

Immigration

Intro – One of the hottest topics in our culture today!

1. What is immigration?

- An **immigrant** is “a person who comes to live *permanently* in a foreign country.” So then, immigration is “the action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country.” **Immigration is different from mere visitation.**
- An immigrant is not to be confused with a **migrant**. A migrant is “a person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions.” Most immigrants started as migrants, but not all migrants become immigrants. **One is more permanent.**
- As of 2015, the number of international migrants had reached 244 million worldwide, which reflects a 41% increase since 2000. One third of the world's international migrants are living in just 20 countries. People are on the move!
- The largest number of international migrants live in the **United States**, with 19% of the world's total. Germany and Russia host 12 million migrants each, taking the second and third place in countries with the most migrants worldwide.
- Saudi Arabia hosts 10 million migrants, followed by the United Kingdom (9 million) and the United Arab Emirates (8 million).
- Nearly half (43%) of all international migrants originate in Asia, and Europe was the birthplace of the second largest number of migrants (25%), followed by Latin America (15%).

- India has the largest diaspora in the world (16 million people), followed by Mexico (12 million) and Russia (11 million).
- A 2012 survey by Gallup found that given the opportunity, 640 million adults would migrate to another country, with 23% of these would-be immigrants choosing the **United States** as their desired future residence, while 7% of respondents would choose the United Kingdom. As Neil Diamond sang, “They’re coming to America!”

2. Why do people migrate to other places?

- The reasons people migrate are too many to mention, but here are some of the **most common reasons**:
 - To escape **persecution** – racial, religious, national, etc.
 - To escape **conflict or violence**
 - To find refuge after being displaced by **environmental factors** (Katrina)
 - To seek **better health care**
 - To escape poverty and find **better economic opportunities**
 - To **reunify the family**
 - To pursue **higher education**
 - To pursue a **career**
 - To **marry someone** of another culture
- Basically, some people migrate for **voluntary** reasons, while others feel like their actions are **mandatory** based on the urgency of their situation.

3. What is this country’s history of immigration?

- The United States has long been considered a **nation of immigrants**. Attitudes toward new immigrants have vacillated between **welcoming** and **exclusionary** over the years.
- By the early 1600s, communities of European immigrants dotted the Eastern seaboard, including the Spanish in Florida, the British in New England and Virginia, the Dutch in New York, and the Swedes in Delaware.
- Some, including the Pilgrims and Puritans, came for **religious freedom**. Many sought greater economic opportunities. Still others, including hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans, arrived in America against their will.
- **March 1790** - Congress passed the first law about who should be granted U.S. citizenship. The **Naturalization Act of 1790** allowed any free white person of “good character,” who has been living in the United States for two years or longer to apply for citizenship. Without citizenship, nonwhite residents were denied basic constitutional protections, including the right to vote, own property, or testify in court.
- **August 1790** - The first U.S. census was taken. The English were the largest ethnic group among the 3.9 million people counted, though nearly one in five Americans were of African heritage.
- **Between 1820 and 1860**, the Irish—many of them Catholic—accounted for an estimated one-third of all immigrants to the United States. Some 5 million German immigrants also came to the U.S., many of them making their way to the Midwest to buy

farms or settle in cities including Milwaukee, St. Louis and Cincinnati.

- **1875** - Following the Civil War, some states passed their own immigration laws, but in 1875 the Supreme Court declared that it’s the responsibility of the federal government to make and enforce immigration laws.
- **Between 1880 and 1920**, more than 20 million immigrants arrived. The majority were from Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe, including 4 million Italians and 2 million Jews. Many of them settled in major U.S. cities and worked in factories.
- **January 1892** - Ellis Island, the United States’ first immigration station, opened in New York Harbor. More than 12 million immigrants would enter the United States through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1954. In 1907, U.S. immigration peaked, with 1.3 million people entering the country through Ellis Island alone.
- Many times throughout our country’s history, **Congress has acted to limit the number of immigrants into the US**, such as The Immigration Act of 1924 that placed quotas on immigration.
- In the wake of the numerical limits established by the 1924 law, illegal immigration to the United States increased. The **U.S. Border Patrol** was established to crack down on illegal immigrants crossing our Mexican and Canadian borders.
- **1942** - Labor shortages during World War II prompted the United States and Mexico to form the Bracero Program, which allowed Mexican agricultural workers to enter the United States temporarily. The program lasted until 1964.

- **1956-1957** - The United States admitted roughly 38,000 immigrants from Hungary after a failed uprising against the Soviets. The United States admitted **over 3 million refugees into the US during the Cold War.**
- **1965** - The **Immigration and Nationality Act** overhauled the American immigration system. The Act ended the national origin quotas enacted in the 1920s which favored some racial and ethnic groups over others.
- **1986** - President Ronald Reagan signed into law the **Simpson-Mazzoli Act**, which grants amnesty to more than 3 million immigrants living illegally in the United States.
- **2001** - U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) propose the first Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors (**DREAM Act**), which would provide a pathway to legal status for **Dreamers** - undocumented immigrants brought to the United States illegally by their parents as children. The bill has never passed.
- **2012** - President Barack Obama signed Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which temporarily shielded some Dreamers from deportation, but no path to citizenship.
- **2017**: President Donald Trump issues two executive orders—both titled “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States”—aimed at curtailing travel and immigration from six majority Muslim countries (Chad, Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia) as well as North Korea and Venezuela.

- Both of these travel bans were challenged in state and federal courts. In **April 2018**, the travel restrictions on Chad were lifted. In **June 2018**, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a third version of the ban on the remaining seven countries.
 - In **2017**, an executive order called for the immediate construction of a wall across the U.S.–Mexico border, the hiring of 5,000 new border patrol agents and 10,000 new immigration officers, and federal funding penalties for sanctuary cities.
 - To summarize, **America is a “nation of immigrants,” but our nation has regulated immigration throughout our history.**
4. How many people are immigrating to America today?
- **Over 1,000,000 immigrants** obtain legal permanent resident status in the US annually. Currently, the US permits **30,000 refugees** into the country annually.
 - The number of unauthorized immigrants living in the United States has dropped to the level it was in 2004, and Mexicans are no longer a majority of this population. This decline is due mainly to a large drop in the number of new unauthorized immigrants coming into the country.
 - There were **10.5 million** unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. in 2017, representing 3.2% of the total U.S. population. The 2017 unauthorized immigrant total is a 14% drop from the peak of 12.2 million in 2007, when this group was 4% of the population.
 - The U.S. civilian workforce includes **7.6 million unauthorized immigrants**, representing a decline since 2007.

- **Six states** account for 57% of unauthorized immigrants: California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey and Illinois.

5. What does the Bible say about immigration?

- Every person, national or migrant, local or foreigner, legal or illegal, is **made in the image of God** (Gen. 1:26). Nothing changes the eternal value of a human, no matter their status.
- Like every other country, Israel entertained “strangers” or “foreigners” into their country. God commands His people – *“you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exo 23:9)*.
- **Leviticus 19:34** – *“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.”*
- **Hebrews 13:1-2** – *“Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”*
- That said, **it is not unfair or inappropriate** for the government to regulate immigration or to create measures to stop illegal immigration. Even Jerusalem was protected with a wall. The government is “God’s minister to you for good.”

6. How should Christians respond to immigration?

- As Christians, we should **treat others the way we want to be treated** (Matt. 7:12). Color, creed, economics, or nationality never changes that!

- **Befriend the immigrants** you know and take advantage of the opportunity to reach them for Christ! Many migrants have been saved in this country, only to go back to their home countries and work as missionaries for Jesus!
- As Christians, we must also **honor the rule of law**. We should not be a part of illegal activity and we must honor the immigration laws of our land. We should not support “sanctuary cities” because they contradict the stated law of the land.
- Rather than advocating for open borders, **Christians should favor border security**, not simply for our own interests, but for the interests of those who would seek to enter our country illegally. Human trafficking, rape, and abuse could be reduced significantly with better border security.
- Should our government use tax dollars to support illegal immigrants and their families? **It’s doesn’t seem wise for the US to use tax revenue to support illegal immigrants**, especially when there are already so many in our country in need.
- As individual Christians, we need to love and help every immigrant that enters our country legally. We must not be a part of illegal immigration, but we should love and show kindness to every illegal immigrant we encounter and seize on the opportunity to reach them for Christ.