



The Bible and Immigration Reform

Hunger is acute among immigrant populations. Statistics show that immigrant children and their parents suffer from food insecurity at a higher rate than the general population.

Introduction

About one-quarter of undocumented immigrants live in poverty. In many cases, the people who, due to their poverty, go hungry daily are the same ones who ensure that the rest of us can eat—those who harvest our food. Immigrants typically receive lower wages and are less likely to have adequate housing, education, and health services.

Exploitation in the workplace is prevalent among undocumented immigrants. When employers fail to pay wages or violate employment laws, fear of deportation prevents undocumented immigrants from taking action to protect their rights. These circumstances lead people to make difficult choices between purchasing nutritious food and paying other bills.

Scriptural Reflection

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new.” These words from the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 are the wellspring for all our work together to end hunger. In our new identity as followers of Christ, we are called to love our neighbors—whomever and wherever they are (Matthew 22:39 and Luke 10:27). The Gospel also frees us for a life of service in which we can advocate for conditions that foster a civil society and that preserve God’s creation (Philippians 2:3-5).



Richard Leonardi for Bread for the World

Bread for the World’s work on immigration reform is rooted in the affirmation that all men and women are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). In Christ’s death and resurrection, God renews his creation (John 1 and 10) and calls forth new people of God who include those from all nations. In Christ, no person differs from any other (Galatians 3:28).



One of the most vivid examples of compassion that transcends nationality is the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). A foreigner, the Samaritan traveler, is the “good neighbor” who ignores ethnic and cultural barriers to care for someone in trouble. Elsewhere in the Bible, the prophet Isaiah rebukes God’s people for exploitation and strife during their fasting and calls them to offer their food to the hungry, bring the poor into their houses, and clothe the naked (Isaiah 58). Israel was instructed to apply the same law to sojourners and natural-born citizens alike, including

the provision of gleaning for the destitute (Deuteronomy 24:19-21).

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, migration is an important theme—beginning with Abraham, who immigrates to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12). Joseph and his family begin the long sojourn in Egypt (Genesis 46 and 47). Moses leads God’s people for 40 years of (summarized in Numbers 33-35). Because of their strong history of migration, God calls the Israelites to respond to the needs of vulnerable people—including the needs of the sojourner, the stranger, the foreigner—because the Israelites were once vulnerable themselves. (Exodus 2:23-25; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 24:19-22). In the New Testament, Jesus himself repeats this history of migration. After being warned in a dream, Joseph left Bethlehem, escaping to safety in Egypt with Mary and Jesus (Matthew 2:13-23).

In Christ’s death and resurrection, we experience God’s grace and love. (1 John 3:16). As followers of Christ, we express and embody God’s reconciling love at all times (2 Corinthians 5:11-21). Since God calls leaders to care for his people, we express God’s love for us by challenging those in power to create a just society (Psalm 72, Esther 4:12-14). In such a society, we welcome the sojourner and extend hospitality to strangers (Romans 12:13).

What You Can Do

1. Pray for immigrants in the United States who come here looking for a better life for their families and

themselves. Pray also for our government, that it will be moved by God’s grace to enact policies that improve the lives of immigrants and their families still at home in their country of origin.

2. Invite your church and your neighbors to learn more about the link between immigration and hunger issues. You will find helpful resources at www.bread.org/immigration.
3. Write letters to your members of Congress. Urge them to adopt immigration reforms that provide a pathway to citizenship. Encourage your senators and representative to support poverty-focused development programs that addresses the poverty that drives people migrate in the first place.

Prayer

O God, in Christ Jesus, you have created us as a new people of all nations and all cultures. We pray for those who have immigrated to our country, leaving their homes and families to escape poverty and hunger. May our communities welcome and support these immigrants as they work to create a better life for themselves and their families. Grant us courage to amplify the immigrant voices so they get protected from abuse and exploitation. And we pray for our nation’s leaders, that they will implement just and compassionate solutions in reforming our immigration system. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

WHAT IS BREAD FOR THE WORLD?

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger and poverty at home and abroad. God’s grace in Jesus Christ moves us to reach out to our neighbors, whether they live next door, in another state, or on another continent. With letters, emails, phone calls, and visits, we urge Congress and the administration to change the policies and conditions that allow hunger to persist.

The individuals and churches involved in Bread for the World represent a broad range of Christian traditions. We embrace and reflect the growing diversity of culture, ethnicity, and religious practices. The empowerment of women and those most affected by hunger give depth and breadth to our witness to God’s love and care for all.

In our efforts to create hope and opportunity for people who are hungry, we find insight and inspiration from the Scriptures. For many Bread members, the sacraments, the ancient creeds, and the liturgy are sources of strength and joy as we seek to share God’s abundance with those who struggle with hunger and poverty.

JOIN US

Bread’s work is made possible by contributions from tens of thousands of individuals and thousands of churches across the country. We invite you to join us by visiting www.bread.org/join or calling 800/822-7323.

Also, join us in praying for an end to hunger—and receive suggested prayers every other week—by visiting www.bread.org/prayer.

