

“I Was a Stranger...” Challenge Toolkit

November 2012 – Evangelical Immigration Table

The Idea:

At the heart of why evangelical Christians believe we should love, welcome, and seek justice for immigrants is our commitment to the authority of Scripture over every aspect of our lives. The Bible speaks clearly and repeatedly to God’s concern for the immigrant, guiding the Christ-follower toward principles that we believe should inform both the interpersonal ways that we interact with our immigrant neighbors and the public policies that we support.

However, in a time when immigration has become a polarizing political issue, most Protestant Christians (91%, according to a 2010 Pew Research Center poll) admit that they do not primarily think about immigrants or immigration primarily through the lens of their Christian faith. In order to encourage those—both in

local churches and in the halls of Congress—who profess to follow Jesus to allow their response to immigration to be infused with biblical values, we invite you to participate in a new initiative called “I Was a Stranger...,” which takes its name directly from Matthew 25:35, where Jesus says that by welcoming a stranger, we may be welcoming him. The focus of the challenge will be on inviting believers to read a short passage of Scripture each day for forty consecutive days that speaks to God’s heart for immigrants and to pray for the immigrants in their community.

“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 of the will of God.”

*Bryant Wright, Senior Pastor,
Johnson Ferry Baptist Church*

“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

To learn more about this opportunity and receive training, we invite you to join us for a one-hour conference call:

“I Was a Stranger...’ Challenge” Conference Calls

In English:

Date: Thursday, November 29

Time: 1:00PM ET, noon CT, 11:00AM MT, 10:00AM PT

Call-in Number: 866-952-1907 Code: LAUNCH

In Spanish (*En Español*):

Date: Thursday, November 29

Time: 8:00PM ET, 7:00PM CT, 6:00PM MT, 5:00PM PT

Call-In Number: 866-952-1907 Code: ESPAÑOL

The Role of the Organizer:

This Toolkit will provide most of the resources that you will need to mobilize and organize an “I Was a Stranger...” challenge in your local church, campus, or community. In any given community, we hope to identify at least one lead organizer (or potentially a team of people) who will coordinate the efforts of various evangelical churches, ensuring that pastors and church leaders have the tools that they need to invite their congregations to participate and that local legislators are invited to participate by as wide and diverse a group of constituent evangelical leaders as possible.

Included within this Toolkit are:

- Challenge Description
- Step-by-Step Instructions
- Timeline
- Description of the “I Was a Stranger...” bookmarks, with information on how to order as many as you will need
- Description of the “I Was a Stranger...” promotional video, with information on how to request a copy
- Sample Sermon Outline
- Template letter to a legislator for local church leaders to request a meeting
- List of additional resources on immigration from a biblical perspective
- Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform, with list of signatories

Description of Challenge

The ultimate goal of the “I Was a Stranger...” Challenge is to encourage evangelical Christians to allow Scripture to permeate their thinking and inform their responses to both the challenges and opportunities of immigration. This local-church-based initiative focuses on two primary groups of people: ordinary church-going Christians and elected officials.

While many of the denominations and organizations involved in creating this challenge do have opinions about immigration as a public policy issue—and we encourage leaders to consider the “Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform,” found at the end of this Toolkit, which many evangelical leaders have endorsed—the purpose of this challenge is not to support a particular public policy, but to ensure that our response is informed by biblical principles, both in terms of our personal interactions with the immigrants in our communities and in terms of our approach to public policy. The fundamental goal of the challenge is discipleship, conforming our thoughts and actions to the authority of Scripture. **Our request of both lay people and of elected officials is simple and uncontroversial: would they commit to reading the Bible and to praying?**

Local Churches

Though the challenge is designed to be adaptable to different contexts, the basic idea is this: In the local church context, a church could kick off the “I Was a Stranger...” challenge by showing a two-minute “I Was a Stranger...” video during a Sunday service. The pastor could then briefly share why he believes that it is important that, as Christians, we allow God’s word to inform our thinking about the topic of immigration and every other complex and controversial issue. Some may choose to focus an entire sermon on the topic (perhaps focused on Matthew 25 or one of the many other passages related to immigrants), while for others it may be a brief announcement (a sample sermon outline is included in this Toolkit).

At the end of that kick-off service, each person will be given an “I Was a Stranger...” bookmark. The bookmark features the references to forty distinct passages of Scripture that in one way or another relate to the topic of immigration. Pastors will ask their congregations to commit to put the bookmark in their Bibles and commit each day to reading the appropriate passage. They will also be asked to commit to praying: asking God that he would give them his heart for immigrants, that he watch over the immigrants in the local community and draw in those who do not yet know the hope of a transformational relationship with Christ, and that he would give wisdom and courage to elected officials who are entrusted with setting immigration policies.

At the end of the forty-day period, local churches (either as individual congregations or, ideally, bringing together multiple congregations within a given community) may want to host a special prayer service to come together to corporately pray. This event could include guided prayer, opportunities to hear testimonies from an immigrant believer, further teaching on immigration from a biblical perspective, and/or worship, potentially led by a local immigrant church. Such an event could also be open to the press (at the discretion of the host church and the organizers), which could open opportunities for many more than attend the event to consider the issue of immigration from a biblical perspective.

Elected Officials

A second component of the challenge is focused on discipling elected officials toward a biblically-informed approach to immigration. Evangelical Christians in the United States are a powerful political force merely on account of our numbers, so when pastors, church leaders, and lay people proactively make their opinions known to elected officials, they have the potential to influence a legislator's decision-making process. Beyond political power, though, Christians—and particularly pastors—have another unique role: we are called to pray for “kings and all those in authority” (1 Tim. 2:2) (regardless of whether or not we voted for or approve of the policies of a particular legislator) and, particularly since most Members of Congress themselves profess to be Bible-believing Christians, to minister to and disciple them to be faithful servants of Christ. We ultimately want church leaders to encourage legislators to vote in favor of immigration policies that we believe are consistent with biblical values *both* because we want care for the immigrant communities that these policies directly affect *and* because we legitimately care for our elected officials and want, for their own sakes, for them to do what is right and just.

To challenge our elected officials to allow biblical principles to influence them as they address immigration policy issues, the lead organizer in a given community will identify which elected official(s) on which to focus; it could be the local member of the House of Representative, one or both of the state's U.S. Senators, or all three. The lead organizer will then address a letter to that legislator (a template letter is included in this Toolkit), which will highlight biblically-guided principles that we believe should inform changes to immigration policies and will ask the legislator to make time to meet with a group of pastors sometime when the legislator is within his or her home district.

The lead organizer will then approach local pastors who live and/or minister within the geographic area that the legislator represents to add their name to the letter. The goal should be to include as many constituent pastors and church leaders as possible, representing the ethnic, denominational, and geographic diversity of evangelical churches in the region.

A few weeks after sending the letter, the lead organizer will follow up with the legislator's staff to coordinate a time and location where a meeting could occur, which either could be at the legislator's district office or at one of the local churches. At that meeting—which can be attended by a contingent of the pastors who signed onto the letter, even if not everyone is available at the same time—the pastors will present a very direct, non-political ask of the legislator: will he or she commit to reading a brief passage of Scripture relating to immigrants each day for the next forty days? They will provide the legislator with the “I Was a Stranger...” bookmark and, if they feel appropriate, will pray for the legislator at the meeting. They will also let the legislator know that they (and, if it is accurate to say so, members within their churches) are committed to praying for him or her as they read through the same Scriptures during that forty-day period.

Many legislators are committed Christians who will likely take this challenge from pastors that they respect very seriously. We believe that “the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). As legislators read God's word and seek him in prayer, we trust that the Holy Spirit will transform their hearts.

Of course, many legislators will politely decline our invitation; some may commit to reading Scripture and prayer but then not follow through. Even still, to have been visited by pastors who influence many voters within their region will likely have a political effect on most legislators, who—for reasons of self-preservation, if not for personal commitment to the authority of God's word—will be more likely to support immigration policies that are consistent with biblical principles.

At the end of the forty-day period, a group of the pastors who initially met with the legislator could follow-up—either with another meeting (in the district or, if a group of pastors are particularly committed, with a visit to Washington, D.C.) or at least with a follow-up call or letter. That would allow the pastors to ask the legislator how—if at all—reading God’s word and praying might have influenced their thinking, and to reiterate the pastors’ desire that the legislator pursue policies consistent with biblical values.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Identify a lead organizer—that might be you!—who will coordinate the details of the “I Was a Stranger...” challenge in a given community or at a given local church (which will likely involved getting the permission of the church leadership). That lead organizer may want to have a team or committee of people supporting the work. Spend some time in prayer up front asking God to bless this effort and use it for his glory.
2. Determine which legislator(s) with whom you believe it would be most strategic to seek a meeting. Some factors to consider might include
 - whether you know (or a basic Internet research suggests) that a legislator self-identifies as a Christian
 - whether he or she has expressed opinions about immigration that do not seem consistent with biblical values (because, to paraphrase Jesus, it is the sick, not the healthy, who most need a doctor)
 - whether the legislator attends one of the local churches whose pastor you think might be willing to participate
3. Contact as many pastors as you can to share the idea of the challenge. You may want to think strategically about who within a given church would be most likely to be naturally interested—often that will be a local outreach pastor, missions pastor, or the pastor of a non-English-language service within the church—who could help bring the request to participate to the senior leadership of the church.

Any given church could participate in one or both elements of the challenge. If the church would like to use the challenge as an opportunity to help **disciple their congregation** to think biblically about immigration issues, you could work with the church leadership to:

- a. Set a date for a kick-off service (or services)
- b. Show the leaders the “I Was a Stranger...” promotional video, featuring nationally prominent evangelical leaders, and, if it is a resource they think would be helpful, request a digital download of the video via the link at www.evangelicalimmigrationtable.com (the video will be available as of January 1, 2013)
- c. Help provide the pastor with idea for what he or she might say at the kick-off service, whether just a few comments after showing the video or an entire sermon
- d. Order a sufficient number of “I Was a Stranger...” bookmarks and make sure that the logistics of how the bookmarks will be distributed have been considered

If the church would like to use the challenge as an opportunity to help **disciple their legislators**, you could:

- a. Ask the pastor or church leader to sign his or her name onto a letter, along with their title, church name, and address (this need not necessarily be a physical signature, but take care to ensure that the pastor’s name going on the letter—and not just a staff person working under his direction—has given permission to include their name)
- b. Compile the names of as many local pastors and church leaders within the particular Representative’s district (or, for a U.S. Senator, within the state); you could also include leaders of local parachurch ministries; there is no particular number of signatories necessary, but the more individuals who sign on

and the larger the churches that they represent, the more likely it is that the legislator will grant the request for a meeting

- c. Send the letter to the legislator's district office, offering yourself as a contact to schedule a meeting; if you don't receive a reply within a few weeks, call the district office, ask to speak to the local scheduler, and ensure that they received the meeting request
- d. Keep checking in with the legislator's district office staff until a meeting is scheduled; the location could either be at the legislator's district office or at one of the local churches
- e. Once the legislator's staffer confirms a meeting, follow up with each of the signatories to the letter and coordinate as many as possible to attend the meeting (it will likely be impossible to find a time when *everyone* can attend at the same time, but work to at least have a representative group)
- f. Meet with the pastors thirty minutes before meeting with the legislator for a time of prayer and to plan through what each person will say; most importantly, make sure that someone makes the specific ask of the legislator to commit to forty days of prayer and Scripture reading and presents the bookmark (if the legislator's own pastor or anyone else with a personal relationship to the legislator is in the room, he or she might be the ideal person to make the request)
- g. At the meeting, in addition to making the request to pray and read Scripture, you should be sure to tell him (if accurate) that various local churches are also actively reading these Scripture passages and praying for him; you may want to share the "Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform"
- h. End the meeting by offering to pray for the legislator, if you think appropriate, asking God to give him or her wisdom, courage, and clarity, as well as praying for God's protection over the legislator and his or her family
- i. Approximately forty days after that initial meeting, follow up with the legislator—either by requesting another in-person meeting (either in the district again or at the legislator's Washington, D.C. office) or via a letter—and ask how reading the Scriptures and praying has influenced their thinking; some groups may feel comfortable asking the legislator at this point to support specific immigration policies, at your discretion

Timeline

This challenge need not fit into a specific timeline, and there is no particular date on which the forty days of prayer and Scripture reading must begin. However, we would suggest the following timeline:

- **November 29, 2012**
 - Conference call to explain challenge concept
- **Early December 2012:**
 - Reach out to local churches, finding leaders interested in engaging their congregations, their legislators, or both, and order as many bookmarks as you will need by using the link at www.evangelicalimmigrationtable.com
- **January 1, 2013:**
 - “I Was a Stranger...” promotional video available (visit www.evangelicalimmigrationtable.com to view the video and to download a digital file of the video)
- **Mid-December 2012 to Early-January 2013:**
 - Aim to mail letter requesting a meeting with a legislator
 - Pastoral meetings with legislators in their home districts are likely to be scheduled (in a local church or at legislator’s district office); Congress is on recess for most of this period
- **January to February 2013:**
 - Legislators are, hopefully, reading Scripture and praying, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts
 - Local churches hold kick-off services, showing “I Was a Stranger...” video if appropriate, distributing bookmarks, and inviting church members to commit to praying and reading Scripture for the next forty days
- **March or April 2013 (depending on legislative calendar):**
 - Optional prayer services at local churches (with media invited, as appropriate); could also include send-off of leaders traveling to D.C. to participate in visits to legislators on Capitol Hill
 - Possibly, a visit of selected pastors from each region to Washington, D.C. on a coordinated day, as a follow-up the request of legislators to read prayer, or other follow-up via meeting again in the district or other correspondence

Bookmark Description

The bookmark, which will be approximately 9 inches tall and 3 inches wide, and printed in full color on a durable card stock, has the title “‘I Was a Stranger...’: 40 Days of Scripture & Prayer” on the top and then includes the references to the following forty biblical passages, with twenty passages listed on each side. Participants are invited to read the passages one per day, in which ever translation of the Bible they prefer, for forty days. The bookmarks will also be available in Spanish. At the bottom of the bookmark, it will have the Evangelical Immigration Table website listed “www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com.” The forty passages included are:

1. Genesis 1:27-28
2. Exodus 12:49
3. Exodus 22:21
4. Exodus 23:9
5. Exodus 23:12
6. Leviticus 19:9-10
7. Leviticus 19:33-34
8. Leviticus 23:22
9. Leviticus 24:22
10. Numbers 15:15-16
11. Deuteronomy 1:16
12. Deuteronomy 10:18-19
13. Deuteronomy 24:14
14. Deuteronomy 24:17-18
15. Deuteronomy 24:19
16. Deuteronomy 26:12
17. Deuteronomy 27:19
18. Job 29:16
19. Psalm 94:6-7
20. Psalm 146:9
21. Jeremiah 7:5-7
22. Jeremiah 22:3
23. Ezekiel 22:6-7
24. Ezekiel 22:29
25. Zechariah 7:10
26. Malachi 3:5
27. Matthew 2:13-14
28. Matthew 25:35
29. Mark 2:27
30. Luke 10:36-37
31. Acts 16:37
32. Acts 17:26-27
33. Romans 12:13
34. Romans 13:1-2
35. Ephesians 2:14-18
36. Philippians 3:20
37. Hebrews 13:2
38. 1 Peter 2:11-12
39. 1 Peter 2:13-14
40. Revelation 7:9-10

Acquiring Bookmarks

Bookmarks can be requested online at www.evangelicalimmigrationtable.com. You can either choose to order bookmarks (in either English or Spanish) and have them shipped to you, or you can request the digital file to print your own bookmarks. The digital file is available for free; the cost for pre-printed bookmarks will include the cost of printing and shipping the bookmarks, which will vary depending upon the size of the order. Please expect for it to take at least two weeks for bookmarks to arrive after the order is confirmed.

Video Description

Video Concept:

We will be producing a broadcast-quality video that communicates Christ's words in Scripture as the basis of our response in public and private life. This 2-minute video will feature approximately 15 nationally prominent evangelical leaders delivering the text of Matthew 25:31-46. *"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in..."* Verse 35, *"I was a stranger and you invited me in..."*, would be emphasized and repeated, both in English and Spanish. The video will close by directing individuals to www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com, where they can access resources for the "I Was a Stranger..." challenge.

Potential Uses:

Though the video is being designed such that it would be useful for future use, the particular intention of this video is for churches to play it within their worship services to launch the "I Was a Stranger..." challenge. The video will be available in early January, so this launch event could occur at any time beginning in January. After showing the video, pastors of local churches around the country could briefly explain the idea of the challenge: to inspire Christians to think biblically—not just politically or economically—about immigration issues, they'll encourage members of their congregation to commit to reading one Scripture passage each day for forty days that relate to God's heart for immigrants. They will provide bookmarks listing forty distinct Scripture passages. They'll also encourage their congregations to pray consistently during that time for the immigrants in their community and for their legislators who have important immigration policy decisions to make. The video will also be available online.

To Acquire Video:

Visit www.evangelicalimmigrationtable.com after January 1, 2012. The video will be viewable online as well as available for digital download.

Sample Sermon Template

Some pastors may want to focus the entire weekend service on the topic of immigration. To assist in planning a sermon, we have provided an outline of a sermon focused on Matthew 25 and the topic of immigration; it was delivered by Rich Nathan, senior pastor of the Vineyard Columbus in Ohio, in 2011. You can find a full transcript of the sermon online at http://vineyardcolumbus.org/media/uploads/files/2011_Sermon_Text/AmazingGrace/The%20Grace%20of%20Being%20Tender-Hearted.pdf or watch it online at <http://vineyardcolumbus.org/watch-and-listen/amazing-grace/the-grace-of-being-tender-hearted/>.

“The Grace of Being Tenderhearted”

Pastor Rich Nathan

Text: Matthew 25:31-46

Topic: Why and how to care for the immigrants, poor, and needy

Big Idea: God’s grace transforms us so that we have a desire to act tender-heartedly towards the oppressed in our society.

Sermon Outline:

Introduction

- *Illustration:* Nathan shows a video of an interview with an immigrant woman who is a member of the church. This woman tells her story as a legal and then undocumented immigrant and the sufferings she faces due to her legal status.
- *Illustration:* Nathan then contrasts this with a story of a Pennsylvania legislator who wants to make life as difficult as possible for undocumented immigrants.
- When we receive God’s grace, it should change us.
- We should be shaped so that the inclinations of our hearts become more and more like Jesus’: inclined to be generous and kind like Jesus when we see a need, and to be tender-hearted, especially to people who are at the bottom rungs of our society, the vulnerable.
- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus welcomes into the kingdom those who cared for the vulnerable and the oppressed, but he turns away those who did not.

Our Judgment

- In this passage Jesus judges *everyone*; no one escapes the judgment of God as he separates the “sheep” from the “goats.”
- Jesus does not judge people based on things we might think he would, like church attendance.
- There are 6 things on which he judges everyone: whether or not one fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, took care of the sick, and visited the prisoner.
- These actions do not earn our salvation, but these actions are the evidence of our salvation.
- What we see on the outside of a person is simply the outer evidence that that person has been given a new heart on the inside through God’s Spirit and God’s grace.
- The actions that Jesus judges one on are not difficult to fulfill, but rather *everyone* can perform them.
 - *Illustration:* Nathan gives several examples of how these actions do not require special gifting or abilities, including an example of someone buying some hamburgers for someone at a street corner who is hungry.
- One day we are going to stand before Jesus, and we are going to have to give account for the grace that we claim was at work in our lives. This coming judgment shapes our heart.

Our language

- Jesus calls the immigrants, the sick, the hungry, the naked, the thirsty, and the prisoners in this passage his brothers and sisters.
- The language we use to describe those in this passage is a reflection of our heart, and it also guides us, changes us, and shapes our hearts (James 3:4).
- In James 3:9, James explains that it is wrong when we use the same tongue to praise God and to curse other human beings who have been made in the image of God.
 - *Illustration:* Nathan gives examples of how Christians refer to immigrants, who are made in the likeness of God, in negative terms.
- In the church, there are many immigrants who worship, and native-born American Christians should remember this before referring to them in negative terms. They should instead call them “brothers and sisters.”
- Our hearts change by paying attention to the language we use.

Our identity

- Jesus doesn’t see the homeless or the immigrant as the “other”, but rather he identifies with them so much that our actions towards these people are actions towards Jesus himself.
- As followers of Jesus, we should identify with and care for the oppressed in this world.
 - *Illustration:* Nathan gives an example of how, when he was a Jew, a negative reference to Jews in general upset him because he took it as a reference to himself. This is how we should identify with the “least” in this world.
- In the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to think of themselves as immigrants.
- Their self-identification as immigrants affected the way that they treated non-Israelites, as they were also commanded to care for foreigners.
- In the New Testament, we are also called to see ourselves as aliens and immigrants (1 Peter 1:1, 2:11).
- When we look at immigrants we should not see someone essentially different from us because if as Christians, we are immigrants and foreigners.
- Not only are we to think of ourselves as immigrants from a Biblical perspective, but also, from a historical perspective most people in America are descendents of immigrants.
- Who we identify ourselves with shapes our heart.

Our welcome

- It is easy to label someone when you don’t know them, but when you get to personally know someone from the groups of people in this passage, such as the undocumented immigrants, your heart changes.
- Some people feel a tension when it comes to showing compassion to an immigrant who is undocumented because he or she has broken the law.
- There is nothing illegal about being kind to someone.
 - *Illustration:* Nathan gives several examples of ways to welcome and show compassion to immigrants, all ways that are not illegal. Advocating for reform for our broken immigration system is also not illegal.
- Those who are here as undocumented immigrants usually feel a heavy burden for breaking the law, but not only do they want to obey the law, they also want to obey Scripture, which commands them to care for their family (1 Timothy 5:8).
- The Church needs to help them so that they can obey all of Scripture.
 - *Illustration:* Nathan shows a video of an interview with an undocumented man in the church who has been welcomed and cared for by the church.
- Our hearts are shaped when we welcome these groups of people, our brothers and sisters, into our church body.

Conclusion

- As we receive God’s grace and our hearts are shaped, we are to care for the (undocumented) immigrant, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and those in prison because they are made in the image of God.

Template Letter for Legislators

[Representative or Senator's Name – www.votesmart.org can help you to determine the appropriate legislator based on the address of a signatory's church or home]

Address

[Date]

Dear [Representative or Senator's Name],

Congratulations on your [(re)]election to the United States Congress. As you [assume/continue] your important responsibilities, we pray that God will give you wisdom. As evangelical pastors and church leaders collectively serving thousands of your constituents within and around [the congressional district or state name], we are writing to ask you to take into account the biblical values of compassion, justice, and hospitality as you consider urgently-needed reforms to our nation's immigration laws

Together with evangelical leaders from throughout the country (listed at www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com), we have affirmed a statement urging you to reform immigration laws in a bipartisan way that:

- **Respects** the God-given dignity of every person
- **Protects** the unity of the immediate family
- **Respects** the rule of law
- **Guarantees** secure national borders
- **Ensures** fairness to taxpayers
- **Establishes** a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents

Our Christian faith compels us to advocate on behalf of the immigrants who are part of our churches and our communities. The Bible tells us that God has a special concern for the foreigner (Deut.10:18, Psalm 146:9), and He commands His people to take special concern for them as well, particularly as people with an immigrant history of our own (Lev. 19:33-34, Ex. 23:9). Furthermore, immigrants—including many who are presently undocumented—form integral parts of our church communities, and as we see them suffering under the dysfunction of our current system, we all suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). We also see the ways that the current system, where our laws are regularly ignored by both employers and immigrants, mocks the God-ordained rule of law (Rom 13:1). Most undocumented immigrants want to become right with the law and embrace the responsibilities of citizenship, but present law provides no mechanism for that reconciliation to be possible.

For these reasons, **we urge you to support reforms to our nation's immigration laws that meet these principles.** As you do, know that you have our support and our prayers. We will also be working to further educate and mobilize our congregations around this pressing issue.

We would also like to request the opportunity for a few of us to meet with you at [church name or "at your district office in" and location name] at your earliest convenience. Please contact [Mobilizer/coordinator name] at [local church or organization] at [email and telephone number] to let us know when you may be available to meet.

Thank you for your service to our communities and for taking the time to consider our views.

Respectfully,

[Names, titles, church affiliations, and addresses of each pastor/leader who agrees to sign onto letter]

Additional Resources on Immigration from a Biblical Perspective

Books

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

Also available in Spanish as *Cristianos en la Frontera: La Inmigración, La Iglesia, y la Biblia* (Casa Creacion, 2000)

This book by M. Daniel Carroll R., distinguished professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, provides a thorough review of what the Bible says about immigration, applying God's word to the realities of immigration from Latin America and other parts of the globe to the United States today.

Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate (InterVarsity Press, 2009)

This book by World Relief staffers Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang provides a primer to immigration issues, looking at what Scripture says on the topic, how immigration is affecting the church in the U.S., the history of immigration to the U.S., and the effect of immigration on the economy.

Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission (InterVarsity Press, 2012)

This book, written by missiologist and pastor J.D. Payne, looks specifically at immigration as a missional opportunity, highlighting the ways that immigration creates opportunities to "make disciples of all nations" without ever crossing a border.

Magazine

Cedarville University *Torch* (Spring/Summer 2012, available online at www.cedarville.edu/torch)

This entire issue of Cedarville University's alumni magazine is focused on immigration, with articles by speakers at their fall 2011 G92 conference including Richard Land, Matthew Soerens, Jason Riley, and Alejandro Mandes.

Small Group Curricula

Welcoming the Stranger: Discovering and Living God's Heart for Immigrants (available for free in digital form at www.welcomingthestranger.com, where print copies can also be ordered)

This resource, published by World Relief and the National Association of Evangelicals, serves as a guide for small groups. The guide includes reading, discussion questions, activities, and suggestions for prayer, with nine units focused on Scripture, mission, refugees, victims of human trafficking, undocumented immigrants, and other topics.

Strangers in the Land (available for purchase online at http://store.sojo.net/product_p/sg_sitl.htm)

This six-week devotional and study guide, created by the publishers of *Sojourners* magazine, is based upon Daniel Carroll's *Christian at the Border*.

Video Resources

"Send These" (Urban Entry, 2010; available for purchase online at <http://www.urbanentry.org/videos/ue4-send-these>)

This 15-minute video serves as a helpful discussion-starter for a small group, Adult Education class, or larger forum on immigration from a distinctly Christian perspective.

“A New Dream” (G92, 2011; available online at www.g92.org/watch)

This 10-minute video profiles an immigrant family whose Christian faith informs their thinking on the issue of immigration.

“Perspective: Dr. Richard Land” (G92, 2011, available online at www.g92.org/watch)

This 8-minute video features Dr. Richard Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, discussing his views on immigration issues.

“Interview: Bill Hybels & Matthew Soerens” (Willow Creek Community Church, 2010, available online at www.g92.org/watch)

In 2010, Bill Hybels and Heather Larson of Willow Creek Community Church interviewed *Welcoming the Stranger* co-author Matthew Soerens at Willow Creek Community Church, addressing why the church should care for immigrants.

Websites

www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com: An online resource that includes tools for the “I Was a Stranger...” challenge as well as an “Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform,” signed by various evangelical leaders throughout the nation.

www.WelcomingTheStranger.com: An online resource from World Relief, including basic information about immigration and tools for discipling and mobilizing others to care for immigrants.

www.FaithAndImmigration.org: The online home of Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, including a regularly updated blog.

www.G92.org: A movement of young evangelicals seeking to respond to issues of immigration in ways consistent with biblical values; the site includes a number of film resources, experiences, and a blog.

Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform

The Evangelical Immigration Table, composed of various national evangelical groups, is responsible for the “I Was a Stranger...” challenge. Table members include:

- **Leith Anderson**, President, National Association of Evangelicals
- **Stephan Bauman**, President and CEO, World Relief
- **David Beckmann**, President, Bread for the World
- **Noel Castellanos**, CEO, Christian Community Development Association
- **Luis Cortés**, President, Esperanza
- **Richard Land**, President, Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
- **Samuel Rodriguez**, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference
- **Gabriel Salguero**, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition
- **Jim Wallis**, President and CEO, Sojourners

These leaders and others have affirmed the following Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform:

Our national immigration laws have created a moral, economic and political crisis in America. Initiatives to remedy this crisis have led to polarization and name calling in which opponents have misrepresented each other’s positions as open borders and amnesty versus deportations of millions. This false choice has led to an unacceptable political stalemate at the federal level at a tragic human cost.

As evangelical Christian leaders, we call for a bipartisan solution on immigration that:

- **Respects** the God-given dignity of every person
- **Protects** the unity of the immediate family
- **Respects** the rule of law
- **Guarantees** secure national borders
- **Ensures** fairness to taxpayers
- **Establishes** a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents

We urge our nation’s leaders to work together with the American people to pass immigration reform that embodies these key principles and that will make our nation proud.

A full list of prominent signatories to this statement can be found online at www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com.