

IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION

THE LAW OF GOD AND PUBLIC POLICY: PART 8



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A REVISION STUDY FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Immigrants and Immigration
The Law of God and Public Policy: Part 8
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Immigrants and Immigration

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Welcome to *Immigrants and Immigration*

Immigration has become a “problem” in many parts of the world. This is especially true in our own country, where immigration laws have been set aside to welcome a flood of people from a wide variety of countries.

Americans have always prided themselves as a “nation of immigrants”, but that view is changing in our day. Immigrants and immigration have become a football to be kicked around in an effort to score points, with little regard for American law or for the proper care and needs of the immigrants we are busily shuffling around the country.

Bible Law has a better idea on how to address this matter, and we’ll take a look at how to shape our thinking, and perhaps public policy, to be more in line with God’s.

ReVision studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We’re happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you’ll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 The Attraction of Justice

“Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”
Deuteronomy 4.5, 6

Foreigners and sojourners

Having addressed, if only in outline, the teaching of God’s Law on the duty of caring for the poor, we now take up a related concern. What does the Law of God teach about the presence of foreigners, or “strangers and sojourners,” among the people who walk according to the Law of God? That the question of foreign immigration is much on the minds of Americans and Europeans these days is news to no one. Are the policies our governments are following in this issue just and good? Do they promote love for neighbors?

What is the responsibility of those who live within the framework of the divine economy for those among them who come from a different social structure? What policies should guide our practice on the topic of immigrants and immigration?

Foundational to God’s covenant is the promise that His people will be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12.1-3). Another way of saying this is that, while God chose to work through a single nation throughout the period of the Old Testament, His concern has always been that the blessings of life—especially justice and love—should be extended to all peoples in all nations and cultures. We see this hinted at in the Old Testament by the inclusion of Gentiles such as Rahab and Ruth into the covenant people of God, as well as the numerous prophetic promises of a coming day when the light of God’s truth and love would extend to all peoples.

As the apostles were able to discern, in line with God’s promises to Abraham, those who have faith in God through Jesus Christ are the chosen means whereby He intends to bring the blessings of life to the world. This is accomplished supremely by the people of God being ambassadors of His Kingdom and heralds of salvation through Jesus Christ.

However, God intends His people to bless the nations in other than spiritual ways as well, although never completely apart from spiritual objectives (cf. Jer. 29.7).

Justice and love

The economics of justice encoded in the Law of God can lead to public policies that promote love for God and neighbor. Righteousness, meekness, justice, and equity obtain where God rules over His people by His Word and Spirit (cf. Pss. 45.6; 99.4). This is the way people were meant to live together in community, and this is what the Holy Spirit comes to do as He redeems those whom God has chosen and builds them together into a holy temple unto the Lord (Ezek. 36.26, 27; Eph. 2.19-22). When God’s people fulfill this calling, wisdom and understanding prevail and are manifest, and the steadfast love of God, which sustains all things, comes to the surface in all human roles, relationships, and responsibilities.

All people have the works of God’s Law written on their hearts, where it can be read by their consciences, either to condemn or confirm them in their actions (Rom. 2.14, 15). Thus, inherent in what it means to be human is to seek justice and to long for righteousness, equity, and neighbor-love.

Certainly the human conscience can become immune to such longings, after years of suppressing the knowledge of God and worshiping idols (Rom. 1.18-32); nevertheless, in most people this desire to live safely, securely, in peace and prosperity represents a perpetual longing and hope.

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It is thus to be expected that, in any community, any nation where justice is the prevailing virtue, people from other places will take note, the longings of their hearts will be plucked, and their souls will stir with the prospect of realizing such hope for themselves. And in the case of many people, this will mean moving toward the source and context of such hope, transplanting themselves from their native country or community, and seeking relocation in those places where the justice of God obtains (cf. Mic. 4.1-5).

While many came to the American colonies with the primary motive of seeking their fortunes, the driving force for the large majority of immigrants was religious and personal freedom, as Barry Alan Shain has shown (*The Myth of American Individualism*). That same motive continued to attract scores of immigrants to America during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Today people come to America largely, I suspect, for the freedom to pursue material wealth and happiness which our blessed nation affords. This general objective has largely supplanted the desire for justice everywhere in the world, but it still appeals to the same, deep longings of the human soul: the longing for the “good life” (although, thus construed and pursued, it can only lead to disappointment in the end). This makes it a difficult task to interpret the Law of God into policies regarding immigrants and immigration, since the *motive* of “getting and spending” can often cloud the *intention* of God’s Law to provide a framework of justice, equity, and love.

Add to that the undisguised political motivations and the blatant disregard of immigration laws and policies that has been the practice in recent years, and Americans—including American Christians— have little taste for thinking seriously and Biblically about immigrants and immigrations.

However, here is an area in which God’s people may expect to discover something of the wisdom and understanding of God, so that we may fulfill our calling as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God and work to realize, if only at the temporal level, the Lord’s blessing for this nation. The Law of God offers sound counsel in helping us to think about the kinds of policies and practices which any nation should pursue if it expects to know the favor of the Lord in dealing with immigrants.

For reflection

1. How would you describe your own “taste” for thinking Biblically about immigrants and immigration? Why is it this way?
2. America is often referred to as a “nation of immigrants”. Why is that? Is that a good thing?
3. What kinds of interactions do you have with people who have immigrated here from another nation?

Next steps—Preparation: Pray daily that God will give you a heart for immigrants that matches His.

2 A Call to Thanksgiving

“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Deuteronomy 10.17-19

A nation of immigrants

America is a nation of immigrants. This certainly is so. Even the native populations, who have largely been displaced by immigrants from Europe and elsewhere, originally journeyed to the “new world” from their homes in Asia. These “first peoples” are as much the descendants of immigrants as the rest of us.

Immigrants have always been a feature of the American landscape, and we may expect that this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. Immigration has been God’s plan for populating the western hemisphere with a creative and energetic mix of peoples He has wondrously gifted in many ways.

What does this tell us about America?

At the very least it indicates that this nation is, and always has been, a desirable place. Its wealth of resources, beautiful and expansive lands, and abundance of opportunities have appealed to people from all over the globe. No other nation in history has captured the thrall and hopes of people from so many different parts of the world.

The continuing press of immigrants into this country should serve as a reminder to Americans that, of all the nations of the world, our country has been most abundantly and lavishly blessed of God.

A renaissance of gratitude?

This observation did not escape the notice of previous generations of Americans as they reflected on the goodness of God to this country. Love of country and gratitude to God have gone hand-in-hand through the course of American history.

But the present blight of narcissism, tribalism, and entitlements has turned many in this country mean, cynical, self-serving, and ungrateful. The hearts of too many Americans simply are not inclined to give thanks. Even our national holiday of Thanksgiving has become a day of self-indulgence, sports and commercial distractions, and an excuse for not having to go to work.

And the recent waves of immigrants, unlawfully admitted across the southern border and shipped out to every sector of the land, has only increased the meanness of many.

But has our outrage at the scofflaws who created this tsunami of immigrants blinded us to the opportunity for giving thanks this situation presents? Are we so busy being angry, resentful, and fearful that we have forgotten Whose hand shapes the king’s heart and rules the course of events on earth? And have we failed to see and give thanks for the unprecedented Kingdom opportunity inherent in this situation?

Yes, there are problems and even dangers. But we are poor disciples if we cannot hear the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, telling us that He has other sheep to bring into the fold, and He must go and get them and bring them to His Church (jn. 10.16).

Gratitude and immigration

Some of us may struggle to thank God for immigrants, especially those who have arrived here illegally. But we must not fail to thank the Lord Jesus—in private and in public—for what the continuing stream of

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immigrants to this country represents: America is still, for all our failings and shortcomings, the nation most abundantly blessed of God of all the nations of the world.

And for this, every Christian should be more outspokenly grateful at every summons to thanksgiving that comes to our attention, including the present crisis of immigration. “In everything give thanks,” Paul insisted, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5.18).

The Christian community must not respond to the present crisis over immigration policy as, in the first instance, a matter of politics. If we do not lead the nation to remember that immigrants are indicators, first and foremost, of the continuing blessings of God on this nation, then we will struggle ever to be able to lead the nation in addressing public policies relating to this and other questions from a more Biblical perspective.

Responding to the crisis of immigration with thanksgiving may help us to recommend a new approach to crafting public policies more in line with the teaching of God’s Law. We do not deny that problems and dangers attach to this present chaotic policy. But immigrants are people, and most who have flooded our borders recently have come to find a more just society than they left, with greater promise and opportunities. Does it not make sense that they will gravitate to those who express gratitude to God for their being here?

Anyone can complain. Anyone can criticize. Anyone can condemn. Only the Christian, who sees the events and trials of this nation through the eyes of faith, can greet every crisis with an upturned eye and a bent knee. The flood of immigrants we keep hearing about is flowing this way because of the blessings of God. Insist on this, and thanks to God, and you may change the hearts of many around you.

And from there, from your posture of gratitude and faith, you might be able to share a bit more about what this wise and good God teaches about how to deal with the immigration crisis in this blessed land.

For reflection

1. How would you summarize your attitude toward immigration and immigrants? How have you come to this?
2. What might churches do to be more welcoming to and grateful for immigrants?
3. In your church, what could you do to begin a discussion about ministering to immigrants?

Next steps—Preparation: Make prayer for immigrants, and your church’s role in serving them, part of your regular prayers.

3 Love the Stranger

“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Deuteronomy 10.17-19

Begin here

I rather suspect, given the present crisis of immigration, that immigrants, and especially “illegal aliens”, are near the bottom of the list of most admired people in this country.

Much less, loved.

At least some of this contempt is understandable. But that does not make it acceptable. To despise, resent, or condemn immigrants is only what we might expect in a society where they are regarded as a serious challenge to economic security or political stability. But in an economy driven not by profit but by justice and love, we must not be content with this view.

We may neither understand nor feel completely at ease with people from other countries—with their different languages, garb, customs, and traditions—but as Christians who walk in the Law as Jesus did (1 Jn. 2.1-6), we must love them. If we do not love the strangers and sojourners in our midst, even those who are here illegally, we will not be able to contribute to making just policies concerning them. And, more importantly, we will not represent God’s attitude toward strangers and sojourners.

This burden falls with a heavy thud on the doorstep of the churches of the land.

People come to America for a variety of reasons, most of them, at least these days, related to the opportunity to pursue safety and material wellbeing. As we have seen, the idol of material wealth has largely replaced the God of Moses and Jesus as the deity of choice all over the world.

But what some may regard as the selfish motives of immigrants and illegal aliens does not excuse the people of God from loving the strangers in our midst. Our calling, the second great commandment, is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves and do unto them what we would have them do unto us—regardless of their country of origin or legal status.

Love and justice

Increasingly, the debate about the immigration crisis tends to be polarized between those who regard the massive waves of immigrants as a potential political force and those who think of them as a criminal class. The one view is exploitative, the other is dismissive. Neither of these views will be helpful in crafting just public policies.

It is doubtless true that many of those who come here are drawn by the opportunity for freebies of various kinds or to practice their nefarious designs for greater profit or political advantage. We do not condone such motives, and we must not support them as matters of public policy; but neither must we fail to love those who have come among us because of such motives.

But loving our neighbors does not mean simply shrugging our shoulders and accepting whatever they want to do. The laws that govern the orderly lives of all citizens must apply to immigrants as well. We love our neighbors when we seek justice for them, and when we work to help make them contributors to a just society. Justice, as we have seen, is the result of obedience to just laws. If we love our neighbors, we will seek to create a society in which justice flourishes, and to which all may expect to make a meaningful contribution.

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Justice—neighbor-love—may at times require retribution toward some of these our neighbors, including deportation. Even then, however, we must not mete out punishments vindictively, but with a view to teaching justice and restoring justice to those who are to be punished, as well as to the society.

Leading the way

In the matter of public policy relative to immigrants and immigration, Christians must lead the way with thanksgiving to God and concrete gestures of love toward our neighbors. Such an approach begins in worship, where we acknowledge and rest in the sovereign goodness of God, and where we must not fail to welcome strangers and sojourners to become part of our worshiping family if they so choose.

Beyond that, other practices which churches might take up together could include providing food and clothing, temporary housing, instruction in English language, helping with job training and finding work, and much more. Such gestures of love, demonstrated by congregations everywhere, would position the Church to join and perhaps even to lead the public policy debate.

Wherever churches can establish means of helping the strangers and sojourners in their communities—without, of course, breaking existing laws—they should do so gladly and with thanksgiving. Let the policies and practices of our churches be the harbingers and prototypes of what governments might do throughout the land.

Once Christians have begun to model neighbor-love for the strangers in their midst, they must insist that civil government at all levels reflect more of the holiness and righteousness and goodness of God's Law in all their policies respecting immigrants and immigration. The prospects of change here must be undertaken with the long view in mind, with vision, patience, and determination. God loves the sojourner, and to the extent that the laws and policies of this land do not reflect that attitude, Christians must work to discover ways of reflecting that love more consistently through the engines of public policy.

For reflection

1. Are you aware of any programs on the part of churches in your community for helping immigrants?
2. How has the present immigration crisis affected your community?
3. If churches will not love the strangers and aliens in our midst, who will?

Next steps—Preparation: See what you can find out about the needs of immigrants in your community or county, and add those needs to your prayers for them.

4 Citizenship

“And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 19.33, 34

The citizenship conundrum

The current wrangling and fussing over immigration includes the question of citizenship. Are all these new immigrants expected to become citizens? Should they enjoy the privileges of citizenship before they do? Does the fact that they are not citizens exempt them from any citizenship duties or responsibilities (like paying taxes)? Should the children born to them in America be regarded as citizens, as is presently the case?

Public policy—or at least the public mindset—assumes that those who come from foreign countries to live and work in America as their new nation will, sooner or later, become citizens. Of course, provisions exist for short-term stays and longer-term work- or study-related arrangements. But if you plan to stay here for long, the assumption is you’re going to become a citizen.

At present, quotas define (supposedly) how many and which people may apply for citizenship in a given year, thus—at least theoretically—limiting the number of people who can come to America for the long-term. The notion of “illegal aliens” is thus directly related to the expectation of citizenship and the existence of quotas and citizenship protocols. At present, no provision exists for long-term, indefinite stays in America. An immigrant’s choices are to return to their native land or become a citizen of the United States.

Becoming a citizen entails certain privileges and responsibilities not available to everyone, primary among these being the right to participate in the political process—to vote or hold office—and to benefit from a variety of government services. Foreigners don’t need to be citizens to work or own property here. And it’s easy enough to visit America as a foreigner, or to study at one of our universities.

So the assumption is that those who wish to stay here for the long haul also wish to participate in the full privileges and responsibilities of living here; thus, they need to become citizens as soon as possible.

Is it necessary?

But is this really a necessity? I’m not suggesting it isn’t; I’m merely asking us to consider whether other options might be discovered. Everyone who is in this country—well, diplomats excluded (why?)—is subject to the laws of the land. So *becoming a citizen* does not obligate one to keep the laws, pay taxes, or behave. Merely *being* here obligates one to such responsibilities.

And *not being a citizen* does not debar one who is here from another country from working, studying, visiting public facilities, benefiting from the protections of law, and a variety of other benefits. These privileges can all be enjoyed under existing policies without the requirement of being a citizen.

Biblical Law did not require strangers (foreign visitors) to become citizens. Owning property would have been difficult, given the way property was managed under the ancient Israelite economy. But a foreign visitor would most likely have been able to find some place to rent or perhaps even to purchase, until, that is, the Sabbath year, when properties were returned to their original owner.

Citizenship in Israel was closely linked to the worship of God, and foreigners were not allowed to participate in the ancient Hebrew religious practices (although later, this prohibition was much relaxed, eventuating in the class of “God-fearers” we meet in the New Testament). But this had no bearing on whether they could live and work for an extended period among the Hebrew people. Nothing approaching our present

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understanding of citizenship exists in the Law of God.

The Law of God understood that people from other nations would want to benefit from conditions and opportunities in Israel. And although they would not have been permitted to worship God, they were free to live and work and expected to keep His Law like everyone else, and they would have been subject to the jurisdiction and oversight of local elders and judges.

Worth considering

I don't know whether removing the citizenship requirement and/or quotas from the immigration question would have any effect on the kind of public policies lawmakers might enact to reform immigration practices. But it might be worth floating as a suggestion. Is it possible to accommodate foreigners wanting to live, work, and enjoy the privileges of American life, while submitting to American law, so that they can remain in this country for extended periods without achieving citizenship?

Citizenship was not an issue in ancient Israel. Perhaps there are ways of accommodating the continual influx of immigrants that do not entail a citizenship requirement.

Should American immigration policies allow for long-term, even indefinite, stays on the part of foreigners, without any expectation that citizenship is the end game? One fear, I suppose, is that foreigners would flood these shores, expecting to be taken care of by the government. But if we recall that, in the Biblical economy, even the poor were expected to work and contribute to the community, that fear might not be well-founded.

We tend to think that all citizens of the United States love their country and its history, heritage, and traditions. Increasingly, it appears that is not the case. Citizenship in America does not automatically make good citizens. And to the extent that this assumption is a factor in requiring citizenship for long-term residency, it is at least a moot question, suggesting that other ways might be found for accommodating the strangers and foreigners in our midst.

But if citizenship is the best alternative for immigrants, then we should make sure the process is thorough and consistent, and not subject to politicization.

For reflection

1. As you see it, what are the benefits that one gains from being a citizen in the United States? What responsibilities does citizenship entail?
2. How much do you know about the process of becoming a citizen? See what you can find out. Does this seem a good preparation for citizenship in the US?
3. What would the US lose if citizenship were not required of all who live here? What might be gained?

Next steps—Preparation: Investigate the process whereby foreigners become citizens in the US. Can you see any ways to improve this?

5 Plan to Work

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 23:22

Made for work

As we have seen, God created human beings for work. Working reflects the image of God and allows people to provide for their needs and contribute to the developing goodness of the earth and the wellbeing of their neighbors. In ancient Israel, even the able poor were expected to work.

The necessity of work is true for every human being. Enslaving people to a variety of entitlements is contrary to Biblical thinking and human wellbeing.

Any foreigners living for an extended period in ancient Israel were expected to work, even if only to glean with other poor people in the fields of their neighbors. Biblical Law makes only scant provision for meeting the material needs of foreigners out of anything like a public purse (Deut. 14:28, 29). Part of the three-year tithe was set aside for that purpose, an expression of distributive justice. In the main, however, strangers, like the native poor, were expected to work to provide for their needs and contribute to the local economy.

Anyone coming to this country with a view to making a home here must not expect to be greeted and sustained by a program of entitlements. They must come with the expectation that, like everyone else, they will have to work.

The entitlement mindset

The entitlement mindset in America today has made it possible for foreigners who live here illegally to benefit from public services paid for by American taxpayers, chiefly, education and some forms of healthcare. But we also see entitlements at work in areas such as housing, when school children are forced to abandon their classrooms to make room for illegal immigrants, or when unprocessed immigrants are shipped to military bases around the country (for a thorough understanding of the history and nature of the entitlement mindset, see Christopher Caldwell, *The Age of Entitlement*).

Illegal workers do not pay taxes. Paying taxes would reveal them as illegal, after all. And it is to the advantage of their employers not to have to report their wages to the IRS. And many illegal workers send large portions of their wages back to their native country to support their families. Thus, the only good they are contributing to our society is cheap labor—labor secured in many cases contrary to existing wage laws (which are themselves unjust, but they are the law of the land), and to the disadvantage of American workers who cannot compete with those who readily accept sub-par wages.

It's simply cheaper to hire illegal aliens in some capacities because they can be paid below minimum wage requirements and without the bother of IRS and FICA “contributions.” And once they're here and working, they become a possible source of political power; thus, many politicians work to make all manner of public services available to them, even though they are not employed.

Such work is unjust and violates the principles of neighbor-love.

Can it be helping to resolve the immigration problem in America that public services are available at little or no cost to foreigners, especially those who are here illegally? I don't see how, and I don't believe such practices contribute to the long-term benefit of those who receive them. I can't imagine that, in the ancient Israelite economy, strangers would be allowed to come to Israel and live off the tithes of the people rather

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than take up employment to sustain themselves.

Long-term solutions

The present political climate is making it increasingly difficult to wean anyone from entitlements, since this is an efficient way for people to avoid taking responsibility for their lives and for politicians to purchase the votes of the dependent. Thus, removing illegal aliens from the ranks of those receiving public benefits, and requiring them all to work, is not likely to happen in the near future.

But in this series we're thinking about long-term policy changes, and only as we begin to think in new ways and to prepare for a different approach to the problem of immigration will we ever be able to expect different outcomes in our immigration situation.

And only if we make a point of talking about these issues—and thus fulfilling part of our “we the people” responsibility—can we ever hope to see new policies, perhaps even policies informed by Biblical Law, come into being, for the immigration crisis and for much else besides.

If it were generally known, among those considering coming to America, that all are expected to work in order to provide for their needs, and that no or few public services are available to them or their children for free, and only for the short-term—except as local charity was able to provide—I suspect this would cut down the flow of illegal immigrants into the country.

Here might be an area of public policy where real immigration reform could be accomplished as Christians fulfill their citizenship duties.

For reflection

1. Does it sound cruel, unfeeling, or unjust to require immigrants to find work? Explain.
2. How do politics muddy the waters of immigration policy? Is there any way to overcome this?
3. Do you know of any Christian organizations whose mission is to help immigrants become well-grounded in America? How might you find out about this?

Next steps—Preparation: See if you can find one Christian organization devoted to helping immigrants according to Biblical criteria. Learn as much as you can about them and see if there is any way to become involved in their work.

6 One Law for All

“You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 24.22

The laws of the land

The context of this statute is the death penalty for murder, but the principle encoded here extended to all the laws of the land in ancient Israel. Foreigners were expected to know and obey the Law of God, and they would have been subject to all the procedures of justice should they fail in doing so.

No special laws existed to accommodate their unique needs or concerns, and they were exempt from none of the civil laws by which all citizens of Israel lived. No laws designed to benefit foreigners above native Israelites would have been tolerated.

If a foreigner chose to sojourn among the people of ancient Israel, not only must he be prepared to work and support himself, with but a minimal (and temporary) amount of public support, but he must also be familiar with and submissive to the laws of the land.

And no one in a position of authority could set aside any laws or enact any policies or practices aimed at exempting strangers and sojourners from the same civic obligations as the people of Israel. Law is not a tool for humans to make and wield according to their whims or wants, as has too often been the case in this age of entitlement. All law derives from the Law of God, and the works of God’s Law are written on the heart of every person (Rom. 2.14, 15) and are the standard for good, just, and loving behavior.

So how might this principle apply to reforming immigration policy and practice in America?

No double standard

The Law of God insists that justice is served when everybody within a nation abides by the same standards of law. This only makes sense. Americans despise “double standards” of any kind, and this is especially true when it comes to matters of law and justice. Americans thus intuitively—because the works of the Law are written on their hearts—demonstrate agreement with this basic principle of Biblical Law.

With respect to immigration policy, therefore, no special exceptions or exemptions from the law of the land should exist for foreigners living in this country: no double standards. This includes the existing laws concerning who may become an American citizen and what the process is for that to occur. Nor should any American citizens engaged with immigrants or foreigners be allowed to relate to or associate with immigrants or foreigners apart from the framework of American law.

One reason America has an immigration problem today is because certain employers violate the law of the land with impunity, in particular, those laws relating to minimum wage and income reporting. Illegal immigrants will work for sub-minimum wages, are frequently paid in cash, receive no social security benefits, and do not pay taxes on their unreported income. The work is often seasonal and thus contributes to illegal immigrants not being able to put down roots. They must go to where the work is and often live in conditions of abject squalor.

Personally, I do not believe that minimum wage laws are just or helpful; however, they are the law of the land, and any who circumvent them by hiring illegal workers at below minimum wage rates should be prosecuted until the laws are changed.

Another blatant disregard of American law fueling the current crisis is the waiving of quotas and other

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requirements relative to immigration to allow as great an influx of immigrants as possible. This, coupled with certain actions favoring immigrants—providing housing, cell phones, transportation, and other double-standard forms of preferentialism—have only made the problem worse. These practices encourage increased illegal immigration and disrespect for the law of the land, and they threaten the security and wellbeing of cities and towns throughout the land where illegal immigrants are transported for political purposes.

...and justice for all

Foreigners and those who aid them in breaking American laws should be held accountable until the demands of justice are met. This should apply to all foreigners, whether diplomats or drug dealers, vagrants or vacationers, part-time workers or full-time students, as well as to all employers, service-providers, bureaucrats, and other members of government. No one living or visiting in this country should be exempt from obedience to American law. All expect the privileges and protections of those laws; all should likewise expect to fulfill the obligations of them.

If the laws are inadequate, outdated, or unjust then they must be changed. But no one may set aside the law with impunity.

We will not make progress in immigration reform if we continue to treat illegal immigrants as a special class or a political boon by choosing to wink at the violations of American law that are associated with their employment, benefits, or other arrangements.

Justice for all means the same justice under the same laws for all those who visit, live, or work within the jurisdiction of those laws.

For reflection

1. How should we respond to employers who violate the law of the land?
2. How should we respond to government when it ignores or violates laws relating to immigration?
3. If “we the people” will not become involved in such issues as this, can we expect the problem to go away? Explain.

Next step—Preparation: Thank God that we live in a country others desperately long to know as their own. How has the present immigration crisis affected your community? How has your community responded? Do you see any evidence of a double standard at work?

7 Some Concluding Thoughts

“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Deuteronomy 10.17-19

Love for sojourners

The Law of God was given to Israel to guide the people of God in learning how to love Him and their neighbors. The Law did not save Israel; God had already graciously delivered them from captivity in Egypt before He gave them His Law. The Law was not intended as yoke or burden, keeping people from the things they really wanted to do. It was designed to encourage justice, order, safety, and love within the communities of Israel, and to serve as a witness to the surrounding nations. By cultivating love for God through its various religious precepts and practices, the Law would encourage love for neighbors in all civil matters.

Thus, the Law of God, as Paul explained, is holy and righteous and good (Rom. 7.12). It is the Law of love and of liberty (Ps. 119.44, 45; 1 Jn. 5.1-3; Jms. 2.8-13). The Law is established as the standard for individual righteousness and for a good and just society (Rom. 3.31). The Law of God is thus well able to speak into matters of public policy, such as the present crisis of immigration.

We’ve seen that God has much to say about “strangers and sojourners” who, observing His blessings on Israel, come to wander among them for a season or even to make Israel their permanent home. When God blesses a people, the nations can’t help but notice, and many will seek those blessings for themselves.

Americans take pride in the fact that ours is a “nation of immigrants.” But unless we turn to the counsel of God’s Law, that pride in “strangers and sojourners” could turn into suspicion, scorn, and even hate. The Law of God can guide us in thinking about how we as a nation can love those who come to us from other countries with the kind of love that finds favor with God and conduces to a just and loving society.

A summary

Here, based on the brief survey of God’s Law we have been examining in this part of our study of the Law of God and public policy, are some thoughts about how to proceed in the work of immigration reform in America today. These guidelines can be transformed into meaningful public policies, if believers are willing to take seriously their role as “we the people” in helping to improve the way we are governed, and if we are consistent in making use of all the *loci* in which matters of public policy are considered.

First, the Law of God encourage us to seek a new attitude toward immigrants and immigration. Rather than fear and despise them, as is increasingly the case, we must learn to love the strangers among us as God does. The Church can take the lead here by making love for strangers an aspect of its local ministries, and by encouraging an attitude of thanksgiving to God both for the strangers in our midst and the abundant blessings of God of which their presence reminds us.

Second, believers should lead the way in seeking local solutions to the immigration crisis, especially church-based solutions. Again, local churches could render a valuable service to their communities, the nation, and immigrants from all over the globe if they made it part of their ministry to reach out locally to the strangers in their midst with programs and services designed to help them get work and become contributing members of the local community. Churches will have the most success in this effort if they work together with other churches rather than try to assume all the burden of this outreach alone.

Third, we must insist that government enforce the laws of the land, eliminating or rewriting any that unfairly favor immigrants or otherwise exacerbate the problem of illegal immigration. The minimum wage law, for

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example, encourages illegal immigration and sends wealth out of this country to be spent in other markets elsewhere. Because certain employers bypass the minimum wage law to pay their illegal workers in cash, they also rob the Treasury of tax revenue, thus further strain the tax burden on law-abiding citizens.

Fourth, we should encourage government to review policies on quotas, visiting workers, and foreign students. Perhaps we need to create a new status for foreigners who wish to stay in the country on a long-term basis, but without the need or expectation of becoming citizens. At the same time, we must protect America's borders, not use them to political advantage by disregarding existing immigration laws and policies. At the same time, we should make the route to citizenship an easier road for those desiring to pursue it. Here again is an area where churches could participate in the process more actively and fruitfully.

Finally, we should support policies that require all immigrants who intend a long-term tenure, whether or not citizenship is a goal, to find and maintain work. We must demonstrate no tolerance of immigrants—or others—who violate American law. If the policy was to deport without possibility of return any foreigners who show contempt for American law or the immigration policies of the land, we might find that to be a helpful part of the process of enhancing the immigrant population.

Encouragement

Many of these ideas are already being discussed. This should encourage us in two ways.

First, these discussions provide opportunities for Christians and our churches to join the conversation about immigration policy and make a positive contribution. And second, they give us an opportunity to demonstrate how the Law of God remains a potent source of insight and counsel in helping us to bring the blessings of God to our nation.

We do not anticipate that every believer will be called to active involvement in immigration reform. But every believer prays, and even adding such concerns as this to our prayer lives enhances the likelihood that God will hear our prayers and show mercy to our land.

For reflection

1. Do you pray for immigrants? Or about present policies and situations? How might you begin to pray more consistently and specifically?
2. If Christians do nothing to help in the present immigration crisis, what is likely to happen?
3. How can you encourage your church—or groups within your church—to pray more consistently for the strangers and sojourners in our midst?

Next steps—Preparation: Adjust your prayer life to spend more time praying for immigrants and immigration. Use the studies in this series to guide your prayers.

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For reflection or discussion

1. Why should Christians take an interest in the present immigration crisis?
2. What can you do to make sure you love the “strangers and sojourners” among us as God does?
3. What might your church do to become active in caring for the strangers in your community?
4. How can you help your church—or the groups you participate in in your church—to love and care about immigrants like God does?
5. What’s the most important lesson you have learned from this installment in our study of “The Law of God and Public Policy”?

For prayer:

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Thank you.