

Immigrants Among Us

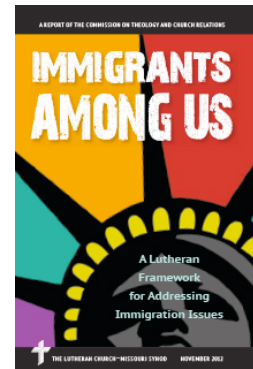
A Lutheran Framework for Addressing Immigration Issues

Questions for Study and Discussion

Provided by the Frontera Ministry of the LCMS

Free copies in both English and Spanish may be downloaded at www.fronteraministries.org

Find the electronic version of "Immigrants Among Us" at: <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=465>



I. Immigrant Neighbors Past and Present

How Should Scripture Inform Attitudes Toward Immigrants Today?

1. What were your overall thoughts and impressions after reading section one of this document?
2. The document cautions against an “anachronistic” interpretation of the Scriptures regarding immigration issues, that is, interpreting the Bible by imposing upon it our current conditions and understandings. According to the document, what errors might result from this misapplication of the Scriptures as we discuss immigration issues?
3. Read Leviticus 19:33-34. What overall attitude does God desire toward the “alien” and “stranger” in the land?
4. Why does God emphasize His people’s time in Egypt as a reference point to their own attitude toward strangers in the land? How does this apply to you today?
5. Read Zechariah 7:8-14. What are some non-negotiable characteristics of true religion?
6. How did Jesus exhibit these characteristics toward us in His life, death, and resurrection?
7. The document states:

“By serving as a point of departure for shaping the church’s basic attitude towards immigrants today, the biblical teachings on loving the immigrant neighbor as ourselves and on showing hospitality to the strangers in our midst also serve as a good deterrent against the development of any attitudes towards aliens, whether documented or undocumented, that are not driven by a legitimate concern for the law and the neighbor” (p.19).

Identify and discuss attitudes that do not flow from a legitimate concern for the law and the neighbor in the area of immigration. Contrast those with attitudes that do flow from this twofold concern.

II. God's Law, Civil Law, and the Neighbor
On Christian Obedience to God's Commands

1. What stood out to you most in this section of the document?
2. Read Romans 13:1-7 and Acts 5:27-32. How do these verses describe two responsibilities Christians are called to balance?
3. Describe how the balance of these responsibilities relates to immigration issues.
4. Discuss how the use of the terms "undocumented" and "illegal" relate to contrasting attitudes toward civil law, God's law, and our neighbor.

5. The document asks:

"What is an appropriate response when there is no clear and broad consensus among Christians on the way in which immigration law specifically conflicts with God's law?"
(p.25)

Give your opinions in response to this question.

6. The document emphasizes that the "divine principle of Christian love" applies to both immigrant neighbor and neighbors covered by the mandates of civil law. Read Ephesians 4:14-16. How do these verses warn us and shape us as we balance the calling to both compassion and obedience?
7. Read Luke 5:29-32. Discuss how the saving work of Jesus shapes our approach to every issue we face. What does it mean to live a life of repentance?

III. Living in God's Two Realms

On the Activity of Christians in the World as Church and as Citizens

1. What thoughts did you have about this section of the document?
2. Describe the Lutheran teaching of "the two kingdoms" as outlined in the document.
3. As citizens of the "right hand" kingdom, what responsibilities do Christians have toward others (undocumented immigrants included)?
4. As citizens of the "left hand" kingdom, what responsibilities do Christians have toward others (undocumented immigrants included)?
5. What consequences might result when the two kingdoms are confused in the area of immigration?

6. The document states:

"The Lutheran distinction between the two realms reminds us that disagreements about immigration law among Christians should not infringe upon their unity in Christ, which the means of grace alone bring about and preserve."

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-7 and Ephesians 4:1-6. What counsel does the Bible give about how believers are directed to settle differences with one another?

7. Read Galatians 3:26-29. How does Christ's redeeming work prepare you to engage in challenging discussions about social and political issues?

IV. Who is My Neighbor?

The Place of the Christian's Vocation in the Immigration Debate

1. What stood out to you most in this section of the document?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. How do these verses capture both the origin and the purpose of a Christian's vocation?
3. Read Luke 10:25-37. According to Jesus, who is your neighbor and how do you live as someone's neighbor?
4. How does this teaching apply to immigration issues and to a Christian's conduct toward undocumented immigrants?
5. Read Mark 7:5-13. How does our sin lead us to neglect or reject our vocation to love and serve our neighbors? Apply your answers specifically to the immigration issue.
6. Read Romans 5:8. Describe how God's work in Jesus epitomizes our vocation of being a neighbor to others.
7. The document states that sometimes a Christian acts for himself while at other times a Christian acts from his or her office. What are some examples of these different roles? How can God's calling of love apply to each of these unique roles?

For additional study:

Be sure to work through the Case Study questions in Appendix I of the document.