

RIGHT or WRONG?

Immigration policy

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Global immigration is enormously complicated. How can Christians contribute to the discussion?

A key item leading to the perceived failure of some international immigration policies has been the inability to communicate across racial, religious and cultural lines. Years ago, Baptist churches had a weekly program called Church Training Union. This valuable program was designed to allow discussion on crucial issues in a friendly environment, seek biblical understandings in approaching resolutions and teach people how to communicate.

We desperately need opportunities to discuss crucial issues in safe environments that will allow us to find spiritually based resolutions. Such conversations need to be approached with a desire to seek truth, not defend a point of view. They should make use of the best resources available, including people and media.

Other suggestions:

- We believe the Bible to be the authoritative guide for our lives. In these conversations, we could begin with Scriptures related to immigrant experiences. With the help of a concordance, examine passages related to “strangers” and “aliens.” Several in-depth studies—on Abraham (Genesis 12, 18, 19 and 20); Jacob and his sons (Genesis 39-47); Ruth; the holy family (Matthew 2:13-23); the various teachings of Jesus; the admonitions found in the letters of Paul and James—provide biblical bases for conversations related to immigrants.

- Conversations should include the best information on our government's policies—local, state and federal. When were those policies developed? What updates have occurred and when? Are they humanitarian? Are the policies designed to serve our needs or those of the immigrants? Examine the restrictions related to families. Who is included and/or rejected? What services/courtesies should be made available to newcomers? For how long? How may we avoid our aid from becoming "welfare magnets"? Could you live under such conditions? Is Christ being honored by those policies? What does Scripture say his response might be toward such policies?
- When immigrants come, what are the better methods of welcoming them into our American way of living? How can we keep them from being isolated, insulated or ghettoed? How may we discover customs or traditions they highly value? How may the things we value be made available to them? Why have previous generations of immigrants helped our nation grow? Were they brought in for utilitarian purposes—steel mill development, railroad work, agricultural immediacy, cheap labor? Is our government selectively using skill-based criteria—the educated, technology specialists, skilled tradesmen, professionals? Why?
- Knowing the emotional volatility of this subject, what steps could be taken to retain conversational stability? What action plans can be developed?

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Right or Wrong? is sponsored by the T.B. Maston Chair of Christian Ethics at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology. Send your questions about how to apply your faith to btillman@hsutx.edu.

