



God and Government

Lesson 5: What about Immigration?

INTRODUCTION

"I sure hope they're all legals!"

God and Government

Lesson 1: Is America a Christian Nation?

Lesson 2: Do We Really Need Government?

Lesson 3: Does God Really Say the Government Can Do *That*?

Lesson 4: What Does It Mean to Be a Christian American?

Lesson 5: One Hot-Button Issue: What about Immigration?

Lesson 6: How Do I Decide Whom to Vote For?

GOD'S REMINDER: WE ARE ALL STRANGERS!

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:8-10)

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Why is it good for God's people to consider themselves "strangers and aliens" on earth?

What are some of the dangers of being citizens of the United States?



List well-known people in the Bible who spent at least part of their lives as immigrants.

Why do you think God had *so many* of his people live their life as immigrants?

IMMIGRATION BASICS

What are the four legal paths to a “green card” in the United States?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Despite those paths to a green card, what is the reality for most Hispanics?

Why do so many immigrants from Latin America enter the U.S. illegally?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

THE “ALIEN” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Leviticus 19:18 – “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.”

Leviticus 19:33-34 – “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt.”



Deuteronomy 10:18-19 – “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.”

Numbers 15:15-16 – “The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the Lord: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you.”

What can we learn from what the Old Testament says about “aliens” and foreigners?

“STRANGERS” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When Jesus was asked, “Who is my neighbor?”, what did he say? What was his point? (Luke 10)

When Jesus met the sinful woman at the well, what did he do? (John 4)

What are four wrong reasons to oppose illegal immigration?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

REVIEW: A CHRISTIAN AND GOVERNMENT

What does God say about a Christian’s attitude toward government? What exceptions does he give?



True/False: Illegal immigration is a sin because it involves breaking the laws of the government.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When I meet a sinful person...

What's my goal?

Where is the best place for sinners to be?

Are there any conditions on the Gospel?

Our situation in Saint Peter:

Are there illegal immigrants living in Saint Peter?

What should we do if they come to our church?

Agree/Disagree: If an illegal immigrant comes to faith in Jesus, they must go back to their country as a fruit of faith.

What I have learned:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Extra Resources

1. Summary

(Pastor Nass once wrote a 75-page thesis on "The Lutheran Pastor and Illegal Immigration." Here is a summary of how he would suggest dealing with undocumented immigrants in a congregation. The entire thesis can be found online at: <http://www.wls.wels.net/library/lutheran-pastor-and-illegal-immigration.>)

"We can use those principles to suggest a typical plan of action when dealing with undocumented immigrants, although this plan will certainly need to be adjusted as it is applied to individual situations: 1) Love undocumented immigrants enough to get to know them and welcome them to your community and church. 2) As you build a relationship with them, look for opportunities to preach to them the message of Christ's forgiveness for all of their sins. 3) Once an undocumented immigrant has come to faith in Christ, use God's Word to show them areas in which they can improve in their lives of sanctification out of love for Christ. Address the sin of illegal immigration, but don't emphasize that sin over any other sin, and address it at the right time for each individual. 4) Once an undocumented immigrant has confessed his sin and received Christ's forgiveness, offer him guidance in fruits of faith and emphasize that proper fruits often involve sacrifice. 5) Recognizes that your relationship with an undocumented immigrant is not a sprint, but a long-term blessing that God has given you. 6) Pray for you and pray for them."

2. Sample Case Studies

(If a person has never been involved with outreach to immigrants in the U.S., it can be difficult to understand the difficulties or the heartache that result from the challenges presented by illegal immigration. The following case studies are designed to merely present a few of the difficult decisions that WELS pastors and members are faced with on a daily basis. Each case study is based on a real event from my short ministry or from the ministries of other WELS pastors. All names have been changed.)

1. Uvaldo is an undocumented immigrant from Central America. He illegally crossed the border into the U.S. five years ago. His journey was very difficult. He was kidnapped as he traveled across Mexico, and when he finally crossed the U.S. border, he spent three days and nights walking barefoot across the Texas desert. He has lived as an undocumented immigrant ever since, but you wouldn't know it if you met him. He receives free health and dental care from the government in the city in which he resides. He has a job with a major U.S. company using a false Social Security number which he bought for \$500 on the black market. His managers know he is an undocumented immigrant, and they even made sure that he was able to complete his paperwork correctly. It is impossible for him to become legal under U.S. law, but he has no plans to return to his country, because he seems to have been so accepted by everyone in the U.S. *Now he walks into your church...*
2. Martín and his family are taking Bible information classes (BIC) at your church. They have lived in the U.S. for eight years as undocumented immigrants. Coming to your church has changed their relationship with God and their perspective on life. They can't seem to get enough of God and his Word. As you study the 4th Commandment at its regular point in your BIC course, you emphasize God's command to submit to



our government, unless it commands us to sin. Martín nods his head in complete agreement. He raises his hand and says, "That's why I had to cross the border into the U.S. The government's laws just aren't fair and are preventing people from having a better life." *Now it's your turn to respond...*

3. Luís has been attending your church since before you arrived. After knowing him for a number of years, it continues to surprise you that he makes so many trips back and forth from Mexico to the U.S. You always assumed that he was a legal permanent resident of the U.S., but one day you find out that he is actually an undocumented immigrant. When you ask him how he is able to make so many trips across the border as an undocumented immigrant, Luís looks surprised. "Pastor," he says, "It's easy. I just know the right times to come. Every year like clockwork the farms need workers at the same times. If you cross the border at harvest time, the border patrol agents will take one look at you and turn and look the other direction." *What are you thinking?*
4. Yolanda just started coming to your church, and she has loved every part of what she has seen and heard. She wants to become a member and has started taking BIC classes. Her cousin—an undocumented immigrant—got arrested for drunk driving. He fulfilled his sentence and has now been handed over to an immigration court to determine whether he will be deported. Yolanda has supported him every step of the way. She asks that you say a prayer in church that God prevent him from being deported and allow him to keep living in the U.S. *What will you pray for?*
5. Raúl and his family are in the middle of the BIC course at your congregation. They are excited to become members soon, and you can't wait to have them as a part of your church. They are undocumented immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for 14 years. They had no contact with the gospel in their home country and are overjoyed to be learning about Christ. There is one problem, however. They have absolutely no money. They have found it almost impossible to find work lately, and they are always afraid of losing their apartment. Today Raúl for the first time tells you he feels like giving up and returning to his country with his family. He is very worried, though, because there is no church near where the rest of his extended family lives, and he knows he is still very immature in his faith. He would love to stay in the U.S. and at your church if only he could have that option. *What do you tell him?*
6. Silvia has been one of the most dedicated members of your congregation. As a single young woman, she has had the time to come to every Bible study and church service, and she is always ready to volunteer. One day, however, she comes to you with a confession. She is married. Four years ago, she became friends with a man on the internet who lives in Cuba. Their relationship was never romantic by any means, but the man convinced Silvia to marry him just for a short time so that he could come to the U.S. She agreed and flew to Cuba for a quick ceremony at a courthouse. They never had any desire to be or stay married and have never been romantically involved. The man's plan hasn't worked very well, however, and he is still in Cuba. Silvia would like to start dating and find a real husband. She wonders whether her marriage is a real marriage and whether she can date other men with a clear conscience. *How will you respond?*

