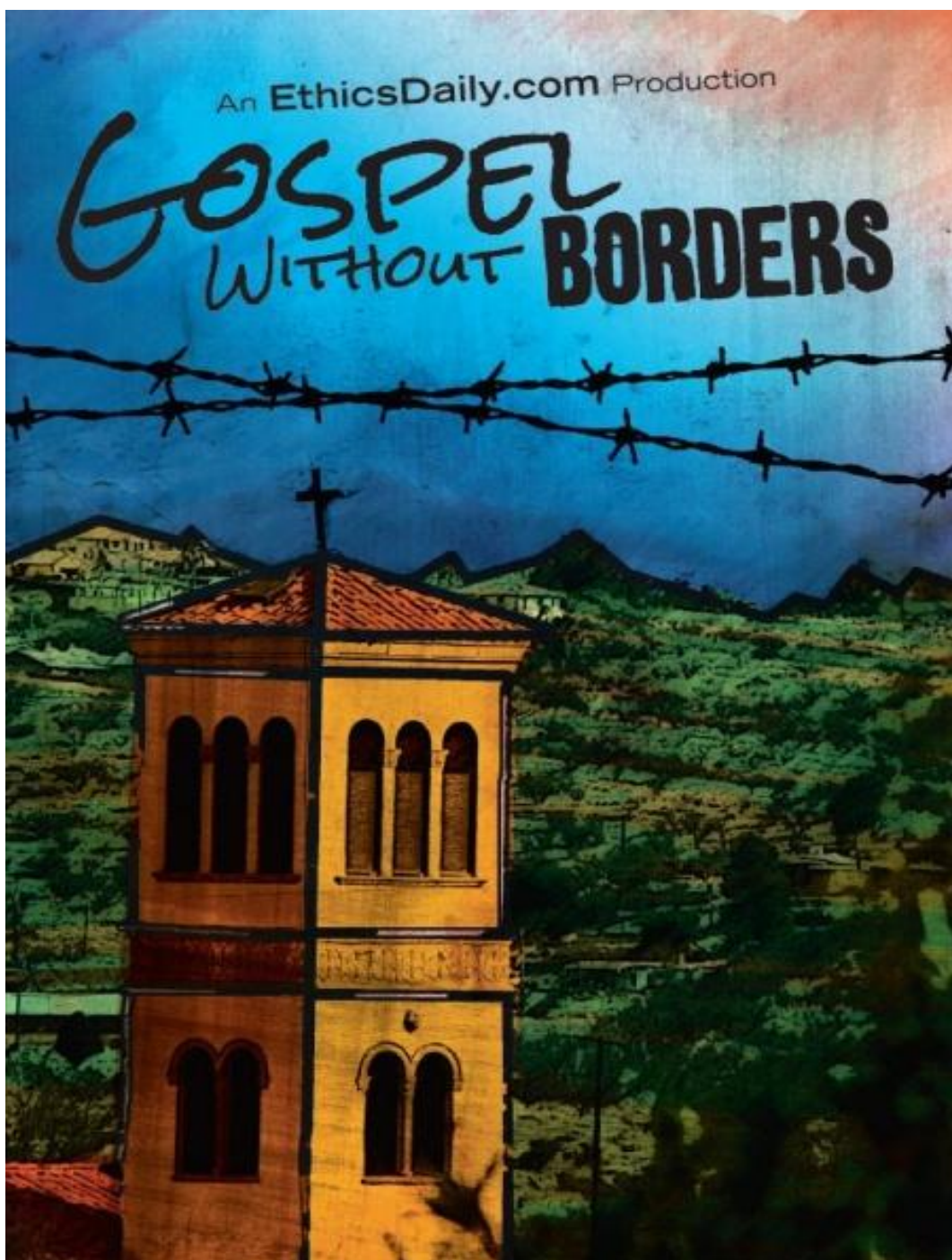


DISCUSSION GUIDE  
SHORT VERSION



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## DVD AND VIEWING OPTIONS

The DVD is loaded with two versions of the documentary, as well as extra features.

The short version is 31 minutes, and the long version is 53 minutes. Each version profiles immigration stories in five states: Arizona, Arkansas, North Carolina, Alabama and Iowa. Each version has its own discussion guide.

*This is the guide for the short version.*

The DVD may be shown in its entirety in one session, or you may break up viewing into different sessions. The choice is yours.

Consider the short version for public screenings with panel discussions, as the shorter running time will allow for more discussion. Public screenings offer audiences an opportunity to gather in community to explore a difficult issue, and to find ways to work constructively together to advance the common good. (Go to [www.gospelwithoutborders.net](http://www.gospelwithoutborders.net) and download our “tip sheet” for hosting the best public screening possible.)

We recommend the long version for more intense small-group study over multiple weeks. With the long version, each chapter becomes a starting point for the session study. The long version is ideal for Sunday school classes, Wednesday night forums and other educational experiences.

The long version also provides more context for each of the stories. That context might help a screening organizer or moderator frame discussion and answer questions when only the short version is shown to the larger group.

Long version chapters are as follows:

- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Good Samaritans in the Desert
- Chapter 2: Immigration Experts on Misperceptions
- Chapter 3: Faithful Families Under Stress
- Chapter 4: Immigrant Christians with the Golden Rule
- Conclusion

A suggested viewing schedule:

- Session 1: Introduction and Chapter 1
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- Session 4: Chapter 4 and Conclusion

Note the extra scenes from “Gospel Without Borders.” Extra scenes are:

- “Bravery,” with Barbara Dinnen
- “No More Deaths and Border Patrol,” with John Fife and Gene Lefebvre
- “Phone Card Ministry,” with Stephen Copley

One or more of these features may be of special interest to your viewing group.

The DVD is also packaged with trailers of other EthicsDaily.com documentaries. These include:

- “Sacred Texts, Social Duty”
- “Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims”
- “Beneath the Skin: Baptists and Racism”

Consider using these DVDs for future moral education experiences.

## ABOUT THE TITLE

What is meant by the documentary title "Gospel Without Borders"?

The word "gospel" relates to the good news of faith. The word "borders" relates to political power, to national boundaries, to state lines.

The documentary begins with footage of a security checkpoint some 20 miles north of the border between the United States and Mexico. Viewers see a Border Patrol vehicle, the golden dome of the Iowa state capitol building, the Mexican flag, a Mexican matricula card, and Chatham County Sheriff's cars. These are symbols of political power. They project control, security, protection, order over defined borders.

Viewers also sees faith symbols such as the white church south of Tucson--the San Xavier Mission founded in 1692--and a Catholic bishop sitting in front of a crucifix. One sees a sign for Trinity United Methodist Church and footage of an evening worship service at Iglesia Bautista La Roca. One sees fire and hears wind, two other Christian symbols. One hears a minister announce the good news on an immigrant trail in the desert: "We are from the church."

On the immigration front, the church and the state often face each other with different values and agendas. For example, some state lawmakers think they must protect their states from those who are different from the majority, while church leaders insist that they must minister to the strangers in their midst regardless the law.

For Christians, the gospel transcends the boundaries, the laws, of the state. While Christians honor the law and respect those in authority, Christians are also called to a higher law, to God's law to love the neighbor.

"Our concern ought not to be where states draw their lines and where laws are drawn, but rather about how we respond to each child of God," says Methodist Bishop Charles Crutchfield.

The title underscores this fluid dynamic between the higher law of God to love neighbor and the law of the land.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As of January 2010, the Office of Immigration Statistics for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security put the number of unauthorized individuals living in the United States at 10.8 million. Other interesting facts from the OIS report:

- The number of unauthorized immigrants increased 27 percent between 2000 and 2010.
- The number of unauthorized immigrants in January 2007 was 11.8 million.
- Of the unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2010, 39 percent entered the country in 2000 or later.
- Of the unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2010, 62 percent were from Mexico. (The next highest country was El Salvador at 6 percent, followed by Guatemala at 5 percent.)
- In 2010, 63 percent of unauthorized immigrants were between 25-44 years old.



People use various terms to describe individuals in the United States without proper paperwork. Common terms include these (and combinations thereof):

- Illegal immigrants
- Undocumented migrants
- Unauthorized workers
- People without papers
- Illegals

Those most sensitive to immigrants and their issues may themselves use various terms or have preferences. For example, one expert says it's a mistake to assume that all foreign nationals in the United States are best characterized as "immigrants" because some have no intention of staying; they are simply here for a season, perhaps. He thus prefers the term "migrants" unless the specific situation is known.

And, a person who is here with an expired visa, for example, technically isn't "without papers." Rather, the visa/paperwork is expired and he or she, legally, is said to be "out of status."

Perhaps the most common egregious term is "illegals," as in, "There are lots of illegals in this country." Technically, a person can't be illegal; only an act can be illegal. So in that sense the term itself is incorrect. Emotionally, the term is

derisive and implies that a *person* needs to be *defined* by a single act or choice. Lastly, using the term “illegals” has the effect of criminalizing many people who in fact have made a difficult and courageous choice for themselves and/or families. The criminalizing effect is not desirable for citizens, migrants or children who absorb that language.



Some people also wonder whether to use “Hispanic” or “Latino.” Again, different people have different preferences, and each term carries with it historical, community, cultural and political meaning. For some, the term “Hispanic” implies too much of a relationship to Spain, which may not be relevant or accurate for some of the people commonly called Hispanic. Nevertheless, the U.S. government uses “Hispanic,” not “Latino,” on its forms and documents. The term “Latino” comes from the designation “Latin America,” which originally referred to areas of the Americas where Romance languages, like Spanish, were spoken.



Know that two stories in the documentary involve criminal activity either directly or indirectly. One involves a Mexican-born man who tried to cash a bad check more than a decade ago. That crime (for which he served prison time) is now jeopardizing his ability to remain in the United States (even though he is a legal resident).

Another story includes an account of an undocumented Mexican worker who killed two people while driving under the influence. That man is now in prison and will be deported after his sentence is up.

The inclusion of these stories should not be construed as evidence for a higher rate of criminality among immigrants.

First, these stories came to our attention because they were already in the public spotlight, at least in their local communities. They had garnered significant media attention *because* Mexican men were involved and the immigration issue was and is on the front burner.

Second, various studies over the past decade have shown that higher rates of immigration do not correspond to higher rates of crime. In fact, a 2007 study found that native-born men aged 18-39 were five times more likely than foreign-born men to be incarcerated.

Third, beware of “reasoning” suggesting that if someone is willing to break U.S. law by entering the country without papers, then that person is at heart a lawbreaker. That idea calls for at least two responses: 1) if you’re here without papers, you’re more likely not to do anything to draw attention to yourself (like commit other crimes); and 2) no legal and timely means of entry is available for most people in crisis.



Common initials involved in the immigration issue:

- DHS: Department of Homeland Security
- ICE: Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- BP: Border Patrol
- CBP: Customs and Border Protection
- CIS: Citizenship and Immigration Services

## CHAPTER 1: GOOD SAMARITANS IN THE DESERT

*Main Location: Arizona*

*Main People: John Fife (Presbyterian pastor and co-founder of “No More Deaths”), Gene Lefebvre (Presbyterian pastor and co-founder of “No More Deaths”), Miguel De La Torre (professor of social ethics at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colo.), Juan (migrant crossing the desert)*

*Focus: Ministering to people crossing the desert*

**Would you be willing to emigrate to another country, without documents, if you and your family were living in poverty with no hope of improving your family’s situation? If you said you were, how would you expect Christians in that country to treat you?**

**Would you have guessed that 5,000 confirmed deaths occurred on the U.S.-Mexico border since 2001? What is your reaction to that number?**

### **U.S. Customs and Border Protection | [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)**

John Fife says: "Jesus says in Matthew 25, 'I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was sick, I was in prison, I was an alien stranger. And as you do it to these, you do it to me.' That's the complete description of the migrant in our midst and in our desert."

**Agree? Do you really feel a connection, as Fife does, between those words of Jesus and what is going on in the Sonoran Desert, for example? If so, what call is on your life?**

**What do you think about “No More Deaths,” its camp, its strategy of getting life necessities to migrants in the desert? Would you be willing to participate in that effort? Why or why not?**

### **No More Deaths | [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org)**

**What is your impression of the shrine in the canyon?**

Miguel De La Torre describes the path as a sort of “exodus,” with the shrine being a marker or altar as in Old Testament narratives. For example, Abram built an altar at Hebron (Genesis 13:18) and Joshua built one at Shechem (Joshua 24:25-28).

**What does this "exodus" analogy do for you? Do you see immigrants leaving the economic hardships of Mexico and Central America akin to the Hebrew**



**people leaving behind the slavery of Egypt? Can you see how immigrant Christians might see their journey to the United States as an exodus story?**

Fife says some of the migrants crossing the desert are members of our churches. Maybe you have migrants in your church, a Hispanic mission or a church in another part of town.

**How often do you think about those migrants as fellow Christians? Does thinking of them as Christians change the way you think about them in general?**

**Did it surprise you that Juan wanted Gene Lefebvre to call border patrol?**  
(As background, know that Juan had fallen in the desert and injured himself. He had gotten separated from his five traveling companions. After three days in the desert, he wanted to return to Mexico.)

## CHAPTER 2: IMMIGRATION EXPERTS ON MISPERCEPTIONS

*Main Location: Arkansas*

*Main People: Andres Chao (Mexican consul in Little Rock), Anthony Taylor (Roman Catholic bishop of the diocese of Little Rock), Paul Charton (immigration attorney in Little Rock), Charles Crutchfield (bishop of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church)*

*Focus: Giving people of faith good information*

Here are a few facts about the U.S. border with Mexico:

- The border between the United States and Mexico is nearly 2,000 miles long.
- The border currently has some type of fencing along roughly 650 miles.
- Nearly half of the 650 miles of fence is in Arizona.
- "... approximately half of all drugs seized and illegal immigrants apprehended entering the United States are seized or apprehended in Arizona," according to Customs and Border Protection.

Mexican Consul Andres Chao says: "If I have a problem with my neighbor, and instead of sitting together to try to resolve the problem, I try to build a fence to not see my neighbor, that's not going to solve my problem. I think it's better to sit together and explain the difference that we have and try to resolve the problems because we will be neighbors forever."

**What do you think about Chao's comment ?**

**Mexican Consulate in Little Rock | [portal.sre.gob.mx/littlerock](http://portal.sre.gob.mx/littlerock)**

**Does the border wall make you feel safe? Safer? How does it play into national security? Is that really what the wall is about?**

Chao says of the United States and Mexico, "We will be neighbors forever."

**What are the implications of his statement for policy? For Christian response? For you and your children?**

"Many of the things we do as a country are the diametrical opposite of what Jesus would ask us to do," says Catholic Bishop Anthony Taylor. "And people recognize that. And naturally they will come to places where they encounter Jesus. And when people are rejecting of them, or acting ugly, Jesus is not to be found there. This is not where I find Christ. If they go to a place that has a

steeple but they don't find self-sacrificing love, they have not found a Christian community."

**Talk about your church or faith community in light of Taylor's comments. Do migrants find Jesus there? Would they? In what ways yes? In what ways no?**

## **Diocese of Little Rock | [www.dolr.org](http://www.dolr.org)**

Taylor conducted the confirmation service at St. Peter Catholic Church in both English and Spanish.

**Would you care to attend a church that held bilingual services? Why?**

St. Peter Catholic Church in Pine Bluff was mostly black and brown. The African-American members of the congregation openly welcomed Hispanics into the congregation.

**What are the obstacles that church faces? What are its benefits?**

Attorney Paul Charton talks about a "fear of other."

**Do you fear others, either individually or as a collective group? How so?**

Charton also says anti-immigrant feeling might be prompted by a sense of fairness, as in: "Why allow someone to benefit from breaking the law?"

**How do you respond to this? Does that question seem appropriate? Why?**

Taylor says: "Americans tend to have an absolutized concept of law and that if it's the law, it's the law, it's the law. And may give lip-service to a higher law, but in fact don't give that higher law much weight. We say we're one nation under God, but we don't act that way."

**What is your impression of the law? Taylor talks about God's law or a higher law. Is there a law higher than human-made law? How do you decide which and/or when to follow each?**

One of the oft-cited biblical passages about obeying the law is Romans 13:1-2:

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

Here are a few facts about immigration and the law:

- Having a visa but “overstaying” its term is a civil offense. This would be an example of “unlawful presence.”
- Crossing the border without any documents (like a visa) is a criminal misdemeanor. This would be an example of “entry without inspection.”

**Ask people if they ever knowingly break laws, or which laws they think some people break intentionally.** (Examples: speeding, copyright infringement, littering, sharing prescription drugs, not reporting extra income, hunting/fishing without license, underage drinking, asking missionaries overseas to share the gospel in defiance of *another nation's* law).

**Do we make distinctions about which laws we follow? If we say we knowingly break the law in some instances, how do we justify that choice? Is it for a noble reason? Out of sheer expediency? Because we disagree with the law?**

Taylor also says demagogues promote things they know to be lies but they do it because it sells.

**Can you think of lies people and organizations have told about immigrants and immigration? Why do you think they presented that information?**

The documentary then examines three (of many) common misperceptions about immigration.

*Misperception #1 - Just get in line.*

Mexico is one of four countries (the others being India, China and the Philippines) that is “oversubscribed,” meaning that more citizens of that country are trying to come here legally than U.S. law currently allows.

When countries are oversubscribed, applicants are given a “priority date” that determines a person’s turn to apply for an immigrant visa (and there are different categories of visas).

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is processing visa applications from Mexico with priority dates as far back as 1992, 1993 and 1996 (depending on which visa category one is placed in).

**Is it really honest and realistic to say that those suffering in poverty or separated from their families should get in a line that may take 15 or 20 years to get through?**

*Misperception #2 - Immigrants don't pay taxes.*

Immigrants pay federal and state income taxes, property taxes, sales taxes and have Social Security withheld on paychecks.

As one interviewee said to us, you never hear an undocumented worker tell a cashier, "I don't have to pay the sales tax because I don't have papers." The idea is preposterous.

When filing paperwork for a job, some undocumented workers will make up a Social Security number. When names and numbers do not match the records of the Social Security Administration, the incident is filed in the SSA's "earnings suspense file" (ESF), and the taxes paid on the wages go into the Social Security Trust Fund. The SSA makes automated and manual attempts to resolve "no match" incidents.

Nevertheless, the undocumented worker has money withheld from his or her paycheck and will never see it.

There also exists what is called an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). It is a tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service for those ineligible for a Social Security number.

"ITINs are issued regardless of immigration status because both resident and nonresident aliens may have a U.S. filing or reporting requirement under the Internal Revenue Code," according to the IRS website. "ITINs are for federal tax reporting only, and are not intended to serve any other purpose. IRS issues ITINs to help individuals comply with the U.S. tax laws, and to provide a means to efficiently process and account for tax returns and payments for those not eligible for Social Security Numbers (SSNs). An ITIN does not authorize work in the U.S. or provide eligibility for Social Security benefits or the Earned Income Tax Credit."

The IRS thus says its ITINs are not work authorization numbers. ITINs are regularly used in the community of undocumented workers, however, because those workers want a paper trail establishing their payment of taxes and history in the United States. Proof of that will likely be essential if the law changes to offer the undocumented an adjustment of immigration status.

Immigrants paid completely "under the table" are likely paid a pittance. This is not only unethical but also contributes to a loss of tax revenue (which is in itself an argument for immigration reform and a path to legalization).

*Misperception #3 - Immigrants use up social services.*

A popular 2007 study by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation found a net surplus to the Arkansas state budget of about \$19 million. (This is the study that Attorney Charton and Bishop Crutchfield cite.)

The study noted: “Though education is calculated as a fiscal cost in this report, expenditures to educate immigrants’ children represent an important investment in Arkansas’ future workforce that could pay substantial returns to the state through increased worker productivity and economic growth.”

Another study by economist William Ford of Middle Tennessee State University found that undocumented workers were a net benefit to the national economy, contributing “\$428 billion dollars to the nation’s \$13.6 trillion gross domestic product in 2006.”

Other misperceptions that the documentary doesn’t directly explore: immigrants don’t want to learn English; immigrants increase crime; immigrants bring diseases.

For more information on dispelling these myths and misperceptions, see Miguel De La Torre’s book *Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration* and the October 2010 report “Giving Facts a Fighting Chance: Answers to the Toughest Immigration Questions” by the Immigration Policy Center.

**Immigration Policy Center | [www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)**

“Some of the most ugly, vocal people style themselves as Christians in this discussion,” says Taylor. “That’s the scandal.”

**Do you agree that some Christians are “ugly” on the immigration issue?  
What would account for that?**

He also refers to “cowardice on the part of religious leaders” who are unwilling to speak the truth to congregants.

**Think of local or national religious leaders. Are they speaking truths you don’t want to hear?**

## CHAPTER 3: FAITHFUL FAMILIES UNDER STRESS

*Main Locations: North Carolina and Alabama*

*Main People: Hector Villanueva (pastor of Iglesia Bautista La Roca in Siler City, N.C.), Martha Villanueva (Hector's wife and mother of six), Ellin Jimmerson (minister to the community at Weatherly Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala.)*

*Focus: Relying on faith during crisis*

Hector Villanueva came to the United States with his family when he was three years old. He became a legal resident due to a 1986 law, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). IRCA had several components, one of which granted “amnesty” to immigrants who had entered the country without papers prior to Jan. 1, 1982 and resided here continuously. President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law.

**Do you tend to think about the law as an unchanging code, or do you think of it as malleable and responsive to situations? Discuss.**

Martha Villanueva says their family chose to settle in Chatham County, North Carolina, because it had a large Hispanic population, even in 2006.

**Discuss what you know about immigration in your own community and state. Are more immigrants moving into your area? Where do they work? Go to church? How are local and state lawmakers responding? How are churches responding?**

**Hispanic Liaison of Chatham County | [hispanicliaison.org](http://hispanicliaison.org)**

Hector and Martha Villanueva have been helped by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina. Hector is a pastor in the CBFNC Hispanic network.

**CBFNC | [www.cbfnc.org/Missions/Immigration.aspx](http://www.cbfnc.org/Missions/Immigration.aspx)**

When Hector, a legal permanent resident, applied for citizenship, the immigration service checked his background, which is standard procedure. The routine check uncovered his crime, for which he has already served time.

Hector is receiving a hearing to avoid deportation only because of the age of the conviction. Were this situation played out today, the immigrant offender would be subject to mandatory detention and ultimate deportation.

Hector says in the documentary: “They’re going to drop all the charges and pretend none of this ever happened.” During the interview, he explained that he thought local law enforcement agencies had benefitted financially from his incarceration and now that it was over, his case would eventually fade away.

Hector was referring to Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The 287(g) program is a partnership between ICE and state and local law enforcement agencies that authorizes those agencies to deal with immigration matters in their jurisdiction. The partnership is set forth in a joint Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOAs also set the amount of money ICE will reimburse the law enforcement agency for its handling of “administrative detainees.”

Remember that Martha is an American citizen and a mother of six children, all of whom are American citizens.

**If you were in Martha's shoes, what would you do if your husband was deported? Should she go to Mexico or stay in the United States. How does deporting Hector strengthen an American family?**



The Alabama story also focuses on faith in a family under stress.

Jimmerson says: “Segregation was a system of laws. Segregation was thoroughly legal and thoroughly immoral. The deportation of Japanese-Americans to internment camps in World War II was thoroughly legal and thoroughly immoral.”

**How do you respond to Jimmerson’s claim that some laws are immoral? Do we follow them anyway out of respect for the “rule of law”?**

Jimmerson, who is married to a lawyer, says: “Although we hold the law in high regard, we don’t confuse the law with God. I don’t think we need to confuse Caesar and God.”

**Are U.S. Christians confusing “Caesar and God” on the immigration issue? Discuss.**

The documentary tells about the death of Jimmerson’s daughter and her boyfriend in the car accident, and Jimmerson discusses her feelings about the



man who was driving the car that hit them. She also talks about how the accident affected the Hispanic community in Huntsville.

**Discuss how Jimmerson’s response to the tragedy makes you feel - about Jimmerson, about the Hispanic community, about retribution, about forgiveness.**

Jimmerson has been working on her own documentary, “The Second Cooler,” about immigration. The title refers to the fact that the morgue in Tucson, Ariz., had to install a second cooler to house the growing number of bodies found in the Sonoran Desert.

**The Second Cooler | [www.secondcooler.com](http://www.secondcooler.com)**

## CHAPTER 4: IMMIGRANT CHRISTIANS WITH THE GOLDEN RULE

*Main Location: Iowa*

*Main People: Manuel Catalán (contractor and church trustee at Las Américas), Barbara Dinnen (pastor of Las Américas)*

*Focus: Doing good to others*

Las Américas Comunidad de Fe is a Hispanic congregation that's part of Trinity United Methodist Church in Des Moines.

**Trinity United Methodist Church | [www.trinityumcdm.org](http://www.trinityumcdm.org)**

Many Las Américas members have roots in El Salvador, where a bloody civil war forced many citizens to leave the country and seek political asylum in the United States.

**The El Salvador Civil War | [www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/index.html)**

Manuel Catalán is one such person. Consider his immigration history:

- 1989 Cross without documents
- 1990 Granted “temporary protected status” and “employment authorization document”
- 1992 Given “deferred enforced departure”
- 1995 Applied for “political asylum”
- 1999 Covered by “Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act” (NACARA)
- 2001 Became “legal permanent resident”
- 2006 Applied for U.S. citizenship
- 2008 Became a U.S. citizen

**What would citizenship mean to you if you spent almost 20 years trying to get it?**

NACARA, “Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act,” resulted from a lawsuit filed against the U.S. government by American Baptist Churches-USA, seeking human rights for immigrants.

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services | [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)**

After all that Manuel has been through, he is practicing the Golden Rule: doing for others as he would have others do for him.

**Have you thought about how documented and undocumented immigrant Christians practice the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)?**

Manuel led a mission trip from Iowa to his impoverished village in El Salvador, and he and the Trinity/Las Américas communities are raising money for a medical clinic there.

Manuel has also been leading the renovation of Trinity United Methodist Church, teaching Las Américas members how to do plaster and other construction work. The church celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June 2011.

Hispanics didn't build the church originally, other immigrant communities did. But Hispanics are now the immigrant community that is giving life back to the church.

Clearly, the face of the church and the community has changed and is changing. This type of change creates fear in some.

**What does it do for you?**

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion asks you to consider what the Bible says about fear, the stranger and justice. It cites several Bible verses about each of those topics.

- “Fear not.” - Luke 12:32
- “Perfect love casts out fear.” - 1 John 4:18
- “God didn’t give us a spirit of fear.” - 2 Timothy 1:7
  
- “Love the stranger as yourself.” - Leviticus 19:34
- “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” - Matthew 25:35
- “Do not mistreat a stranger or oppress him.” - Exodus 22:21
  
- “I, the Lord, love justice.” - Isaiah 61:8
- “Follow justice and justice alone.” - Deuteronomy 16:20
- “The righteous care about justice for the poor.” - Proverbs 29:7

**Are there are other verses or stories you would add? Maybe something about taking care of children?**

The conclusion also asks you to think about what the Bible says about Juan and his situation.

**How might Christians apply biblical truths and mandates to Juan and those like him?**

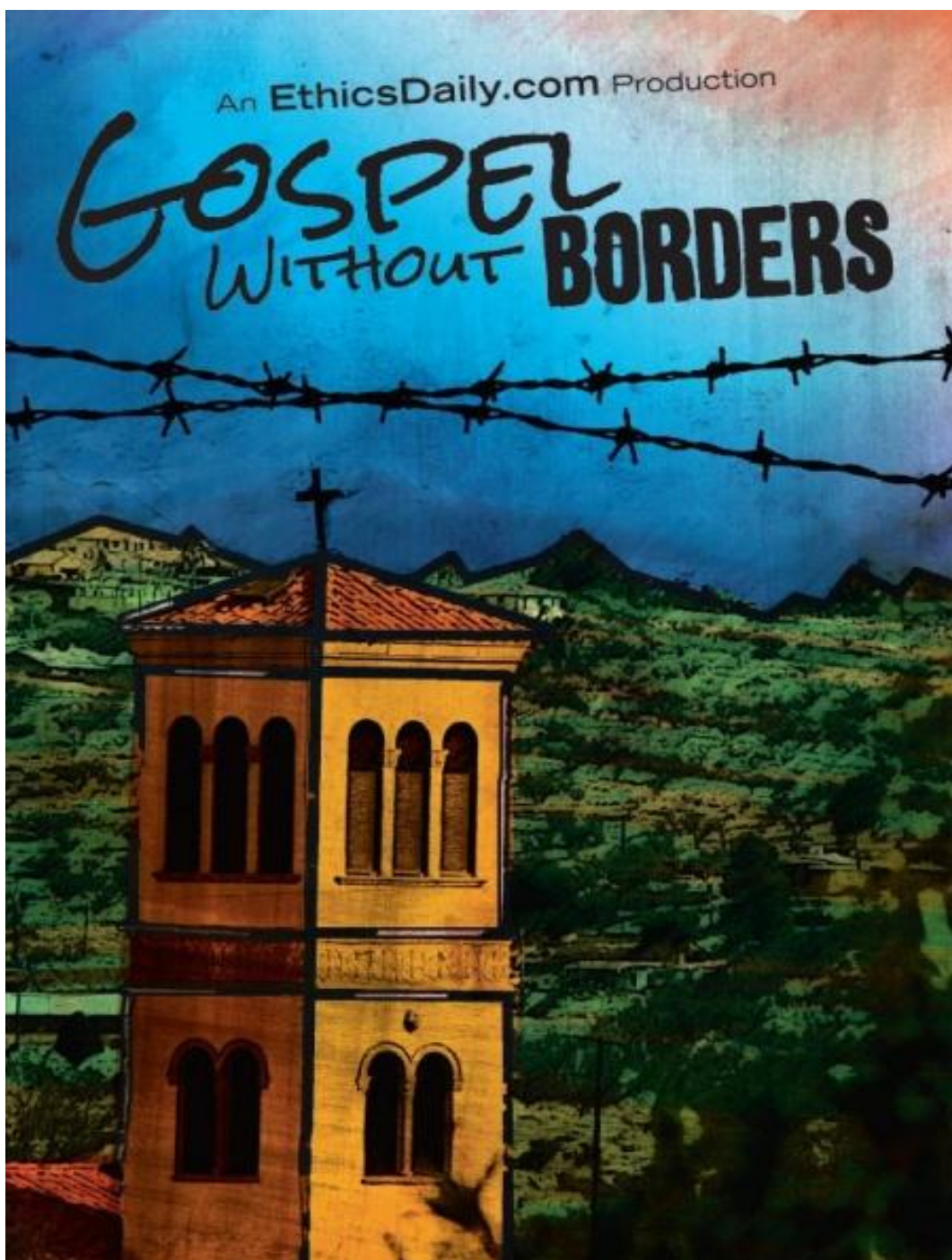
The conclusion says you can:

- Put yourself in another’s shoes.
- Get to know immigrants.
- Avoid using the word “illegals.”
- Learn more about the border.
- Take a mission trip to the desert.
- Challenge the misperceptions.
- Change unjust laws.

**Take each suggestion and brainstorm as a group how you could follow through on these. Which of the above suggestions is easiest? Hardest? Most important?**

**What other suggestions would you offer?**

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The word "gospel" relates to the good news of faith. The word "borders" relates to political power, to national boundaries, to state lines.

The documentary begins with footage of a security checkpoint some 20 miles north of the border between the United States and Mexico. Viewers see a Border Patrol vehicle, the golden dome of the Iowa state capitol building, the Mexican flag, a Mexican matricula card, and Chatham County Sheriff's cars. These are symbols of political power. They project control, security, protection, order over defined borders.

Viewers also sees faith symbols such as the white church south of Tucson--the San Xavier Mission founded in 1692--and a Catholic bishop sitting in front of a crucifix. One sees a sign for Trinity United Methodist Church and footage of an evening worship service at Iglesia Bautista La Roca. One sees fire and hears wind, two other Christian symbols. One hears a minister announce the good news on an immigrant trail in the desert: "We are from the church."

On the immigration front, the church and the state often face each other with different values and agendas. For example, some state lawmakers think they must protect their states from those who are different from the majority, while church leaders insist that they must minister to the strangers in their midst regardless the law.

For Christians, the gospel transcends the boundaries, the laws, of the state. While Christians honor the law and respect those in authority, Christians are also called to a higher law, to God's law to love the neighbor.

"Our concern ought not to be where states draw their lines and where laws are drawn, but rather about how we respond to each child of God," says Methodist Bishop Charles Crutchfield.

The title underscores this fluid dynamic between the higher law of God to love neighbor and the law of the land.



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As of January 2010, the Office of Immigration Statistics for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security put the number of unauthorized individuals living in the United States at 10.8 million. Other interesting facts from the OIS report:

- The number of unauthorized immigrants increased 27 percent between 2000 and 2010.
- The number of unauthorized immigrants in January 2007 was 11.8 million.
- Of the unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2010, 39 percent entered the country in 2000 or later.
- Of the unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2010, 62 percent were from Mexico. (The next highest country was El Salvador at 6 percent, followed by Guatemala at 5 percent.)
- In 2010, 63 percent of unauthorized immigrants were between 25-44 years old.



People use various terms to describe individuals in the United States without proper paperwork. Common terms include these (and combinations thereof):

- Illegal immigrants
- Undocumented migrants
- Unauthorized workers
- People without papers
- Illegals

Those most sensitive to immigrants and their issues may themselves use various terms or have preferences. For example, one expert says it's a mistake to assume that all foreign nationals in the United States are best characterized as "immigrants" because some have no intention of staying; they are simply here for a season, perhaps. He thus prefers the term "migrants" unless the specific situation is known.

And, a person who is here with an expired visa, for example, technically isn't "without papers." Rather, the visa/paperwork is expired and he or she, legally, is said to be "out of status."

Perhaps the most common egregious term is "illegals," as in, "There are lots of illegals in this country." Technically, a person can't be illegal; only an act can be illegal. So in that sense the term itself is incorrect. Emotionally, the term is

derisive and implies that a *person* needs to be *defined* by a single act or choice. Lastly, using the term “illegals” has the effect of criminalizing many people who in fact have made a difficult and courageous choice for themselves and/or families. The criminalizing effect is not desirable for citizens, migrants or children who absorb that language.



Some people also wonder whether to use “Hispanic” or “Latino.” Again, different people have different preferences, and each term carries with it historical, community, cultural and political meaning. For some, the term “Hispanic” implies too much of a relationship to Spain, which may not be relevant or accurate for some of the people commonly called Hispanic. Nevertheless, the U.S. government uses “Hispanic,” not “Latino,” on its forms and documents. The term “Latino” comes from the designation “Latin America,” which originally referred to areas of the Americas where Romance languages, like Spanish, were spoken.



Know that two stories in the documentary involve criminal activity either directly or indirectly. One involves a Mexican-born man who tried to cash a bad check more than a decade ago. That crime (for which he served prison time) is now jeopardizing his ability to remain in the United States (even though he is a legal resident).

Another story includes an account of an undocumented Mexican worker who killed two people while driving under the influence. That man is now in prison and will be deported after his sentence is up.

The inclusion of these stories should not be construed as evidence for a higher rate of criminality among immigrants.

First, these stories came to our attention because they were already in the public spotlight, at least in their local communities. They had garnered significant media attention *because* Mexican men were involved and the immigration issue was and is on the front burner.

Second, various studies over the past decade have shown that higher rates of immigration do not correspond to higher rates of crime. In fact, a 2007 study found that native-born men aged 18-39 were five times more likely than foreign-born men to be incarcerated.

Third, beware of “reasoning” suggesting that if someone is willing to break U.S. law by entering the country without papers, then that person is at heart a lawbreaker. That idea calls for at least two responses: 1) if you’re here without papers, you’re more likely not to do anything to draw attention to yourself (like commit other crimes); and 2) no legal and timely means of entry is available for most people in crisis.



Common initials involved in the immigration issue:

- DHS: Department of Homeland Security
- ICE: Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- BP: Border Patrol
- CBP: Customs and Border Protection
- CIS: Citizenship and Immigration Services

## CHAPTER 1: GOOD SAMARITANS IN THE DESERT

*Main Location: Arizona*

*Main People: John Fife (Presbyterian pastor and co-founder of “No More Deaths”), Gene Lefebvre (Presbyterian pastor and co-founder of “No More Deaths”), Miguel De La Torre (professor of social ethics at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colo.), Juan (migrant crossing the desert)*

*Focus: Ministering to people crossing the desert*

Chapter 1 actually begins with a teaser from Iowa: Norma Cabezas tells the story of her sister-in-law, Maira, who was deported to El Salvador and then tried to cross the Sonoran Desert in Arizona to rejoin her sick mother in Des Moines. Maira died trying to re-enter the country. A friend carried her body for six hours rather than leave her in the desert.

**Can you imagine having to choose whether to continue the trek across the desert, or to stop and stay with a dying person, which in this case meant being arrested by law enforcement and deported?**

**Would you be willing to emigrate to another country, without documents, if you and your family were living in poverty with no hope of improving your family’s situation? If you said you were, how would you expect Christians in that country to treat you?**

**Would you have guessed that 5,000 confirmed deaths occurred on the U.S.-Mexico border since 2001? What is your reaction to that number?**

### **U.S. Customs and Border Protection | [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)**

John Fife says: "Jesus says in Matthew 25, 'I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was sick, I was in prison, I was an alien stranger. And as you do it to these, you do it to me.' That's the complete description of the migrant in our midst and in our desert."

**Agree? Do you really feel a connection, as Fife does, between those words of Jesus and what is going on in the Sonoran Desert, for example? If so, what call is on your life?**

**What do you think about “No More Deaths,” its camp, its strategy of getting life necessities to migrants in the desert? Would you be willing to participate in that effort? Why or why not?**

Would you be willing to search the desert for a couple of weeks looking for a 14-year-old girl? How do you think you would react to finding the body of the girl with green shoes?

## **No More Deaths | [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org)**

**What is your impression of the shrine in the canyon?**

Miguel De La Torre describes the path as a sort of “exodus,” with the shrine being a marker or altar as in Old Testament narratives. For example, Abram built an altar at Hebron (Genesis 13:18) and Joshua built one at Shechem (Joshua 24:25-28).

**What does this "exodus" analogy do for you? Do you see immigrants leaving the economic hardships of Mexico and Central America akin to the Hebrew people leaving behind the slavery of Egypt? Can you see how immigrant Christians might see their journey to the United States as an exodus story?**

Fife says some of the migrants crossing the desert are members of our churches. Maybe you have migrants in your church, a Hispanic mission or a church in another part of town.

**How often do you think about those migrants as fellow Christians? Does thinking of them as Christians change the way you think about them in general?**

**Did it surprise you that Juan wanted Gene Lefebvre to call border patrol?** (As background, know that Juan had fallen in the desert and injured himself. He had gotten separated from his five traveling companions. After three days in the desert, he wanted to return to Mexico.)

## CHAPTER 2: IMMIGRATION EXPERTS ON MISPERCEPTIONS

*Main Location: Arkansas*

*Main People: Andres Chao (Mexican consul in Little Rock), Anthony Taylor (Roman Catholic bishop of the diocese of Little Rock), Paul Charton (immigration attorney in Little Rock), Charles Crutchfield (bishop of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church)*

*Focus: Giving people of faith good information*

Here are a few facts about the U.S. border with Mexico:

- The border between the United States and Mexico is nearly 2,000 miles long.
- The border currently has some type of fencing along roughly 650 miles.
- Nearly half of the 650 miles of fence is in Arizona.
- "... approximately half of all drugs seized and illegal immigrants apprehended entering the United States are seized or apprehended in Arizona," according to Customs and Border Protection.

Mexican Consul Andres Chao says: "If I have a problem with my neighbor, and instead of sitting together to try to resolve the problem, I try to build a fence to not see my neighbor, that's not going to solve my problem. I think it's better to sit together and explain the difference that we have and try to resolve the problems because we will be neighbors forever."

**What do you think about Chao's comment ?**

**Mexican Consulate in Little Rock | [portal.sre.gob.mx/littlerock](http://portal.sre.gob.mx/littlerock)**

**Does the border wall make you feel safe? Safer? How does it play into national security? Is that really what the wall is about?**

Chao says of the United States and Mexico, "We will be neighbors forever."

**What are the implications of his statement for policy? For Christian response? For you and your children?**

"Many of the things we do as a country are the diametrical opposite of what Jesus would ask us to do," says Catholic Bishop Anthony Taylor. "And people recognize that. And naturally they will come to places where they encounter Jesus. And when people are rejecting of them, or acting ugly, Jesus is not to be found there. This is not where I find Christ. If they go to a place that has a

steeple but they don't find self-sacrificing love, they have not found a Christian community."

**Talk about your church or faith community in light of Taylor's comments. Do migrants find Jesus there? Would they? In what ways yes? In what ways no?**

## **Diocese of Little Rock | [www.dolr.org](http://www.dolr.org)**

Taylor conducted the confirmation service at St. Peter Catholic Church in both English and Spanish.

**Would you care to attend a church that held bilingual services? Why?**

St. Peter Catholic Church in Pine Bluff was mostly black and brown. The African-American members of the congregation openly welcomed Hispanics into the congregation.

**What are the obstacles that church faces? What are its benefits?**

Attorney Paul Charton talks about a "fear of other."

**Do you fear others, either individually or as a collective group? How so?**

Charton also says anti-immigrant feeling might be prompted by a sense of fairness, as in: "Why allow someone to benefit from breaking the law?"

**How do you respond to this? Does that question seem appropriate? Why?**

Taylor says: "Americans tend to have an absolutized concept of law and that if it's the law, it's the law, it's the law. And may give lip-service to a higher law, but in fact don't give that higher law much weight. We say we're one nation under God, but we don't act that way."

**What is your impression of the law? Taylor talks about God's law or a higher law. Is there a law higher than human-made law? How do you decide which and/or when to follow each?**

One of the oft-cited biblical passages about obeying the law is Romans 13:1-2:

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

Here are a few facts about immigration and the law:

- Having a visa but “overstaying” its term is a civil offense. This would be an example of “unlawful presence.”
- Crossing the border without any documents (like a visa) is a criminal misdemeanor. This would be an example of “entry without inspection.”

**Ask people if they ever knowingly break laws, or which laws they think some people break intentionally.** (Examples: speeding, copyright infringement, littering, sharing prescription drugs, not reporting extra income, hunting/fishing without license, underage drinking, asking missionaries overseas to share the gospel in defiance of *another nation's* law).

**Do we make distinctions about which laws we follow? If we say we knowingly break the law in some instances, how do we justify that choice? Is it for a noble reason? Out of sheer expediency? Because we disagree with the law?**

Taylor also says demagogues promote things they know to be lies but they do it because it sells.

**Can you think of lies people and organizations have told about immigrants and immigration? Why do you think they presented that information?**

The documentary then examines three (of many) common misperceptions about immigration.

*Misperception #1 - Just get in line.*

Mexico is one of four countries (the others being India, China and the Philippines) that is “oversubscribed,” meaning that more citizens of that country are trying to come here legally than U.S. law currently allows.

When countries are oversubscribed, applicants are given a “priority date” that determines a person’s turn to apply for an immigrant visa (and there are different categories of visas).

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is processing visa applications from Mexico with priority dates as far back as 1992, 1993 and 1996 (depending on which visa category one is placed in).

**Is it really honest and realistic to say that those suffering in poverty or separated from their families should get in a line that may take 15 or 20 years to get through?**



*Misperception #2 - Immigrants don't pay taxes.*

Immigrants pay federal and state income taxes, property taxes, sales taxes and have Social Security withheld on paychecks.

As one interviewee said to us, you never hear an undocumented worker tell a cashier, "I don't have to pay the sales tax because I don't have papers." The idea is preposterous.

When filing paperwork for a job, some undocumented workers will make up a Social Security number. When names and numbers do not match the records of the Social Security Administration, the incident is filed in the SSA's "earnings suspense file" (ESF), and the taxes paid on the wages go into the Social Security Trust Fund. The SSA makes automated and manual attempts to resolve "no match" incidents.

Nevertheless, the undocumented worker has money withheld from his or her paycheck and will never see it.

There also exists what is called an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). It is a tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service for those ineligible for a Social Security number.

"ITINs are issued regardless of immigration status because both resident and nonresident aliens may have a U.S. filing or reporting requirement under the Internal Revenue Code," according to the IRS website. "ITINs are for federal tax reporting only, and are not intended to serve any other purpose. IRS issues ITINs to help individuals comply with the U.S. tax laws, and to provide a means to efficiently process and account for tax returns and payments for those not eligible for Social Security Numbers (SSNs). An ITIN does not authorize work in the U.S. or provide eligibility for Social Security benefits or the Earned Income Tax Credit."

The IRS thus says its ITINs are not work authorization numbers. ITINs are regularly used in the community of undocumented workers, however, because those workers want a paper trail establishing their payment of taxes and history in the United States. Proof of that will likely be essential if the law changes to offer the undocumented an adjustment of immigration status.

Immigrants paid completely "under the table" are likely paid a pittance. This is not only unethical but also contributes to a loss of tax revenue (which is in itself an argument for immigration reform and a path to legalization).

*Misperception #3 - Immigrants use up social services.*

A popular 2007 study by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation found a net surplus to the Arkansas state budget of about \$19 million. (This is the study that Attorney Charton and Bishop Crutchfield cite.)

The study noted: “Though education is calculated as a fiscal cost in this report, expenditures to educate immigrants’ children represent an important investment in Arkansas’ future workforce that could pay substantial returns to the state through increased worker productivity and economic growth.”

Another study by economist William Ford of Middle Tennessee State University found that undocumented workers were a net benefit to the national economy, contributing “\$428 billion dollars to the nation’s \$13.6 trillion gross domestic product in 2006.”

Other misperceptions that the documentary doesn’t directly explore: immigrants don’t want to learn English; immigrants increase crime; immigrants bring diseases.

For more information on dispelling these myths and misperceptions, see Miguel De La Torre’s book *Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration* and the October 2010 report “Giving Facts a Fighting Chance: Answers to the Toughest Immigration Questions” by the Immigration Policy Center.

**Immigration Policy Center | [www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)**

“Some of the most ugly, vocal people style themselves as Christians in this discussion,” says Taylor. “That’s the scandal.”

**Do you agree that some Christians are “ugly” on the immigration issue?  
What would account for that?**

He also refers to “cowardice on the part of religious leaders” who are unwilling to speak the truth to congregants.

**Think of local or national religious leaders. Are they speaking truths you don’t want to hear?**

## CHAPTER 3: FAITHFUL FAMILIES UNDER STRESS

*Main Locations: North Carolina and Alabama*

*Main People: Hector Villanueva (pastor of Iglesia Bautista La Roca in Siler City, N.C.), Martha Villanueva (Hector's wife and mother of six), Ellin Jimmerson (minister to the community at Weatherly Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala.)*

*Focus: Relying on faith during crisis*

Hector Villanueva came to the United States with his family when he was three years old. He became a legal resident due to a 1986 law, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). IRCA had several components, one of which granted “amnesty” to immigrants who had entered the country without papers prior to Jan. 1, 1982 and resided here continuously. President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law.

**Do you tend to think about the law as an unchanging code, or do you think of it as malleable and responsive to situations? Discuss.**

Martha Villanueva says their family chose to settle in Chatham County, North Carolina, because it had a large Hispanic population, even in 2006.

**Discuss what you know about immigration in your own community and state. Are more immigrants moving into your area? Where do they work? Go to church? How are local and state lawmakers responding? How are churches responding?**

**Hispanic Liaison of Chatham County | [hispanicliaison.org](http://hispanicliaison.org)**

Hector and Martha Villanueva have been helped by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina. Hector is a pastor in the CBFNC Hispanic network.

**CBFNC | [www.cbfnc.org/Missions/Immigration.aspx](http://www.cbfnc.org/Missions/Immigration.aspx)**

When Hector, a legal permanent resident, applied for citizenship, the immigration service checked his background, which is standard procedure. The routine check uncovered his crime, for which he has already served time.

Hector is receiving a hearing to avoid deportation only because of the age of the conviction. Were this situation played out today, the immigrant offender would be subject to mandatory detention and ultimate deportation.

Hector says in the documentary: “They’re going to drop all the charges and pretend none of this ever happened.” During the interview, he explained that he thought local law enforcement agencies had benefitted financially from his incarceration and now that it was over, his case would eventually fade away.

Hector was referring to Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The 287(g) program is a partnership between ICE and state and local law enforcement agencies that authorizes those agencies to deal with immigration matters in their jurisdiction. The partnership is set forth in a joint Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOAs also set the amount of money ICE will reimburse the law enforcement agency for its handling of “administrative detainees.”

Remember that Martha is an American citizen and a mother of six children, all of whom are American citizens.

**If you were in Martha's shoes, what would you do if your husband was deported? Should she go to Mexico or stay in the United States. How does deporting Hector strengthen an American family?**



The Alabama story also focuses on faith in a family under stress.

Jimmerson says: “Segregation was a system of laws. Segregation was thoroughly legal and thoroughly immoral. The deportation of Japanese-Americans to internment camps in World War II was thoroughly legal and thoroughly immoral.”

**How do you respond to Jimmerson’s claim that some laws are immoral? Do we follow them anyway out of respect for the “rule of law”?**

Jimmerson then refers to graffiti she saw on the border wall in Nogales: “If it is a sin to cross, I hope God forgives me.” We know it’s against U.S. law to cross the border without being admitted by the proper authorities.

**It is also a sin? What would or wouldn’t make it a sin to do so? Discuss.**

Jimmerson, who is married to a lawyer, says: “Although we hold the law in high regard, we don’t confuse the law with God. I don’t think we need to confuse Caesar and God.”

**Are U.S. Christians confusing “Caesar and God” on the immigration issue? Discuss.**

The documentary tells about the death of Jimmerson’s daughter and her boyfriend in the car accident, and Jimmerson discusses her feelings about the man who was driving the car that hit them. She also talks about how the accident affected the Hispanic community in Huntsville.

**Discuss how Jimmerson’s response to the tragedy makes you feel - about Jimmerson, about the Hispanic community, about retribution, about forgiveness.**

Jimmerson has been working on her own documentary, “The Second Cooler,” about immigration. The title refers to the fact that the morgue in Tucson, Ariz., had to install a second cooler to house the growing number of bodies found in the Sonoran Desert.

**The Second Cooler | [www.secondcooler.com](http://www.secondcooler.com)**

## CHAPTER 4: IMMIGRANT CHRISTIANS WITH THE GOLDEN RULE

*Main Location: Iowa*

*Main People: Manuel Catalán (contractor and church trustee at Las Américas), Merced Cruz (member of Las Américas), Barbara Dinnen (pastor of Las Américas)*

*Focus: Doing good to others*

Las Américas Comunidad de Fe is a Hispanic congregation that's part of Trinity United Methodist Church in Des Moines.

**Trinity United Methodist Church | [www.trinityumcdm.org](http://www.trinityumcdm.org)**

Many Las Américas members have roots in El Salvador, where a bloody civil war forced many citizens to leave the country and seek political asylum in the United States.

**The El Salvador Civil War | [www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/index.html)**

Manuel Catalán is one such person. Consider his immigration history:

- 1989 Cross without documents
- 1990 Granted “temporary protected status” and “employment authorization document”
- 1992 Given “deferred enforced departure”
- 1995 Applied for “political asylum”
- 1999 Covered by “Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act” (NACARA)
- 2001 Became “legal permanent resident”
- 2006 Applied for U.S. citizenship
- 2008 Became a U.S. citizen

**What would citizenship mean to you if you spent almost 20 years trying to get it?**

NACARA, “Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act,” resulted from a lawsuit filed against the U.S. government by American Baptist Churches-USA, seeking human rights for immigrants.

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services | [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)**

After all that Manuel has been through, he is practicing the Golden Rule: doing for others as he would have others do for him.

Manuel led a mission trip from Iowa to his impoverished village in El Salvador, and he and the Trinity/Las Américas communities are raising money for a medical clinic there.

Manuel has also been leading the renovation of Trinity United Methodist Church, teaching Las Américas members how to do plaster and other construction work. The church celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June 2011.

Hispanics didn't build the church originally, other immigrant communities did. But Hispanics are now the immigrant community that is giving life back to the church.

Clearly, the face of the church and the community has changed and is changing. This type of change creates fear in some.

**What does it do for you?**

Barbara Dinnen, pastor of Las Américas, points out that immigrant members want to give back to others.

**Have you thought about how documented and undocumented immigrant Christians practice the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)?**

Merced Cruz shares that Trinity United Methodist Church had an open door for her.

**Do you think American Christians ought to have an open door for undocumented Christians? What would this look like? Discuss.**

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion asks you to consider what the Bible says about fear, the stranger and justice. It cites several Bible verses about each of those topics.

- “Fear not.” - Luke 12:32
- “Perfect love casts out fear.” - 1 John 4:18
- “God didn’t give us a spirit of fear.” - 2 Timothy 1:7
  
- “Love the stranger as yourself.” - Leviticus 19:34
- “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” - Matthew 25:35
- “Do not mistreat a stranger or oppress him.” - Exodus 22:21
  
- “I, the Lord, love justice.” - Isaiah 61:8
- “Follow justice and justice alone.” - Deuteronomy 16:20
- “The righteous care about justice for the poor.” - Proverbs 29:7

**Are there are other verses or stories you would add? Maybe something about taking care of children?**

The conclusion also asks you to think about what the Bible says about Juan and his situation.

**How might Christians apply biblical truths and mandates to Juan and those like him?**

The conclusion says you can:

- Put yourself in another’s shoes.
- Get to know immigrants.
- Avoid using the word “illegals.”
- Learn more about the border.
- Take a mission trip to the desert.
- Challenge the misperceptions.
- Change unjust laws.

**Take each suggestion and brainstorm as a group how you could follow through on these. Which of the above suggestions is easiest? Hardest? Most important?**

**What other suggestions would you offer?**