

Excerpts from “The United States of America: Land of the ‘free’”

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Immigration: A word that, to some people, means a fresh start or safety. This word is also seen as a controversial topic in politics....Immigration is an issue that needs to be looked at through political, Christian, empathetic, and logical perspectives; we are not dealing with objects here. We are dealing with people who have traveled miles away from home. We as Christians should be able to welcome new people into our communities and remember that in a country founded by immigrants, ‘immigrant’ should not be looked at as a bad word.

Jesús, a Mexican immigrant who has lived in the United States for almost twenty years, said he chose to come to the United States for a better future, his wife, and his forty-day-old baby. When asked what factors influenced his decision to immigrate, he spoke about how he wanted to be able to build a home and earn money without having to fear for his and his family’s safety and wellbeing. “Finding a sustainable job in Mexico was hard for me, and the job options were hazardous, and I had a family to think of.”

Jesús’s story is just one of the millions of other immigrants’ unique stories, but it is still essential. Many common reasons people immigrate to the United States may be because of safety, poverty, job opportunities, wars, natural disasters, political or racial persecution, local economic hardships, family, global market pressures, sheer curiosity, and other reasons....

As Christians, we should be extra sensitive to these immigrants. The Bible has multiple instances when there is a migration of the people, and one of the most popular ones is when Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus) and into a new land....

In the Book of Deuteronomy, God’s love spreads to migrants because God himself made his chosen people migrants, especially in Deuteronomy 10:12-22, “*For you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.*” How do we, as Christians, support the local immigrants in our community? By remembering that immigrant is just a term and that these new immigrants coming into our communities and country are people– God’s children, and we show warm welcome to them because Jesus tells us to ‘welcome the stranger’ (Romans 12:13). Something else that can be extremely helpful is putting together resources or being the resource they can reach out to. For example, setting up doctor’s appointments, translators, telling them when and where food pantries and laundry mats are, and helping to enroll their children in school and other activities can be a tremendous help to immigrants who are just starting out. One person in the community did that for Jesús, and he has never forgotten it.

Jesús’s story is a massive part of the story of my life. Without him and his perseverance to build a better life, a home, for his wife, child, and future children, I would not be able to proudly identify myself as a United States-born citizen and middle child of two hardworking Mexican immigrants. I have experienced first-hand how hard it is for immigrants to find jobs, friends, and security when it feels like the whole country is wishing for them to fail or trying to send us back to the “hole we crawled out of.” Immigrants are people too, and they deserve the same fundamental human rights that we all have. No one should ever be treated as just another ‘problem’ to solve....

A federal policy change that should be made to address this problem is making it somewhat easier for the people seeking asylum or living in the United States illegally to find help and speed up the Visa process....

Also, contrary to popular belief, immigration can positively affect the United States' economy. With more immigrants, more jobs are being created, and the job wages are going up, and it is not just for these immigrants. With more people working and living in the United States, more people are paying taxes and doing their part as American citizens. Immigrant workers also contribute to the native-born aging population by increasing the number of workers and strengthening the Social Security and Medicare trust funds....

The government spends a lot of money on the US military. Using some of that money to help with the root cause(s) of immigration would be very helpful. That money could go to different government programs in other struggling countries.....Another proposal is hiring more people who can help in the immigration system. More people's cases can be looked at and hopefully solved....

For many people, [immigration] means a new life full of opportunities. The world is changing, and every day we will encounter new people. We may see a ton of new immigrants in our communities, and when we do, remember that Jesus said to welcome the stranger and treat others how you would want to be treated.