

DISCIPLES WOMEN
GENERAL PROGRAM

Date: 2015

Authored By:
Berenice Gil Soto

MDiv/MAMFT Student
Christian Theological
Seminary, Indianapolis, IN
Sweeney Chapel Assistant

The Barely Known as Immigrant: Jesus



The barely known as immigrant: Jesus

Purpose

The Church needs to think about our relationship with Jesus and with others, especially those like Jesus. Through this Bible Study session, is intended that each congregation think, from the perspective of the story of Jesus, about the social issues around immigration in the United States, and the response that is required from each of us as followers of Jesus, “the barely known as immigrant.”

As Disciples Women, we have made a commitment to take action and work on the awareness of and fight against Human Trafficking due to immigration.¹ The story of Jesus and his immigration story can give us some light and challenge us to participate against this issue.

Supplies Needed

- Large index cards (3 per participant)
- Markers (1 per participant)
- Big sheet of poster paper or newsprint
- Tape
- Prints of Image1 (page 8) and Image2 (page 9) or digital files to project
 - Computer
 - Projector
 - Audio system

Suggestions for the Leader

Give no clues to the participants of what the Bible study session will be on. Have prepared, either printed or digitally projected, the images attached to this file, but do not show them until later when indicated in the lesson.

Start the session with a prayer of illumination and then proceed with the following:

- Give to each participant some index cards and a marker. Ask them to write the first three words, without much thinking, that come into their mind when you say the word “IMMIGRATION.” Emphasize to them that there are no good or bad answers; this is just a brainstorm exercise.

Have a large sheet of paper and tape so the participants will come up and put their cards on the sheet of paper.

- After everyone has put their card on the sheet, ask the group, do you know anyone close to you who is immigrant—perhaps at your church, your work, your school, neighborhood, or someone who provides a service for you? If so, do you know their story?

Introduction

There are many brothers and sisters in the United States and Canada for whom this is not their land, who are immigrants; in fact, there are not only many, but millions. Immigration is not a modern phenomenon, it has been happening since The Americas “were discovered” by the Europeans. Immigration is a broad and complex issue. While some came against their own will, some others have come searching a better life and opportunities for growth, and yet others have come fleeing from the despair and violence in their own countries. Women, men, children and babies have come and been brought searching for refuge and life, some of them holding documents, and some only holding on their dreams and hopes.

Immigration does not only imply people coming to a new country to work and/or study. Immigration implies family separation and trauma from the journey due to terrible things such as the death of sojourners, rapes, or human trafficking. No age or gender is exempt from such things.

Lesson

The biblical story for today’s study session is found on Matthew 2:1-15 [Read together].

Our reflection will be centered on verse 13, “Now, after they have left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.’ (NRSV).” *Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee... [Show Image 1]*

The picture we see is seen in some parts of the MEX-US border, indicating that it is prohibited for families to run and cross the border. But every time I see that picture I do not only think of the families coming from Mexico, Central, and South America running and trying to cross the border, but I also think about Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee.”

According to the Matthew story of the birth of Jesus, he was born in Bethlehem of Judea (v.1) *[Show Image 2]*, where Herod “The Great” was the king. This latter heard the word from the wise men (or magi) that a new king had been born. A king is born, but a king is already here; hence, the already king wants to get rid of the baby that is supposed to take his place. Fear and coercive power drove a decision. It is too then, fear and coercive power what forced a family to leave their place and flee for refuge and security to Egypt.

This story is familiar; it is very similar to the story of Moses (Exodus 2:1-8). The story of Jesus “is told in such a way to parallel not only the story of Israel, but the story of Moses in particular. Both were born in a time in which God’s people were oppressed by hostile forces (Moses/Egypt, Jesus/Herod).”² In both stories we find a family having a baby –a baby who will liberate the people from oppression; we also have a king’s mandate to kill baby children because he feels threatened; and, in both stories we have the children fleeing accompanied by family members (sister or parents) and finding refuge far from home.

“Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee...” Jesus, Mary, and Joseph became asylum seekers in Egypt. As a Mexican Woman, I could think of Jesus, Mary and Joseph making a backpack with bottles of water, canned food, leather gloves to hold from the train, bandages for the journey and birth-control pills for Mary—in case she is raped. I imagine the “Holy Family” without travel documents getting into the train, trying to cross the border, looking for safety and opportunities far from home. They were strangers in another land, in a land that, worthy is to mention was the land in ancient times that oppressed the people of God. But even though they were strangers, someone took them in; someone welcomed them and protected them; someone cared for them regardless their legal status in Egypt.

Unfortunately, the story nowadays is just a little different. There are still too many “holy families” coming to the United States from the North, South, East, and West; but there are not as many, who care about, welcome and protect them—as Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, or Moses experienced. Pilgrims nowadays face corruption and violence in their journey to seek safety and a better life. Adults and kids, no matter the age or gender, are killed, kidnaped, or trapped into the horrors of human trafficking (either for human labor or for prostitution).

We have to do something! Most people we do not realize that Jesus was an immigrant. We just know that he was born in Bethlehem and then he went to live his ministry to Nazareth. But even if we say that he and his family escaped to Egypt, we do not address him as an immigrant. Perhaps because we do not see Jesus as the immigrant he was, we neglect see Jesus in the immigrants around us. Are we willing to receive others as we receive Jesus?

[Optional to show the video Aloe Blacc – Wake Me Up https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_o6axAseak&feature=youtu.be There is also a link for the DisciplesWomen.org General Programs web page.]

Discussion

After the lesson, the session leader can divide the group into small groups (depending on the attendance, if not the leader can have an open discussion), and start the discussion with the following questions, having someone collecting the answers:

- Where else in Scripture can we find words concerning welcoming the immigrant?
Some passages: Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 10:19; Jeremiah 7:5-7; Matthew 25:35; Mark 12:30-31; Hebrews 13:2
- How is our congregation promoting welcome to other cultures to worship together? If we are not doing so, how could we do so?
- How much do our children and youth know about immigration and human trafficking?

- As a local congregation, what could we do, outside of our church building, to take action against the mistreatment of our brothers and sisters who come to the United States or Canada?
 - Do we know any Non-Profit organization in our city that we could partner with?
 - Do we know what your senators and house representative have done about this?³

Show the following video after the discussion time:

- <http://vimeo.com/59505153>
- <http://vimeo.com/59607176> (Same video with subtitles in Spanish)

Close the discussion time by encouraging the participants to keep the conversation going and to take action.

Remind them that big results require constant small actions.

Closing prayer follows as a hand-out on page 7.

References:

1. For more information visit DisciplesWomen.org and view the Link By Link page to learn more about the three foci for this project.
2. M. Eugene Boring, *The People's New Testament Commentary*. 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 16.
3. Write to your senator: Under the DisciplesWomen.org/LinkbyLink focus of Labor/Immigration is information for writing to your senator.
4. Contact legislative bodies in Canada. Under the LinkbyLink focus of Labor/Immigration is Canadian websites and phone numbers for citizenship information and help for temporary foreign workers..



Closing Prayer

Gracious and loving God, God of love and mercy,
God of our refuge in times of turmoil and hatred.
We come to you confessing that we have not done enough.
We confess that we have not fully welcome Jesus,
Because we have neglected his face
Through the one who speaks another language and lacks of documents.
Forgive us God, we pray.
Lead us while we take the courage to fully welcome Jesus.

Watch over those our brothers and sister migrants
Who seek security and opportunities in this land.
Bring comfort and peace to their families they are leaving behind;
And be you before them in their journey.

It is in the name of Jesus, the immigrant and savior we pray,
Amen.



Image 1

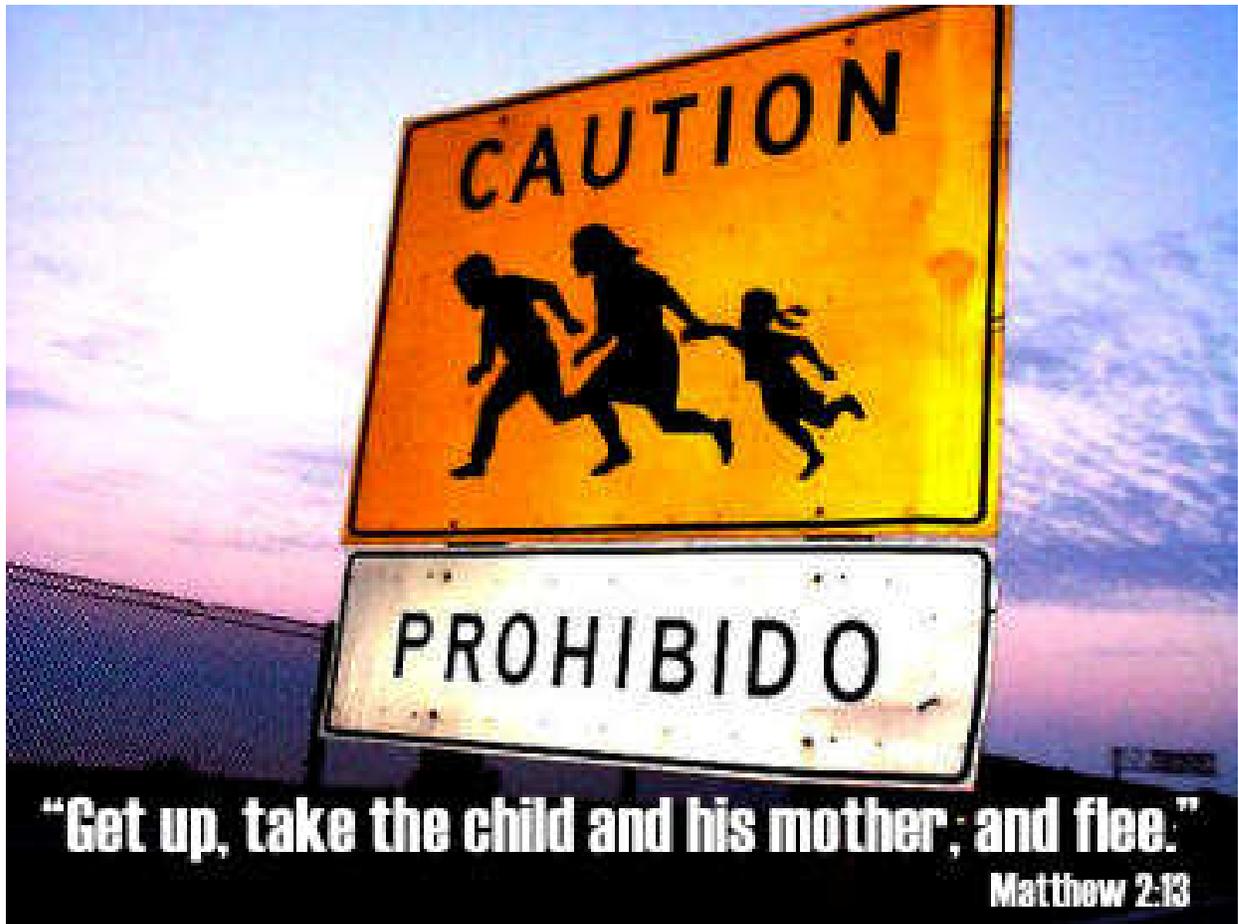
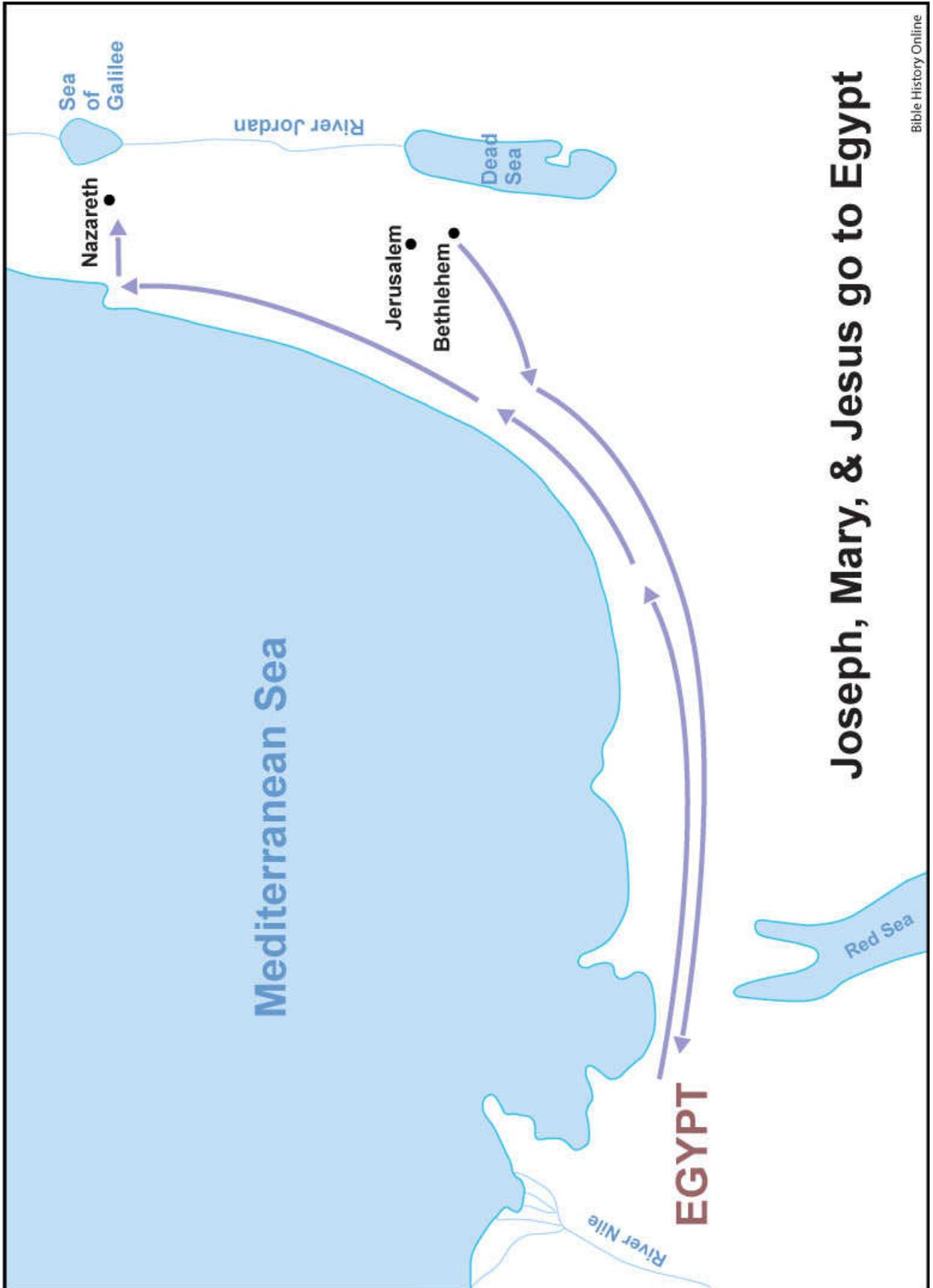


Image 2



Joseph, Mary, & Jesus go to Egypt