

Chapter 12c – Immigration

What should be the policy of the U.S. (or any other nation) regarding the immigration of people from other countries?

A. Biblical Teaching

- a. Treatment of the sojourner (Ex. 22:21, 23:9, Lev. 19:33, Deut 10:19): biblical requirement to care for those living away from their permanent homes. Must keep this in mind for entire discussion.

You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (Exo 22:21 ESV)

"You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (Exo 23:9 ESV)

"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Lev 19:33 ESV)

He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (Deu 10:18 ESV)

- b. Do immigrants today always = sojourner (or alien, stranger) of the OT? See James Hoffmeier's arguments re. sojourner & border protection in the OT world: "sojourner" was always known to host country and given permission to enter.

- c. *Immigration policies of a nation should be designed to bring benefit to that specific nation* (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–14)

1. The Constitution is in alignment with this biblical principle: "ensure domestic tranquility," "provide for the common defense," "promote the general welfare."
2. Implication: US should control all immigration processes to give priority to those who would most benefit US society, and exclude those who would negatively affect US society

B. Historically different immigration situation today (as compared to the immigration situations of years past).

Two problems have become acute within the past decade or so:

- a. First, *Illegal Immigrants*: Estimates run as high as 13 million or more (4% of a nation of 307 million).

- b. Second, *Permanent Lack of Assimilation* for some:

1. Primary Loyalties – The US vs. Nations of origin?.
2. Inability of many to rise above the lowest level of annual income
3. Some drain more resources than they provide for the nation (see statistics from the Center for Immigration studies p. 472, PATB)

- c. *Some influential immigrant leaders actually promote the lack of assimilation*

1. Raul Yzaguirre (former president of La Raza): "U.S. English is to Hispanics as the Ku Klux Klan is to blacks."
2. Juan Hernandez: "I want the third generation, the seventh generation, I want them all to think 'Mexico first.' "

SOLUTIONS:

C. Step 1: Close the borders.

- a. *Border Fence* would stop 99% of illegal immigration. Ineffective borders = criminals, terrorists, and others entering at will.
- b. *Those who enter who are not criminals*: - still breaking the law, - become a permanent underclass, - become part of an underground economy, - are easily exploited, and - get little protection from the US legal system which doesn't know they exist.
- c. Citizens get no protection from illegal immigrant criminals who cannot be tracked.
- d. Illegal immigrants, by virtue of their "illegal" status have no motivation to integrate into and benefit US society.
- e. Illegal immigrant status = violation of Paul's teaching (Rom. 13:1)
- f. A Border Fence could easily be built, but instead the process has dragged on for years.
 1. Border Fence = having the ability to *determine* who enters the country and to *know* who enters the country. Nothing more.

D. Step 2: enact comprehensive reform of the immigration system

- a. *Stopping chain migration and exercising rational control over immigration*

1. Hart-Celler Act of 1965 (Legal Immigrants to U.S. - 2.1 mil, 1950s; to 4.2 mil, 1970s; 6.2 mil, 1980s; 9.7 mil, 1990s)
2. Immigration Reform and Control Act, 1986. – Meant as a cure-all, but instead gave added incentive to illegal immigration
3. Problem with Hart-Celler & similar laws: *US has no effective control over either the number or the qualifications immigrants.*
- Other problems: burden of medical care system, difficulty for teachers to teach in the English language, contribute to feelings of resentment, possibility of Muslim terrorist/s being "sponsored" into the US.

- b. *Benefits of Controlled immigration*

1. Immigrants are, by and large, *producers* who bring benefit to the economy and *helpers* who bring other benefits to the society as a whole. Controlled immigration can help limit entrance to these types of immigrants.
2. Example of Nobel laureates

- c. *Needed patriotic and educational reforms in the schools and the immigration processes*

1. Immigration process + education reform = all children growing up in American schools (including immigrant children) can be taught the moral standards and ideals that have historically been true of the nation.
2. Any new citizens must renounce allegiance to any other nation and swear allegiance to the United States.

-Opposition to this: Peter Shuck of Hofstra University & Peter J. Spiro of Yale in WSJ op-ed = Mexican & American

3. The Need to learn English for Immigrants:

- It is the one language that allows communication in most nations. Learning English can only benefit Immigrants, not harm.

- US needs a population that speaks the same language for practical purposes as well as to feel like 1 nation & 1 society.

d. *Expanding the number of skilled workers who are admitted to the United States*: Though the present state of immigration in the US allows many unskilled laborers into the country we maintain restrictions that are far too severe on the visas granted to highly trained scientists, inventors, medical professionals, university researchers, and others with similar qualifications.

E. Step 3: Enforce tighter regulations on employers regarding illegal immigrants

a. *Two kinds of harm that merit more effective law enforcement re. employers of illegal immigrants*:

1. Exploitation of illegal immigrants by employers

2. Incentive for other illegal immigrants to come to the US because jobs are available

b. *E-verify* – enforced more in AZ, but nationally, by and large, still voluntary.

F. Step 4: What should be done about illegal immigrants that are already here?

a. *First*: No national consensus on this issue is possible until the border is secure and vast flow of illegal immigration is stopped.

b. *Once the border is secure: Deport all known criminals*

c. *Require immediate temporary registration* of some kind for immigrants to receive any service from any facility in the US.

d. *Establish a difficult but possible path to citizenship*

1. Immediate amnesty would be a mistake (tried in past)

2. For those immigrants who are contributing most positively to American society, the biblical requirements of mercy and compassion, as well as the well-being of the nation => we should want them to stay.

3. Requirements for citizenship should include: fine, back-taxes, learn (or know) English, allegiance sworn to US above any other nation, learn values of American culture & society, record of employment that is continuous over time, and an extensive background check.

4. Time required before citizenship allowed? – should be decided by political process. 5-10 years seems appropriate.

e. *With this type of immigration reform (points D & E), immigration would be “gain” proposition, instead of “loss” for the nation.*

f. *Possible objection: foreign workers will take jobs.* -> based in a misunderstanding of economics.

F. What should American churches do about immigrants (in their congregations)?

a. *Here legally* – a welcoming home, source of support and encouragement. Apply all biblical texts that speak of the *sojourner*.

b. *Here illegally* – kind but honest counsel that we (and they) are to be subject to the governing authority (Rom 13:1).

1. The immigration laws of the US do not require sin against God, & do not fall under laws that biblical conscience would a believer to disobey.

c. In some cases, it may be possible for churches to help with an immigration lawyer that would help someone stay legally.

1. Honesty dictates that we accept that this will not often be possible. Many will have to leave in order to obey the law.

G. Guest worker programs?

a. I might be wrong on this, but I think: Too difficult to enforce exit requirements: Therefore it becomes a new pipeline for illegal immigration.

b. *Example of Germany, France, Netherlands, and Scandinavia* (Peter Salins, Professor – Stony Brook Univ.)

c. Guest worker program not needed in US (on an economic level):

1. The free market will determine what the US can produce, & at what price, by employing people within its own borders to work at its own farms and factories

d. Possible Objection: American farmers driven out of business by low cost foreign food

1. Resource and skill of the American farmer make this unlikely

2. If it does happen to a degree, it's simply the effect of natural economic forces bringing about a shift in world markets

3. Economic forces should not be feared.

-Historically, 60% of US population worked in agriculture. Now, 2%. The other 58% generally found higher paying jobs in others fields. The economic transition was a benefit.

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