Your parent can apply for you, but you will need to wait between 8 and 19 years (depending upon your country of origin) before entering. Proceed to the Admissibility Questions.
NO
Your parent can apply for you, but you will need to wait an estimated 3 years before you will be eligible to enter. Proceed to Admissibility Questions.
NO
Child, grandparent, sibling, cousin or another relationship?
YES
Sorry, Lawful Permanent Residents can file petitions only for their spouse or child. Try something else.

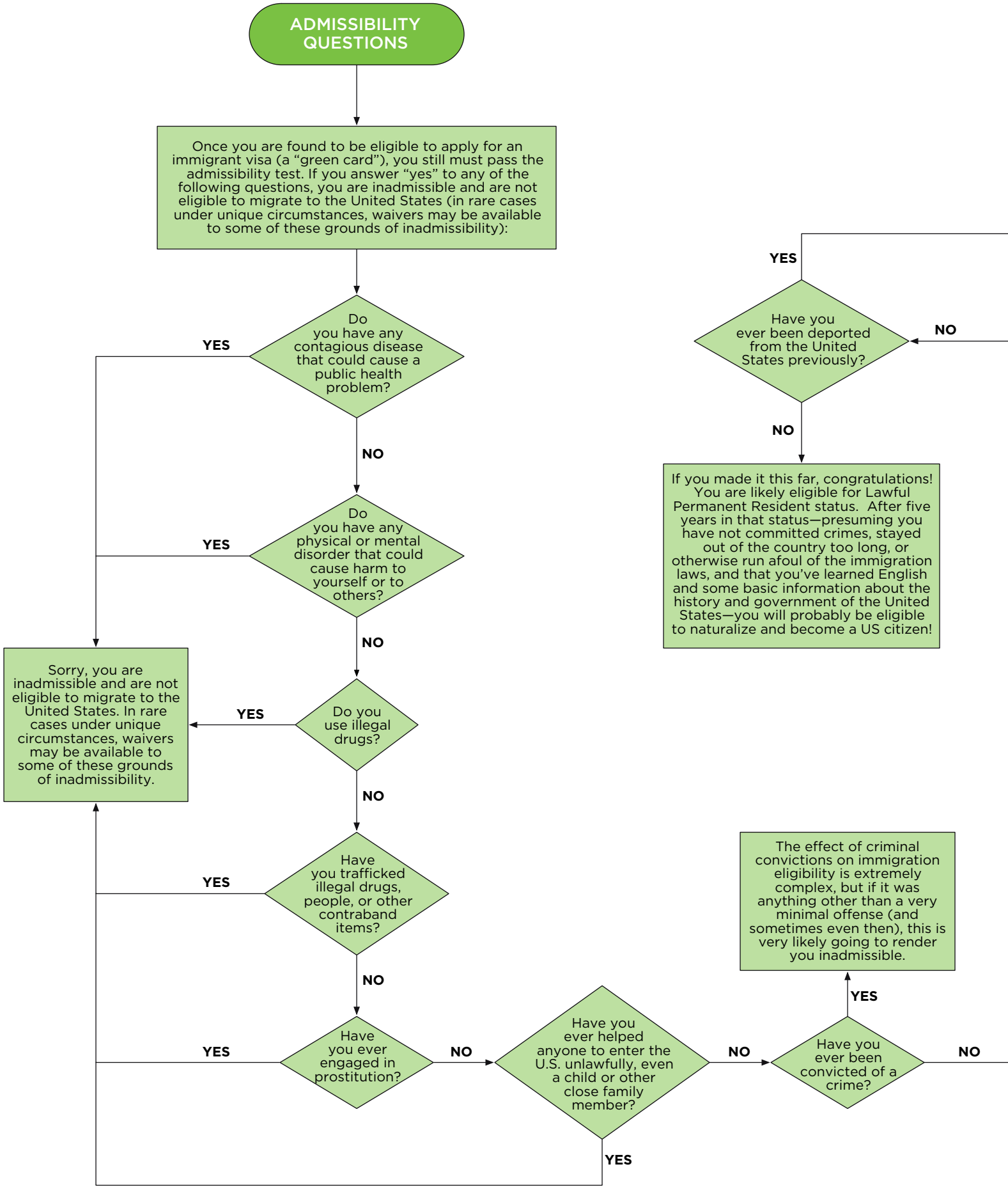

Sorry, you are not eligible for a family-based visa. Try another category.
Is the relative your spouse?
YES
Advance to Admissibility Questions
NO
Is the relative your parent?
YES
Are you under 21 years of age?
YES
Are you married?
NO
YES
Are you married?
YES
Your parent can apply for you, but you will need to wait between 10 and 19 years (depending on country of origin) to enter. Proceed to Admissibility Questions.
NO
Your parent can apply for you, but you will need to wait between 8 and 19 years (depending on country of origin) to enter. Proceed to Admissibility Questions.
NO
Is the relative your child?
YES
Is the child under 21?
YES
Sorry, a US citizen child cannot under 21 cannot file a petition. Try another option.
NO
Was the child born in wedlock?
YES
Advance to Admissibility Questions
NO
NO

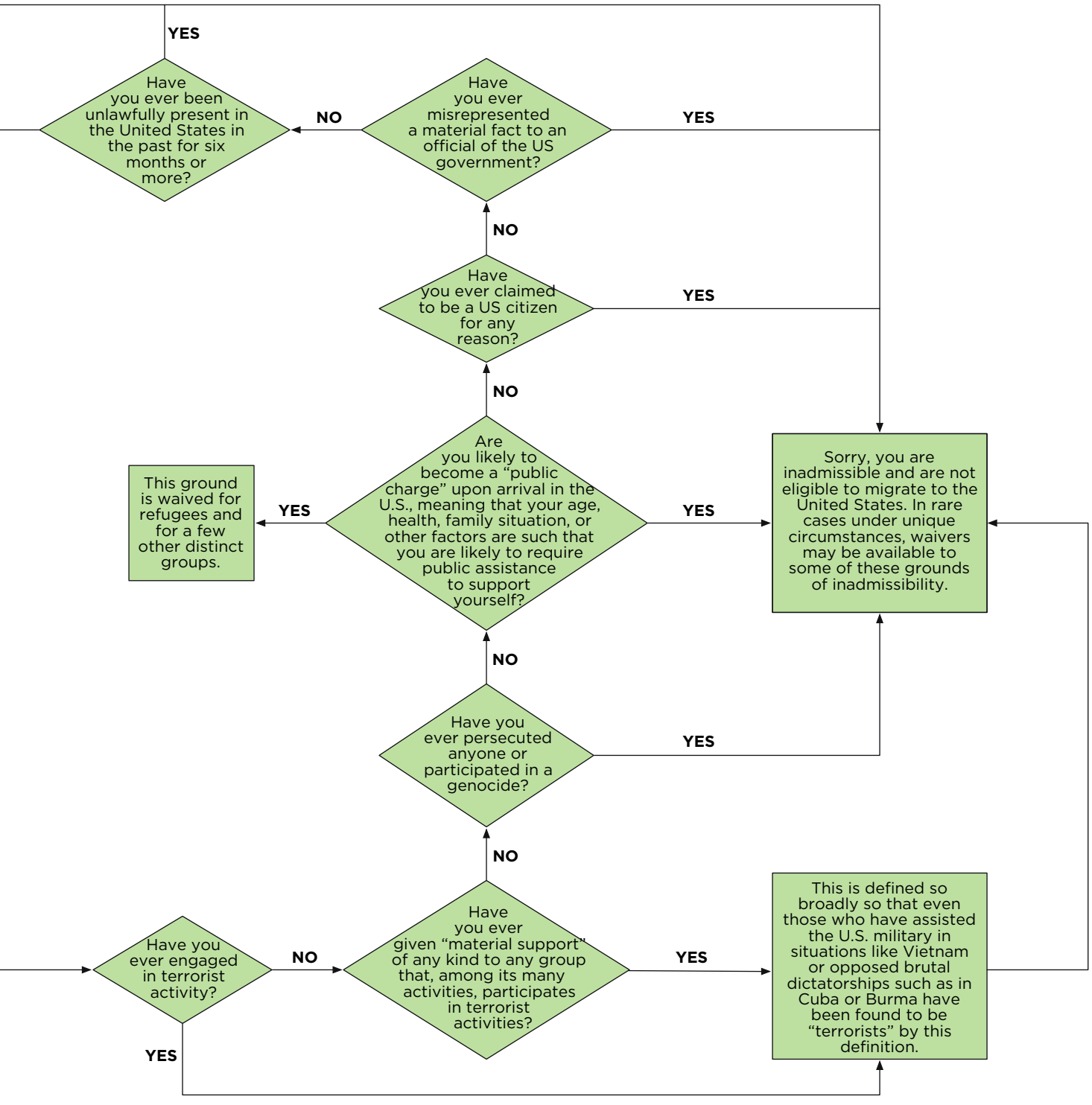

EMPLOYMENT START HERE
Do you possess an extraordinarily unique ability or hold an "advanced degree"?
NO
Sorry, but in a typical year, the U.S. allows for just 5,000 permanent visas through the employment-based system for anyone other than those who classify as highly-skilled; with such a huge demand for low-skilled workers, the odds of getting one of these visas are practically zilch. Try another option.
YES
Do you have an employer who wants to hire you?
NO
This isn't an option for you. Polish your resume and continue the job search from abroad or consider another option.
YES
Can they satisfy the Dept. of Labor's requirement that no US citizens are willing to fill this job?
NO
Sorry you are not eligible; look for a job for which you are more uniquely qualified, or try a different option.
YES
Are they willing to invest significant resources in a bureaucratic legal process to bring you lawfully to the US?
NO
Sorry you are not eligible; keep looking for another job or try different option.
YES
Proceed to Admissibility Questions. You will probably have to accept a temporary employment-based visa initially, but eventually you may be eligible for Lawful Permanent Resident Status.
Do you have at least $1 million to invest in the United States?
NO
Sorry, you're not eligible for an Investor Visa. Make some more money, if you can, or try another option.
YES
You may be eligible for an Investor Visa. Proceed to Admissibility Questions. And maybe you'd like to make a donation to World Relief?


REFUGEE OR ASLYUM STATUS START HERE
Are you fleeing something in your country of origin?
NO
Sorry, you're not a refugee if you're not fleeing. Try something else.
YES
Are you fleeing persecution?
YES
NO
Sorry, you don't meet the legal definition of a refugee. It doesn't matter if you're fleeing poverty, a natural disaster, or violence directed at you for reasons other than the grounds enumerated in the law. Try something else.
Is that persecution on account of your Race, Religion, National Origin, Political Opinion, or Membership of a Particular Social Group?
YES
Are you physically in your country of origin?
NO
Are you in the US in a temporary or undocumented status?
NO
Are you in a second country?
YES
You may qualify as a refugee, if you can convince the United Nations High Commission for Refugees that you meet the legal definition. That opens up the small possibility of being resettled into the US. But there are 10.4 million refugees globally recognized by the UNHCR, and the US will resettle only 80,000 or less in a typical year—less than 0.8% of the total, so your odds are not good. Think of a random number between 1 and 130 now (before you look at the next box).
YES
Sorry, you're not a refugee, just an Internally Displaced Person. If you can manage to escape your country, you might qualify as a refugee.
YES
Have you been in the US for less than one year?
NO
Sorry, except for in extraordinary circumstances where the country conditions have changed, you cannot be granted asylum if you have been present for more than one year.
YES
You may qualify for asylum, but you had better have a very strong case with lots of evidence, because if your case is ultimately denied, you'll likely be deported right back to the country where you were fleeing persecution. Given that risk, many choose simply not to apply in the first place.
Did you choose 91?
YES
You have been selected for resettlement; proceed to Admissibility Questions.
NO
Sorry, you have not been selected. But maybe next year—or try another migration option.


Can you establish that you have a parent-child relationship including support during childhood?
YES
Proceed to Admissibility Questions.
NO
The child does not qualify as your child. Try something else.
Is the relative your sibling?
YES
Is your sibling at least 21 years of age?
YES
Your sibling can apply for you, but you will need to wait between 11 and 23 years (depending on country of origin). Proceed to Admissibility Questions.
NO
Sorry, only those 21 and older can petition for siblings. Wait until they are older or try something else.
NO
Is the relative a grandparent, cousin or another relationship?
YES
Sorry, there are only categories for spouses, parents, children and siblings. Try something else.


DIVERSITY LOTTERY START HERE
Are you a native of Brazil, Canada, China, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Phillippines, Poland, South Korea, United Kingdom or Vietnam?
YES
Sorry, these countries have each sent more than 50,000 immigrants to the US in the past 5 years and thus, under the law, do not qualify for the Diversity Lottery. it looks like you are out of options.
NO
Do you have a high school degree?
YES
You may enter the Diversity Lottery online, presuming you can access a computer with the internet. Your odds of winning are not good. In your mind, select a random number between 1 and 272 before looking at the next box.
YES
Do you have at least two years of professional experience in a career requiring at least two years of formal training?
NO
Sorry, you are not eligible to apply for the Diversity Lottery. It looks like you're out of options.
YES
You may enter the Diversity Lottery online, presuming you can access a computer with the internet. Your odds of winning are not particularly good. Choose a number between 1 and 272 (and don't look ahead; cheating will disqualify you from migration to the US.)
Did you choose 139?
YES
Congratulations, you won the lottery! Proceed to Admissibility Questions.
NO
Sorry, you did not win. But you could try again next year.


ADMISSIBILITY QUESTIONS
Once you are found to be eligible to apply for an immigrant visa (a "green card"), you still must pass the admissibility test. If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, you are inadmissible and are not eligible to migrate to the United States (in rare cases under unique circumstances, waivers may be available to some of these grounds of inadmissibility):
Do you have any contagious disease that could cause a public health problem?
YES
NO
Do you have any physical or mental disorder that could cause harm to yourself or to others?
YES
NO
Do you use illegal drugs?
YES
NO
Have you trafficked illegal drugs, people, or other contraband items?
YES
NO
Have you ever engaged in prostitution?
YES
NO
Have you ever helped anyone to enter the U.S. unlawfully, even a child or other close family member?
NO
YES
Have you ever been convicted of a crime?
NO
YES
The effect of criminal convictions on immigration eligibility is extremely complex, but if it was anything other than a very minimal offense (and sometimes even then), this is very likely going to render you inadmissible.
Have you ever been deported from the United States previously?
YES
NO
If you made it this far, congratulations! You are likely eligible for Lawful Permanent Resident status. After five years in that status—presuming you have not committed crimes, stayed out of the country too long, or otherwise run afoul of the immigration laws, and that you've learned English and some basic information about the history and government of the United States—you will probably be eligible to naturalize and become a US citizen!
Sorry, you are inadmissible and are not eligible to migrate to the United States. In rare cases under unique circumstances, waivers may be available to some of these grounds of inadmissibility.


YES
Have you ever been unlawfully present in the United States in the past for six months or more?
NO
Have you ever misrepresented a material fact to an official of the US government?
YES
NO
Have you ever claimed to be a US citizen for any reason?
YES
NO
Are you likely to become a "public charge" upon arrival in the U.S., meaning that your age, health, family situation, or other factors are such that you are likely to require public assistance to support yourself?
YES
This ground is waived for refugees and for a few other distinct groups.
YES
Sorry, you are inadmissible and are not eligible to migrate to the United States. In rare cases under unique circumstances, waivers may be available to some of these grounds of inadmissibility.
NO
Have you ever persecuted anyone or participated in a genocide?
YES
NO
Have you ever given "material support" of any kind to any group that, among its many activities, participates in terrorist activities?
YES
This is defined so broadly so that even those who have assisted the U.S. military in situations like Vietnam or opposed brutal dictatorships such as in Cuba or Burma have been found to be "terrorists" by this definition.
NO
Have you ever engaged in terrorist activity?
YES

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[177] 1 Thessalonians 5:17, English Standard Version

[178] John 17:21

[179] 1 Timothy 2:2

[180] Proverbs 21:1

[181] Matthew 18:19

[182] Romans 12:12

[183] Bryant Wright, "Immigration: A Biblical View," Right from the Heart Ministries, September 4, 2011, available online at <http://rightfromtheheart.org/watch/48528>

[184] For example, groups like NumbersUSA, the Center for Immigration Studies, and FAIR (the Federation for American Immigration Reform), were each founded by a man named John Tanton. Mr. Tanton's primary concern with immigration is one of population control, which is why he has also been a strong proponent of abortion rights, and the organizations he founded, to varying extents, are explicit about their goal to limit not just *illegal* immigration but *all* immigration to the U.S. out of population growth concerns. For more information about Mr. Tanton and the organizations with which he has been affiliated, see *Wall Street Journal*, "Borderline Republicans," June 17, 2004, available online (with subscription) at <http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB108742681731539433,00.html>; see also Jason DeParle, "The Anti-Immigration Crusader," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2011, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/17/us/17immig.html>; verification of these organizations' stated missions to reduce immigration and/or population is also available at their organizational websites: www.cis.org, www.numbersusa.org, and www.fairus.org

[185] Proverbs 31:8

[186] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Beacon Press, 1986)

[187] Quoted in Stephanie Simon, "Evangelical Group Seeks Broader Tent," *Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 2010, available online at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703894304575047500910380386.html>

[188] Southern Baptist Convention, "On Immigration and the Gospel," June 2011, available online at <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1213>

[189] National Association of Evangelicals, "Immigration 2009 Resolution Endorsements," 2009, available online at <http://www.nae.net/immigration-2009-endorsements>

[190] Brian Bennett, "Senators Ask About Costs of Deporting Apprehended Illegal Immigrants," *Tribune Washington Bureau*, October 29, 2010, available online at

<http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2010/10/29/20101029immigration-deportation-gop-senators.html>

[191] Marshall Fitz, Gebe Martinez, and Madura Wijewardena, "The Cost of Mass Deportation," The Center for American Progress, March 2010, available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/03/pdf/cost_of_deportation_execsumm.pdf>

[192] Quoted in Linda Valdez, "Immigration Reform Could Revitalize GOP," *Arizona Republic*, May 15, 2010, available online at <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/viewpoints/articles/2010/05/16/20100516immigration-reform-linda.html>

[193] Quoted in Sarah Pulliam, "Max Lucado on Compassion: The Best Apologetic," *Christianity Today*, October 21, 2010, available online at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/october/26.65.html?start=1>

[194] Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Beyond Red vs. Blue: Political Typology," May 4, 2011, available online at <http://people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/Beyond-Red-vs-Blue-The-Political-Typology.pdf>, p. 81

[195] Soerens and Hwang, 150

[196] Matthew 28:19-20

[197] Jenkins, 1

[198] Russell Moore, "Not Just An Issue," June 22, 2011, available online at <http://undocumented.tv/2011/blog/2026/>

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