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Familia E Inmigración: Discovering Biblical Immigration Narratives that Speak to Today's Latin American Immigrant Families in Chicago

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FAMILIA E INMIGRACIÓN: DISCOVERING BIBLICAL IMMIGRATION NARRATIVES THAT
SPEAK TO TODAY'S LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IN CHICAGO

By

McKenzie Fritch

Honors Scholarship Project

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This work is dedicated to the Latino churches in Chicago and around the United States
and the strong, brave families at their core, with whom I am honored to travel on our shared
journey to a better country

Hebrews 11:13-16

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study sought to gain insight into the motivations, challenges, and behavior patterns of Latin American immigrant families in the Chicago, Illinois area, and can be divided into two parts: research and application. Research was collected by conducting focus group interviews with immigrant parents and children at three Nazarene Hispanic churches in and around Chicago. Questions were asked about the families' reasons for immigrating and their stories of entry and arrival, but the interviews maintained a particular focus on the changes each family experienced while living in the United States. This study was especially interested to learn about communication patterns between family members, gender and occupational role changes in the new country, and acculturation differences between generations. In the interviews, one researcher worked with a group of five to ten people, posing questions for group discussion. Many times one person's answer sparked a thought from another participant, so that shared feelings and experiences began to emerge. Through the process of thematic analysis of the recorded interviews, seven of the top struggles of interviewees were identified, including anxiety, changes in roles and identity, family leadership, and parent-child communication.

The results of the research were applied to the creation of a series of small group studies for immigrant families, for use both in the churches where the interviews were conducted and elsewhere. One theme was selected per study, and paired with a relevant Biblical immigration narrative—the stories of Naomi and Joseph are two that were included—and pertaining anonymous quotes from the interviews. Questions designed to facilitate constructive conversation between families follow the scripture and quotes, to guide discussion and application of the material, and also allow for the exchange of advice and experience between participating families.

Keywords: Immigration, Latin America, Family, Culture, Small Group Study

INTRODUCTION

Immigration is hard on families. The thousands of Latin American immigrant families living in the United States today find themselves in a situation of particular challenge. Separated from their old communities and the loved ones they have left behind, and often arriving without proper documentation or English ability, Latino immigrants may find life in the U.S. lonely, isolating, and overwhelming. Those fortunate enough to come with spouses and children have ahead of them a transition no less difficult: huge cultural differences in family values and roles between the United States and the immigrant's own country are immediately apparent upon arrival, and become more nuanced with further contact with American culture.

The vast majority of Latino immigrant parents come to the U.S. in order to provide a better life for their families, but few realize before leaving that the same decision has the potential to tear their families apart. Unequal acculturation rates between children and parents as well as gender role changes necessitated by a new culture and lifestyle create tension within families, most of whom are completely unprepared for these internal stresses. And while individual members seek to reorient themselves within the family, external demands of language acquisition, the search for work, and the adjustment to a new environment continue to press in.

The Christian church can be a place of great support and hope to families during this time of transition and stress, helping them to connect firsthand with the God of family, love, and language as well as providing strong friendships with other families and individuals in similar situations. This project, with its component parts of interview research and small group study application, seeks to partner with the church to provide a tool specifically designed to address the needs and concerns of Latino immigrant families in the Chicago area.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Each year, thousands of people migrate to the United States Latin America and Mexico. Each one of them represents a family. Family is a cornerstone of Hispanic identity and culture, but often immigration does not leave families intact, either by rupturing them from the start when some members must leave and others stay, or by presenting insurmountable tensions once in the new country (Radillo 41). The immigration process is challenging on the individual level because of the reidentification it necessitates. Immigrants experience a sense of isolation and loss of the old culture and community, as well as the incredible stress of adapting to the new ones. The implications are even greater for families, as multiple members experience this shift simultaneously and in different ways. Individual members are forced to redefine their roles in the face of financial hardship or social pressure from the new culture. What often ensues is a crisis of identity, both cultural and personal. How an immigrant family deals with such a crisis may ultimately determine its success both in adapting to the new culture and maintaining closeness.

The destruction of cultural identity may begin even before an immigrant has left his or her country. Especially in recent times, wars, genocide, natural disasters, and political unrest are major factors propelling the migration of people from their homeland (Amnesty International 5, Carrol, *La Inmigración* 1). In countries damaged by war and poverty, a potential immigrant's social and cultural identity is already in flux. The psychological affects of such trauma are well-researched, though not the primary concern here. Economic need is a more common reason for leaving—a usual practice is for one or two family members to leave the rest in the country of origin to search for work and send back their earnings. This is most often the case of immigrants crossing into the United States from Mexico. This set-up may be temporary or long-term. While the extra income may be desperately needed and the choice to leave fully voluntary, however,

the separation of family members (often between the now-absent father and the mother and children left behind) frequently leads to feelings of abandonment and anger, causing problems even after the family's reunification (Maldonado 43).

These sorts of changes are important considerations to be made during the pre-emigration stage of the immigration process, described by Rebeca Radillo in her book *Cuidado Pastoral: Ministerio con Inmigrantes*. Radillo contrasts the stages an immigrant experiences before leaving the home country and after arriving in the country of destination. Many of the early stages are primarily cognitive or emotional: making the decision to emigrate and mentally preparing for the changes that will inevitably happen. Later begins the actual setting in order of documentation and transportation, before the saying of goodbyes (Radillo 19).

Once in the country of destination, family struggles are intensified by the vastly different values of the new culture. The very American glorification of the individual makes a strong contrast with the traditional Hispanic values of community and family, and the American expectations of "fending for oneself" or pride in independence may leave the Hispanic immigrant feeling isolated and alone (Radillo 22). Problems develop as some family members adjust and conform more quickly to the new society, such as school-age children, who acquire the language of the new country more quickly as they begin to assimilate into new classrooms and friend groups (Maldonado 49). As children raised primarily in the new country continue the process of acculturation, they frequently outstrip their parents in "Americanization," so that it may ultimately seem to both parents and children that their household is made up of two different cultures, divided around generational lines. Tension results because of the rift that develops between parents and children, as each group recognizes that there is a part of the other that they may never fully understand. The more rapid Americanization of children compared to adults can lead to parents feeling a loss of control or the need to "crack down" on

their children to maintain something of the culture, heritage, and social norms they left. “Because of this cultural clash, Latino families’ external boundaries often become rigid to preserve culture of origin beliefs and norms,” Bacallao and Smokowski write in their article “The Costs of Getting Ahead: Mexican Family System Changes After Immigration.” “This conflict can fuel adolescent rebellion, alienate parents and adolescents, and contribute to the development of adolescent behavior problems” (53).

Language may become an additional source of tension and dissonance between parents and children. As children more quickly learn English, their parents may become less able to help them in traditional capacities, such as giving assistance with homework. In their groundbreaking article on Mexican-American immigrant fatherhood, “I hardly Understand English, But”: Mexican Origin Fathers Describe Their Commitment as Fathers Despite the Challenges of Immigration,” Behnke, Taylor, and Parra-Cardona interviewed 19 Mexican fathers, and found this language barrier to be a recurring theme in their discussions. One father they interviewed spoke to the difficulty of helping his child with schoolwork when his own education had been very limited—not to mention in a different language. “One doesn’t know how to read well or write, and if you can’t read how can you help ‘em. They’re so advanced in math and they learn different things, and they’re so advanced you can’t help,” he said (197). Another father, perhaps with more education, was able to help his daughter with her schoolwork, but commented on the length of time or the amount of effort it required. “I hardly understand English, but when she has a question I try to help her with it, and tell her what she needs to know. Sometimes I have to look in books or on the computer, and if I can’t find it there I’ll ask my wife or one of my friends that speaks English and they help out,” he said (196).

Cultural differences also create emotional distance between parents and children. Many Latino parents are distressed by the variety of negative influences available to their children in

the United States. In the study conducted by Behnke, Taylor, and Parra-Cardona, Mexican immigrant fathers discussed the concerns they had about their children in American culture. Increased access to drugs and sexual risk-taking and promiscuity topped their lists. “Mexican immigrant fathers discussed how immigration influenced their children and the ways they raised their children,” Behnke writes. “In relation to their children, fathers worried about new found influences such as: the dominance of television in their child’s lives, increased autonomy, greater access to parties, sex, drugs, and alcohol in the U.S., a higher standard of living, and reduced family involvement” (Behnke 194). In an individualist society, children’s independence and autonomous decision-making are highly valued, at the expense of more collectivist values such as decisions made for the benefit of the family or the vision of the family—parents and children alike—as a team in which all members play a role in looking out for and protecting one another. This change in values comes at a critical time. In their article “Preimmigration Family Cohesion and Drug/Alcohol Abuse Among Recent Latino Immigrants,” Dillon, De La Rosa, Sanchez, and Schwartz discuss the importance of family closeness as a safeguard against children and teen’s involvement in risk-taking behaviors. “Family cohesion has been identified as a distinctive cultural protective factor against drug/alcohol abuse and psychological distress among U.S. Latinos,” Dillon writes (257). Unfortunately, however, “acculturation is theorized to disrupt the traditional Latino value of familismo or familism—a term used to generally characterize the commitment of individuals to the nuclear and extended family” (257). One huge challenge to Latino families immigrating to the United States, then, is the maintenance of closeness between family members.

Rifts develop not only between parents and children, but also between wives and husbands. In the article “Family functioning and depression in low-income Latino couples,” Sarmiento and Cardemil discuss the impact of acculturative stress on the marital/cohabitating

relationship. They list some of the demands that new immigrants must face in the U.S.: “learning a new language, different customs, social norms, and unfamiliar laws” are a few (434). Acculturative stress, they write, coupled with poor family functioning, is a strong predictor for depression in Latina women. “Women who reported both poor family functioning and high acculturative stress demonstrated particularly high levels of depression,” Sarmiento and Cardemil report (441). One cause of marital stress for Latino immigrants is frequently the issue of gender roles. As Jorge E. Maldonado aptly states, “ ‘Up North,’ things will be different” for the spousal relationship (Maldonado 46). The affects of machismo in the Hispanic or Latin American family structure have been to restrain women’s authority essentially to the home, leaving husbands to earn the primary income and make most important decisions for the household (46). In the United States, however, both husband and wife may be forced to work, and the role reversal of man and woman can be potentially traumatizing. “The spouses’ employment statuses can undermine the very organization of the family and place the family in crisis,” Maldonado writes. “The husband frequently becomes depressed and seeks an escape in alcohol or in his friends. The wife is then overloaded with a double shift of work and responsibility” (50). Such an environment is healthy neither for the marriage itself nor the children living under it. Behnke’s work with immigrant fathers suggests that the “provider” role is still fundamental to a man’s self-understanding as a father, while women are still often seen in the role of “caretaker” (Behnke 192, 197). Sarmiento and Cardemil explain the sources of these traditional roles through the cultural concepts of “machismo” and “marianismo.” Men are often cast as hard working providers but emotionally detached, while for women there is “the expectation that they be caring, nurturing, and self-sacrificing while always prioritizing the needs of the family (much like the image of the Virgin Mary)” (441). When these traditional roles are challenged by a new culture that seems to have “outgrown” them years ago, stress necessarily develops as

husbands and wives seek to reorient themselves within the marriage. Greater education, as well as greater exposure to the U.S.' more egalitarian views on the marital relationship, is a big predictor of increasing equality between husbands and wives. "The experience of immigration to the U.S. appears to facilitate father's engagement in more egalitarian relationships with their spouses or partners and with their children," Behnke writes. "Fathers who immigrate come in daily contact with cultural messages, depictions, and models of egalitarian family roles in the U.S., and may confront less criticism from peers for their egalitarian gender relations" (189-90). However, this process of reidentifying roles within a marriage and family is one of the more stressful tasks of immigrant couples.

The feeling of social isolation touches every family member. In Latino culture, the closeness of external family makes for an even more difficult break when some family members must leave. Even when a nuclear family immigrates together or is restored in the United States after the migrations of individual family members, the lack of extended family is deeply felt. As Bacallao and Smokowski report, Mexican immigrant parents in their study "missed the companionship, support, and help extended family members provided," and "Adolescents reported missing family members in Mexico as much as more than their parents" (58). Loss of non-family community is also painful. The void created by missing family members and community can be supplemented by integration into a new community in the United States. Spanish-speaking Latino churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have grown to be important sources of support and community for Latino immigrants. In the article "Churches and Public Spaces: Identity sites for Mexicans in Metro Atlanta," Fortuny and Williams explain the role of the church in Latino immigrant culture. "Churches, above all others the ones that arrive along with migrants, constitute a multiplicity of functions in the places of destination, not only as a source of moral help and a message of salvation for the faithful, but also because they

transform spatial geometries into places of *meaning*,” they write (7). Latino churches are an ideal place for the safe exchange of experience, resources, and advice between immigrant families, and can offer encouragement to struggling families. The Bible speaks frequently and specifically to the immigrant’s situation, and the theme of being a “stranger,” “foreigner,” or “alien” is a prominent motif in Scripture. Most of the great heroes of the Bible found themselves the outsider or immigrant at some point in their stories—Moses in Midian, Abraham as he traveled in search of the promised land, Jesus as a child exile, traveling to escape the persecution of a corrupt political leader, Ester as an ambassador for her own people in a foreign land (Van Engen 27-29). As Charles Van Engen writes, immigrants have always been essential in the spreading of God’s message, actively participating in “the mission of God to the nations” (Van Engen 22).

Latino immigrant families face numerous tensions and challenges to the unity between spouses, parents, and children. However, hope is available through a better understanding of the upcoming struggles, and the ability to maintain connection with family members and the new community.

METHODS

The qualitative research for this project was conducted through small focus group interviews. Although a substantial quantity of existing literature on the topics of immigration and family was consulted prior to the interviews in order to help generate and shape the questions to be asked, the most helpful and compelling sources of information were, unsurprisingly, the Latin American immigrant families interviewed themselves. At the start of the study, the pastors of seven churches in the Chicagoland area were contacted by letter and asked to participate in the study by hosting interviews in their churches and asking three or four families to participate per church. Churches were chosen as the focal point of the study because of their importance as a gathering place for communities of Latino immigrants of a variety of ages and backgrounds, and their accessibility—they could provide not only participants, but also a common gathering place where the interviews could be conducted. Four churches responded positively to the invitations, but scheduling conflicts prevented any interviews from being held at one. In the end the small group interviews were held in three different churches, encompassing a total number of roughly 40 interviewees.

At all churches but one, the interviewees were divided into two groups: adults and children (the interview that stands as an exception was conducted in an adult class during a regular Sunday morning service at a Latin American church, and no children were in attendance). Participants at the other locations were asked to come as families, but in order to encourage uninhibited conversation, parents and children were interviewed separately. Two interviewers led each session: one adult native-speaker and one non-native but language-competent college student. The native speakers were placed in charge of asking questions in all but one of the interviews, with the student's primary responsibilities being the handling of Informed Consent documents, note taking, and video recording the interviews. The two groups

were separated into different rooms, and were asked different questions. In general, each group contained between five and ten people. Children's questions differed from adults' primarily in wording and maturity/age level, but covered many of the same topics as their parents' question set. Both question scripts were reviewed and approved by the Institution Review Board at Olivet Nazarene University.

Interviews lasted between one and two hours, and were somewhat tailored to the interviewees—the researchers were instructed to remain flexible, pursuing themes that seemed to generate the most discussion among participants even if it meant deviating from the pre-written scripts. All interviews were video recorded with the full knowledge and consent of the participants.

To begin the second part of the study, the creation of the small group resource, the interviews were played back several times, and important quotes selected and transcribed. Frequently emerging themes were also noted, with special attention paid to common struggles the immigrants reported facing. Taken together, these themes and quotes (available in Appendix D) would form the framework for the creation of the series of studies, each of which was crafted in response to a specific concern shared by participants. Professor Wilfredo Canales, himself a pastor at one of the churches where interviews were conducted, gave direction for the studies, guiding their topics and format and helping to make them suitable for small group discussion by families. The studies, once formatted for print, will be sent to a printer and made into 200 booklets to distribute at the churches where interviews were conducted.

Choosing biblical immigrant narratives to match with the modern-day situations of participants was an interesting challenge. The Bible's frequent lack of detail and tendency to describe actions instead of feelings or mindsets made it harder, at times, to link the very concrete biblical stories with some of the comparatively abstract emotional themes we found in

the interviews. There are no “perfect matches” between the interview quotes and the Bible narratives—for example, no biblical stories of a young man who travels to a new country and struggles to learn the language in hopes of making himself more employable—but there are plenty of examples of God coming through for his people in specific ways. (This particular theme of language/English acquisition was in the final manuscripts paired with the story of Moses, who received God’s promise that he would help him to speak and himself teach him what to say.) It was important, then, to remember to look for generalizable facts about each biblical narrative: *What kind of leader was in power in the native country? Why did the people decide to leave? What was the social landscape like at that time?* Answering these sorts of questions helped to establish matching contexts between the stories of interviewees and the characters of the Bible, even if specific events did not always align.

Two or three quotes from the interviews were paired with the Biblical narratives, in a section entitled “Perspectives from immigrants of today.” These selected quotes invite participants to read the comments of people in their own situation, and to begin to make connections between the selected Bible account and modern-day immigration experience.

Once a narrative was selected, discussion questions were created for the study. Since the primary purpose for these small group sessions is not the explicit teaching of a particular “lesson” but the facilitation of sharing between group members with the biblical narrative as a jumping-off point, many questions were generated and divided into three categories: Observation, Interpretation, and Application. Observation questions referred specifically to the Bible narrative and the concrete facts of the story, such as characters, time periods, and motivations. Interpretation questions asked participants to begin to infer a bit more into the narrative, digesting the ramifications of the character’s experience and exploring further into the emotional and psychological details the Bible frequently leaves out. The application

questions were perhaps the most important, however. They asked participants to make connections between their own stories, the quotes from modern immigrants, and the biblical narrative for that study, bringing all three together to provide practical insight for their daily lives. The end of each study includes an opportunity for forming a concrete goal for that session's topic, be it English language, family leadership, etc. Participants are encouraged to formulate a specific plan for growth for the upcoming week. These can be very simple—"make sure to thank my children each time they interpret for me this week" or "work on dialogue with my spouse by having at least one uplifting, no-negativity conversation a day." The next session, families may discuss the results of the implementation of the previous week's goal. The following is a sample study, translated into English: the story of Ruth and Naomi, dealing with the themes of undocumented status and anxiety.

RUTH AND NAOMI, I

Conditions of Immigration: Rut left her country to escape poverty and accompany her mother-in-law to a new land where she would be a stranger. She came to Judah without the status of being Jewish: a big deal, as everyone in her new country would be of the same religion and race, a highly exclusive group. Upon arriving to the new land, Rut began to do the only work that was available to her as a foreigner and a woman without a husband: she went to work in the fields.

Heritage: A brave and loyal woman in spite of horrible circumstances, Ruth never let the events of the past or fear of the future control the present.

Key Passages: Ruth 1-4

Story: Ruth lived in Moab, a neighboring land of Judah. She married a man from Judah, who had come to Moab with his parents and brother to escape the famine in their own country. It was a short marriage: Ruth's husband lived in Moab only 10 years before he died. After his death, Ruth was left without a husband, but the situation of her mother-in-law, Naomi, whom she loved very much, was even worse: not only had her son, Ruth's husband, died, but also her other son and her own husband. Naomi found herself without family or protection in a strange land, and decided to return to her homeland of Judah. She told her daughter-in-law Ruth to go back to her parents' house to look for protection and a new life with another husband, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi. Ruth bravely left her own country in order to go with her mother-in-law and enter a radically different country and culture.

Upon arriving to Judah, Ruth immediately dedicated herself to the work of picking up sheaths of grain with the harvesters in the barley fields to provide food for her mother-in-law and herself.

It was difficult work, and dangerous, especially for a woman, but as a foreigner and unmarried woman, she had few options. God protected Ruth, however, and saw her good work and caring heart. Her dedication and bravery caught the attention of the owner of the field, who showed kindness to her and in the end of the story, married her, giving her a home and support. God had seen Ruth's faithfulness, and gave her both a new family and a place in the line of Christ.

Reflections from immigrants of today:

There's the fear that something will happen to my parents at work, that there will be raids...every day, all I think about is hoping that everything is okay, that nothing happens.

I wanted to come because, I think, all of us intend to give a better life to our family. And I wanted to do this at my husband's side, and I thought that it would be easy between the two of us and we would get to go back [to Mexico] very soon. But when I got here and saw the reality of what it is to live in the United States, and not have documents, I began to understand that, really, one suffers too much. Even more because my children and I are separated from each other. We stay in this country hoping, honestly, that God either gives us the documents we need to be able to live a better life, or that we are able to return for good to our own country, all of our family.

English isn't such a big deal; it's the documents.

Questions for Conversation

Observation:

- What are the circumstances surrounding Ruth's immigration? What were the circumstances of the original immigration of her mother-in-law and her family?
- What was Ruth and Naomi's economic situation like after the deaths of their husbands?
- In what ways are Ruth and Naomi different? How do their reactions to their individual losses differ?
- What kind of work did Ruth find after arriving in Judah?
- What was the role of Boaz in the story?

Interpretation:

- Why did Ruth insist on going with Naomi? Why, at first, did Naomi try to dissuade her?
- What is the significance of the promise that Ruth makes to Naomi, specifically in regard to faith? How would her life have changed as a result of this choice?
- What are some of the challenges that Ruth faced as an immigrant in Judah? What would have been her fears?
- What role does the past seem to occupy in Ruth's life?
- How can certain social and cultural aspects favor or impede an immigrant's integration into a new culture?

Application:

- How can you relate Ruth's immigration story with the experiences of today's immigrants living without documents?
- What part of Ruth's story do you most identify with? Why?
- How does Ruth's story help us to face and integrate ourselves into a new culture?
- Can you tell about a time in your own history or immigration when you had to keep moving forward, despite difficult circumstances?
- Is it always wrong to think about the past? When does it become dangerous to look back?
- What strategies has your family found to leave your anxiety about the future, the past, or documents in God's hands?
- How do you build and maintain a family environment of safety and protection for your protection, in spite of unstable circumstances?

*God, help us this week to trust you with our lives, exactly as they are right now. We don't want to be controlled by our past, or our fears about the future. Only you are in control of our lives, and we know that you are good, and have good plans for our families. Give us the strength that we need to keep believing and trusting in your love and protection this week. Teach us to lead our families not in anxiety or fear, but in the peace and hope you offer us.
Amen.*

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As the interviews were analyzed, seven specific themes emerged as the top challenges faced by the participating families. These were issues that consistently arose at the interviews, and around which there seemed to be the liveliest discussion. They are: English, family leadership and discipline, undocumented status and anxiety, communication within the family (especially between parents and children), the “Pronto regreso” mentality, identity and role changes, and adaptation for children and teens. We will take a more in depth look at each one.

English

One of the interview questions asked at every church was, “Since arriving, what has been the most difficult part of living in the United States?” At least one person in each group quickly said *el inglés*. Many Latin American immigrants come to the U.S. without being able to speak English, and learn too late how critical it is for finding work and navigating American culture. As one man commented in the interviews, “You just have to do it [learn English]...In my case, if I didn’t look for work, I didn’t eat, and if I didn’t speak English, where was I going to work?” An immigrant’s mastery or lack of English skills has a huge effect on the kinds of opportunities that will be available to him or her in the U.S. This does not refer to employment only, but also a sense of personal empowerment or well-being. A young girl interviewed spoke about her mother’s loss of liberty since coming to the U.S. Often Latin American women who immigrate to the States experience a sense of freedom due to the culture’s relaxed gender roles and greater acceptance of female equality, but this woman’s inability to speak English served as a new kind of restriction. “In Mexico, she went everywhere by herself, but here she is

dependent on my dad, all my brother and sisters, and me. When my dad can't [go with her], she says, "Oh, we'll go another day when you all can come with me," the young interviewee said. As difficult as this change must have been for the girl's mother individually, situations like hers, in which one or both parents struggle with English, can create large amounts of tension within the family as a whole. Because children are often faster language learners, it is common to see Latino families with English-fluent children and non-speaking parents. Very often, and at very young ages, these children become small interpreters and translators, serving as their parents' guides into English-speaking American culture. While this is perhaps a reasonable work-around for the short term, our interviews revealed the frustration that builds up in children who are constantly forced into the interpreter role. "Sometimes I feel bad [when I have to interpret for my parents]," one child told us. "Because I know that if I go ahead and do it for them, they will be content with not being able to explain themselves or express themselves like they would otherwise." A parent's dependence on a child for interpreting places that child in a place of inappropriate responsibility, in a sense inverting the roles of the caregiver and the cared-for, as will be discussed later.

This theme of struggles with language applied well to the story of Moses in Exodus 4. In this passage, God had appeared to Moses in the land of Midian in the form of a burning bush, and told him to go back to Egypt to be the liberator of the Hebrew slaves. Moses protested, saying he could not do it. He offered a variety of excuses before finally confessing that he was afraid of speaking to the people, because since he was a child he had struggled with his speech. Upon this confession, God reminded Moses that it was He himself who had made Moses' mouth, and that He promised to go with him and "teach him what to say." Even with this reassurance, however, Moses still refused. Finally, out of frustration, God told him He would send Moses' brother Aaron to help him speak. The role of Aaron, who is thrown into the deal as

a concession to Moses' fear, makes an interesting parallel to the roles of the many Latino children today who speak for their parents. While the study encourages parents to acknowledge and be thankful for their children's help, it questions whether Moses' interpreter was necessary, or part of God's original plan, and encourages immigrants struggling with learning English to claim the promise of God, that he—the maker of language and of mouths—can enable them to learn. The study also generates discussion on the role of children as interpreters within the home to increase understanding between parents and children, and to expose feelings that parents might not realize their children have in regard to their ability to speak English.

FAMILY LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLINE

The U.S. and the countries of Latin America have vastly different ideas about respect and formality within the family, and how it should be shown. One girl who participated in a children's interview put it well: "The respect that we have toward our parents [is different than in U.S. culture]. Us, we don't yell at our parents or get haughty with them. But the Americans, that isn't important to them. [With them] it's like, *whatever [I] am going to do, I'm doing it and it doesn't matter what you think*. Here in our communities, though, it's like, "If I tell you to do something, you do it. You don't ask me why, you don't question me." It's like, "You have to do it, because I'm telling you to." Latin American families steeped in the autocratic leanings of machismo are likely to enforce a stricter hierarchy in their households, with the parents holding a strong authority over children. Tensions can come up, however, when quickly-aculturating school-aged children are exposed to a more "American" version of child-to-adult interaction and attempt to implement it at home. Parents in the interviews expressed their frustration with the competing system of politeness, respect, and formality they find their children facing in the U.S. Many say they would like their children to be educated in traditional courtesy—to ser *cortesés*—but admit there are few models for them here in the U.S.

Several participants also found their own parenting styles challenged in the U.S., but many report that it has been a change for the good—a healthy turning point for their families. One woman commented on her own decision to deviate from the traditional parenting methods of the family she grew up in.

“Because of the experience I had in my family, the discipline style of my parents—I made a change in my own household. [In my parents’ style of discipline], the children were beaten often. It was what you did to correct the child. Then, when I came here...I began to see that the child is human, and he understands, and that you can discipline him with different forms of punishment, different strategies, and not with the belt. So when I go back, I try in a way to teach others what I’ve learned here.

A man in the same interview picked up her train of thought. “Like we’ve talked about before, in our cultures, there was a lot of violence involved in the discipline of children,” he said. “My challenge is to stay calm, and look for a way that my child can understand me just through speaking. Thanks to God, I’ve been able to work with my children in a more civilized way, which is talking with them constantly—a dialog.”

The Bible narrative paired with this theme is the story of Christ’s earthly father, Joseph. Although we do not receive too much description of him in the Bible, we learn from Matthew 1 that Joseph was a “righteous” man, who was determined to act kindly toward his fiancé, even when it appeared that she had been unfaithful to him. The study discussed the risks that Joseph assumed upon deciding to marry Mary—potential discrimination from family and friends who saw his fiancé’s pregnant belly and made the wrong assumptions, and the huge pressure he would inevitably feel trying to raise the son of God. Joseph obeyed God, however, took these risks, and because of his obedience was honored to become the protector of Christ and his

mother. Joseph's leadership of his family is seen in the way he served them. Throughout his story, God communicated the needs of the family directly to Joseph, for him to resolve. In one instance, God spoke to Joseph in a dream, telling him get his wife and son ready and flee their homeland, where the corrupt king would search for their child to kill him. Joseph listened to God, and quickly responded, leading his family to safety. This point about Joseph's role as protector of his wife and children is an important message for Latin American families, who generally come from countries and cultures with high rates of domestic violence and abuse, which may be perceived as acceptable and normal. One hope of this particular study was to help Latin American men to see the difference between leading their families in their own authority and power, and leading them in ways that communicated God's love and compassion for them. Joseph led through service and submission of himself to the leadership of God, fulfilling his role as protector—not master or exploiter—of his family.

The study also pointed out that, under Joseph's leadership, his family stayed together, even during the immigration process. For most Latino families, this isn't the case: frequently the husband or father of a family migrates first, and is then followed by his wife and, perhaps even later, their children. This separation causes obvious emotional and psychological problems for each member of the family, and can also generate unhealthy feelings between family members. One of the questions for discussion in the study was, "Despite the past, how can you lead your family to greater unity this week?" Joseph serves as example of a man whose gentle leadership both protected his family and brought them closer together.

UNDOCUMENTED STATUS AND ANXIETY

This is a theme that recurred constantly throughout the interviews. Surprisingly, however, it was the pre-teens and teenagers, and not the adults, who talked about it the most. The interviews revealed the profound stress and concern that children of undocumented

immigrants feel for their parents' safety. "There's the fear that something will happen to them at work, that there will be raids," one pre-teen said. "All I think about, every day, is hoping that everything is okay, that nothing happens." Teens also expressed sympathy for their parents' loss of liberty. "They don't have the freedom to go anywhere they want or travel like they used to because of the fear of getting separated, or being arrested and deported," one said. One of the questions in the children's interview set was a simple, "How do you feel about your family?" Expected answers might have been "loved," or "happy"—the interviewers were unprepared for one boy's answer: scared.

Adults also spoke about the hardships of living in the U.S. without documentation, and one woman confessed her desire to leave. "When I got here and saw the reality of what it is to live in the United States, and not have documents, I began to understand that, really, you suffer too much," she said. "We stay in this country hoping, honestly, that God either gives us the documents we need to be able to live a better life, or that we are able to return for good to our own country."

The story of Ruth was chosen for this theme. Ruth may not have immigrated "illegally" to Judah, but she did come rather unofficially, sneaking into a quite exclusive race and people under the auspices of her mother-in-law. The opportunities offered to her there very closely paralleled those that undocumented immigrants find on arriving in the United States, too: the only living offered to her as an unmarried, non-Jewish immigrant woman was working in the fields—a risky and dangerous occupation. Ruth's response to her situation, however, models the ideal: she quickly found out what opportunities were available to her, and dedicated herself to the hard work to be done in order to provide food for herself and her mother-in-law, despite the hardship she was experiencing with the recent death of her husband and the emigration to another land. Ruth's kindness and perseverance caught the eye of God, and also of Boaz, the

owner of the field where she had begun working. In the end, God rewarded Ruth with the love and protection of Boaz as her husband, and included her in the prestigious line of ancestors to the Messiah.

The purpose of Ruth's inclusion in this study is to give a model of an immigrant who came because of horrible and unforgettable circumstances, but was able to keep trusting in God and moving bravely forward, not letting the past control her identity or her potential.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE FAMILY

Perhaps because of the traditional model of Latino parenting and household leadership, communication between parents and children is limited. Big decisions are not always discussed with or communicated to children, even when the children may be primary stakeholders. One of the adolescents interviewed reported that his parents did not tell him of their decision to emigrate to the United States before leaving the country. They left him behind in Mexico to live with his grandparents without telling him where they were going. After a few years, they paid for a plane ticket to bring him to the United States, but even then their plan was never fully disclosed. "They said it was going to just be like a field trip," he said—he didn't know that he would be coming to stay. A father in one of the adult interviews spoke to the same issue from the other side. "The hardest thing was to say goodbye to my six year old son. We didn't wake him up—we didn't want him to know what was happening," he said. This lack of communication within families, and particularly between generations, can hardly encourage trust or children's sense of security.

On a very practical level, language difficulties also complicate family communication. There are a lot of Latino immigrant parents who do not speak English, but there is also a growing number of U.S.-raised children of immigrants who do not speak Spanish. "Since our children don't speak only Spanish, they are constantly losing words," one father said. "Sometimes when

I'm chatting with my son, he stops to ask me "What is that?" and I have to either look it up in English or look for an application in Spanish. In the environment we're living in, everything has changed." Language barriers put additional stress on the relationship between generations.

The story of Ruth and Naomi was used again for this study. This particular narrative worked well because it is one of the few in the Bible in which we see pieces of dialogue between characters. Even if the goodbye conversation between Naomi and her daughters-in-law had not been recorded, however, Ruth's action of staying with and immigrating to the country of her mother-in-law would have said much about their relationship. As we have some of the words they spoke, however, we are able to see the concern and affirmation that characterized their communication.

One important aspect to realize about Ruth and Naomi is that they came from separate cultures—Ruth was Moabite, Naomi was Jewish. In the new family they created after the deaths of their husbands, these two women modeled the respectful integration of two cultures into one home. Many times, as immigrant children quickly out-acculturate their parents, it can feel to both parents and children as if they come from two very difficult cultures and ways of thinking. Naomi's kind, compassionate way of speaking to Ruth, however (despite the differences of culture and age) inspired her daughter-in-law to great faithfulness and courage. In the study, Latin American families are invited to reflect on their own conversations with family members at home. Does their choice of words and actions lead their children towards them, and towards the love of God, or away?

"PRONTO REGRESO" MENTALITY

Pronto regreso means, "I'm going back soon"—in this case, going back home. A good percentage of Latin Americans who come to the United States plan to stay only temporarily to make money—a mindset that prevents them from settling down, learning the language, or

establishing meaningful interaction in the U.S. “They come with a mindset more about the money,” one man said. “*I’m going to go make money and in one, two, or three years, I’m leaving again.*” He pointed out a flaw in this approach, however: many short-term immigrants end up coming back. “It’s possible to make that good little bit of money, but then they go back to their homes, everything gets spent, and in the end they are back in the same situation of having to leave and come back.” When this happens, temporarily reunited families are torn up again, and the cycle starts over.

This important theme was paired with God’s letter to the Jewish exiles in Babylon in the book of Jeremiah. In this letter, God gave the exiles specific instructions for facing life in the new land. Although Babylon was probably the last place they wanted to live (it was, after all, the country of the king who had just invaded and conquered their land), God told the exiles to settle down and start planting gardens and having babies (29:5-7). He told them also to pray and work hard for the success and prosperity of the city. This advice—of seeking the good of the land you’ve arrived in, and praying for its people—stands in blatant conflict with the philosophy of using a country simply for its money or resources, and then leaving. God offered a more respectful, and a more healthy, way for his immigrants to live, that involved putting down roots and making commitments to the good of another, instead of focusing exclusively on one’s own needs.

IDENTITY AND ROLE CHANGES

In traditional Latino culture, family and gender roles are central to a person’s identity, and are not up for much negotiation. As one woman summarized, “In Guatemala, mothers stayed back in the house with the children and the dads went to work. So, I brought this mentality in my head because it was how I’d been raised: my mom stayed home with us.” In the U.S., however, it may be necessary for both husband and wife to work

outside the home. This change in roles can have profound impacts on each person's sense of self and belonging to the family. The same woman quoted above was distressed when, after arriving in the U.S. and marrying an American, she found herself obliged to work. "Here in the US, both [spouses] work, and we decided that for a while I would work with [my husband] too," she said. "But I wasn't happy, and I didn't like it. I would say to myself, "Why did I have children at all, if I'm just going to leave them with another person...I wanted to enjoy them, because if I have children, it's because I want to take care of them. I didn't feel good about leaving them." The same opportunity that may have felt like liberation to another woman felt oppressive to her, and encroached upon her sense of identity as a mother.

One man in the interviews made an insightful comment, saying that for his family it was better to reject the pre-made gender roles. "[My wife and I] had to create our own roles," he said. "That is to say, we can't follow either the pattern of [Guatemala] or the pattern there is here. We had to redesign our own roles."

Another role change already mentioned is represented in the phenomena of child-interpreters. These children act as the speakers and ambassadors for their parents, instead of the other way around, as is advocated in traditional family structure. One girl told the story of how she had acted as the caretaker of her father when he was in the hospital.

When my dad was sick, I was there the whole time. I went to all the appointments, and when he stayed in the hospital, I had to stay there with him, because in the hospital they have people that translate for you, but they don't come until the doctor is there. So I had to stay there, I took care of him and watched him. Sometimes it's like I get tired of it, because I want to do other things, I need to go, I need to go do what I want to do. And sometimes I get almost angry, because if they could speak [English], I wouldn't have to be there

all the time. But since they can't [speak] sometimes, I have to be there, and I can't do what the other girls do when their dad is sick—just go, visit him, leave, and then it's history. I can't do that—they get sick and I have to take care of them.

This change places children, to an extent, in the role of caregiver—a position that, despite all the love children may feel towards their parents, inevitably costs them additional stress and frustration.

The story of Joseph shows a young man who went through a series of serious ups and downs and changes in roles. In the beginning of the story, he was a spoiled favorite son living at home with his adoring father—next, he was a slave, sold off by his brothers to a traveling caravan. The next time we see him, he has arrived in Egypt and become a powerful man, working under the Pharaoh's captain of the guard. In the next chapter, however, he is thrown into jail for a crime he didn't do, and so on. Through all of these huge changes, however, Joseph's attitude seemed to remain positive. Everywhere he went—whether to the palace or the prison—he worked hard, gaining the respect and trust of those in power. The Bible says that God was with Joseph in everything that he did, and His example shows that identity cannot be founded on position, status, or culture. If Joseph had based his self-concept in any of these things, it would have been very quickly destroyed. However, since he had based his selfhood on an unchanging, steady God, his identity remained stable despite the constant changes. This hope is available for today's immigrants, too.

CHILDREN'S ADAPTATION

The interviews showed that children and teens are profoundly impacted by many aspects of immigration, particularly concern and fear for their parents. This love and concern,

however, is tempered by a need for independence and interaction with the new culture that will ultimately become theirs. The lack of guidance is a struggle as children and teens feel pulled in two directions, caught between two cultures. Often, they feel left alone in figuring out the balance between the two sides. They may feel left alone, as well, when language barriers force them to do for themselves things that their parents would normally do for them, or at least assist them in doing. “Growing up in an immigrant community as students, we with our siblings and all the other kids had challenges, where our parents were always there, but they were limited in how they could help us,” recalled one man who was raised in the U.S. as the child of immigrants. “So we found ourselves, for example, [throughout] the whole process of school admissions without the guidance of our parents or any type of mentor. As adolescences, we had to figure it all out for ourselves. It’s not that our parents weren’t there, or that they didn’t give us words of love and support, but they had found themselves in a very difficult place.” Immigrant children often receive very early on responsibilities and tasks that would normally be reserved for much older or more mature children, and must also cope not only with the usual stresses of growing up, but of growing up the product of two cultures.

The story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worked well as the pairing for this theme, because the four boys of the story were only adolescents when they did the brave things recorded in the book of Daniel. Like many young Latino immigrants today, these teenage boys had been forced to leave their country, without being asked or consulted, and found themselves in the middle of a rapidly changing world completely against their choice. The four boys set a good model for cautious acculturation: although as slaves their lives depended on their ability to become as Babylonian as possible, they stood up when their own moral lines were about to be crossed. Their values and faith remained strong, even in a new country, and guided the way they saw and interacted with the new culture. Without parents or mentors

there with them, they had a lot to figure out for themselves about growing up and adjusting to a new place. God was with them, however, just as he can be with the young immigrants of today—giving them wisdom and bravery beyond their age.

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APPENDIX A: ADULT INTERVIEW QUESTION SET (TRANSLATED)

Questions for each couple:

To start, ask every couple for a description of their family:

Names:

Ages:

Parents' employment:

Country of origin:

Date/year of emigration:

Questions for the group:

Did you come directly to Chicago, or to another city?

What were your main motives in leaving?

What were you hoping for in the United States?

Since arriving, what has been the most difficult? What has been easiest? What has been the biggest surprise?

Did all of your family come to the US, or only some members? How did you decide who would stay and who would go?

What are your hopes and goals for your family? Have they changed at all in the United States?

Have you experienced any change in family roles since living in the United States? What is different? Why do you think those changes occurred?

How do you maintain an open and unified relationship with your husband/wife?

What are the biggest challenges of maintaining good relationships with your children? How do you protect this relationship?

What are your biggest concerns about your family at this time?

How did you find this church? How long have you been going here?

How do you believe that churches can support immigrant families?

Is there a Biblical story or passage that has helped you or your family in your experience as immigrants?

Do you have any advice to Latin-American families new to the United States?

Is there anything else you would like to say?

APPENDIX B: CHILDREN/TEEN INTERVIEW QUESTION SET (TRANSLATED)

Basic Questions:

Name:

Age:

Parents' names:

Country of origin:

Questions (All questions do not need to be answered, especially if the child is very young or loses interest quickly. The researcher should choose from the list the most appropriate questions for the situation):

How many people are in your family?

How many brothers and sisters do you have? Are you the youngest/oldest?

How do you feel about your family?

How long have you lived in the United States?

Can you remember the place where you lived before coming to the United States? What do you remember about it?

How did your family decide to come to the United States? Did your parents ask you if you wanted to leave, or not?

How did you feel about leaving your home?

What did you miss most? What do you miss most now?

What was the hardest part of leaving for you?

How did your life change in the United States?

What do you like best about living in the United States?

What do you think is hardest for your parents?

Do you sometimes have trouble understanding your parents?

How are the cultures of the United States and your home country different?

Do you feel that you belong more to one culture than the other? What about your parents?

Have you visited your home country? Do you plan to go back some day?

APPENDIX C: THEME/QUOTE MATCHING

ENGLISH

- Something very difficult is the language. And unfortunately we as immigrants bring the mindset that we are returning to our own country. For example, I have friends—I'm one of them—who said "I'm not going to study, because I'm only going [to the US] to work for one, two, or three years and then come right back." It gets more difficult because you just have to do it—for example, in my case, it was hard because I had the mentality of going back [to my country]. I was no good at studying. But...if I didn't look for work, I didn't eat, and if I didn't speak English, where was I going work?
- I think my dad has adapted well. The one that it is a little bit harder for is my mom. It's the same thing, the language. She doesn't understand me or can't speak very much, but my dad can. He doesn't speak 100% perfectly, but he does understand, and can make it work.
- In Mexico, [my mom] went everywhere by herself, but here, she is dependent on my dad, all of my brothers and sisters, and me. When my dad can't [go with her somewhere], she says "Oh, we'll go another day when you guys can go with me, so that you can explain."
- Sometimes I feel bad [when I have to interpret for my parents]. Because I know that if I go ahead and do it for them, they will be content with not being able to explain themselves or express themselves like they would otherwise.

FAMILY LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLINE

- Because of the experience I had in my family, the discipline style of my parents—I made a change in my own household. [In my parents' style of discipline], the children were

beaten often. It was what you did to correct the child. Then, when I came here [to United States], I was carrying that same pattern, but...I began to see that the child is human, and he understands, and that you can discipline with different forms of punishment, different strategies, and not with the belt. So when I go back, I try in a way to teach others what I've learned here.

- Honestly, one of the biggest challenges is to stay calm. Like we've talked about before, in our cultures, there was a lot of violence involved in the discipline of children. Like Maria said, beating them. My challenge is to stay calm, and look for a way that my child can understand me just through speaking. Thanks to God, I've been able to work with my children in a more civilized way, which is talking with them constantly—a dialog.
- “The respect that we have toward our parents [is different than in US culture]. Us, we don't yell at our parents or get haughty with them. But the Americans, that isn't important to them. [With them] it's like, *whatever [I] am going to do, I'm doing it and it doesn't matter what you think*. Here in our communities, though, it's like, “If I tell you to do something, you do it. You don't ask me why, you don't question me.” It's like, “You have to do it, because I'm telling you to.”
- Education, instruction, understanding—you get these from the school. But values—that is the place of your parents.

UNDOCUMENTED STATUS AND ANXIETY

- Thanks to God, I was able to cross. I didn't suffer the passage. I was able to pass through—my husband paid so that I could cross the line without issue. I didn't suffer in crossing, but I did suffer, in leaving my children. I left my three children. I wanted to come because, I think, all of us intend to give a better life to our family. And I wanted to

do this at my husband's side, and I thought that it would be easy between the two of us and we would get to go back [to Mexico] very soon. But when I got here and saw the reality of what it is to live in the United States, and not have documents, I began to understand that, really, one suffers too much. Even more because my children and I are separated from each other. We stay in this country hoping, honestly, that God either gives us the documents we need to be able to live a better life, or that we are able to return for good to our own country, all of our family."

- English really isn't that big of a deal: it's the papers.
- [The hardest thing for my parents] is not having the same rights as everyone else, like licenses, security. They don't have the freedom to go anywhere they want or travel like they used to because of the fear of getting separated, or being arrested and deported.
- There's the fear that something will happen to [my parents] at work, that there will be raids. All I think about, every day, is hoping that everything is okay, that nothing happens."

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE FAMILY

- The hardest thing was to say goodbye to my six year old son. We didn't wake him up—we didn't want him to know what was happening.
- It gets a little difficult because of the language. Since our children don't just speak Spanish, they are constantly losing words. Sometimes when I'm chatting with my son, he stops to ask me "What is that?" and I have to either look it up in English or look for an application in Spanish. In the environment we're living in, everything has changed.
- One of the greatest challenges is indifference. But why does indifference happen? That is to say—and this doesn't happen only between children and parents, but even

between spouses—when you get to the point where there is no longer understanding, where you’re no longer synchronized. There are a number of things necessary to have a healthy relationship. Speaking about children, I think that the change of context—of culture—makes everything a little more difficult, to the point that the parent, even though living with his son, really no longer knows him, and vice versa.

“PRONTO REGRESO” MENTALITY

- If only someone were to come with the mindset of deciding that, “No, I’m going to go [to US], and I’m going to overcome.” But they come with a mindset more about the money: “I’m going to go make money and in one, two, or three years, I’m leaving again.” And it’s possible to make that good little bit of money, but then they go back to their homes, everything gets spent, and in the end they are back in the same situation of having to leave and come back.

IDENTITY AND ROLE CHANGES

- In Guatemala, mothers stayed back in the house with the children and the dads went to work. So, I brought this mentality in my head because it was how I’d been raised: my mom stayed home with us. But here in the US, both [spouses] work, and we decided that for a while I would work with [my husband] too. But I wasn’t happy, and I didn’t like it. I would say to myself, “Why did I have children at all, if I’m going just to leave them with another person, be it my own mother?” I wanted to enjoy them, because if I have children, it’s because I want to take care of them. I didn’t feel good about leaving them.
- In our marriage, we represent two different cultures, even though both of us are Hispanics. We had to create our own roles. That is to say, we can’t follow either the

pattern either of [Guatemala] or the prescribed pattern there is here. We had to redesign our own roles.

KIDS ADAPTATION

- Growing up in an immigrant community as students, we with our siblings and all the other kids had challenges, where our parents were always there, but they were limited in how they could help us. So we found ourselves, for example, [throughout] the whole process of school admissions without the guidance of our parents or any type of mentor. As adolescences, we had to figure it all out for ourselves. It's not that our parents weren't there, or that they didn't give us words of love and help, but they had found themselves in a very difficult place.
- When my dad was sick, I was there the whole time. I went to all the appointments, and when he stayed in the hospital, I had to stay there with him, because in the hospital they have people that translate for you, but they don't come until the doctor is there. Because of that I had to stay there, I took care of him and watched him. Sometimes it's like I get tired of it, because I want to do other things, I need to go, I need to go do what I want to do. And sometimes I get almost angry, because if they could speak [English], I wouldn't have to be there all the time. But since they can't [speak] sometimes,
- I have to be there, and I can't do what the other girls do when their dad is sick—just go, visit him, leave, and then it's history. I can't do that—they get sick and I have to take care of them.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW THEMES/BIBLE NARRATIVE PAIRINGS

Theme	Bible Narrative
English Language	Moses
Family Leadership and Discipline	Joseph, Father of Jesus
Undocumented Status and Anxiety	Ruth and Naomi
Communication Within the Family	Ruth and Naomi
"Pronto Regreso" Mentality	Letter to the Exiles
Identity and Role Changes	Joseph
Cultural Adaptation	Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego

APPENDIX E: SMALL GROUP STUDIES

RUT Y NOEMÍ, I

Condiciones de inmigración: Rut salió de su propia patria para evitar la pobreza y acompañar a su suegra a una tierra donde sería una extraña. Vino a Judá sin el estatus de ser judía—algo tremendo, porque todos los demás en su nuevo país serían de la misma raza y religión, y lamentablemente la nación de los judíos, por mucha de la historia, era un grupo bien exclusivo. Al llegar a la nueva tierra, Rut empezó a hacer el único trabajo que se le ofrecía como extranjera y mujer sin esposo: ella se fue a trabajar en los campos.

Herencia: Una mujer valiente y leal a pesar de circunstancias horribles, Rut nunca permitió que los eventos del pasado o el miedo del futuro controlaran el presente.

Pasajes Claves: Rut 1-4

Historia: Rut vivía en Moab, tierra vecina de Judá. Se casó con un hombre de Judá, quien había venido a Moab con sus padres y hermano para escapar de la hambruna en su propio país. Fue un matrimonio corto: el esposo de Rut vivió en Moab sólo diez años antes de morir. Después de su muerte, Rut estaba sin esposo, pero la situación de su suegra Noemí, a quien amaba mucho, era peor todavía: no solamente se le había muerto su hijo, el esposo de Rut, sino también su otro hijo y su propio esposo. Noemí se encontró sin familia ni protección en una tierra extraña, y decidió irse para regresar a Judá. Dijo a su nuera Rut regresara a la casa de su madre y buscar ahí protección y una nueva vida con otro esposo, pero Rut se negó a dejar a Noemí. Valientemente Rut salió de su propio país para acompañar a su afligida suegra y entrar en un país y una cultura totalmente diferente.

Al llegar a Judá, Rut se dedicó inmediatamente al trabajo de recoger espigas con los segadores en el campo para proveer comida para su suegra y para sí misma. Era trabajo duro y peligroso, especialmente para una mujer, pero como extranjera y mujer no casada, no tenía muchas opciones. Sin embargo, Dios le protegió a Rut, y vio su buen trabajo y cariñoso corazón. Su valor y dedicación llamó la atención del dueño del campo, quien le mostró amabilidad y al fin se casó con ella, dándole un hogar y amparo. El Señor había visto su lealtad, y le regaló nueva familia y un puesto en el linaje de Cristo.

Reflexiones de los inmigrantes de hoy:

[Me pesa] el temor de que les pasa algo [a mis padres] en el trabajo, que tengan redadas... cada día no más pienso de que todo está bien, que no pasa nada.

Quise venir porque todos yo creo pensamos en dar una vida mejor a la familia. Y quise experimentarlo al lado de mi esposo, y yo pensaba que iba a ser fácil entre los dos y que rápido iríamos a regresar. Pero cuando llegué aquí y vi la realidad de lo que es estar aquí en EE.UU., y no tener documentos, entonces pude entender que realmente se sufre demasiado. Seguimos en este país, esperando, verdad, en Dios que o nos dan papeles para poder vivir una vida mejor, o definitivamente nos vamos a nuestra tierra, toda la familia.

El inglés no es tanto; sino es los documentos.

Preguntas de Conversación

Observación:

- ¿Cuáles son las circunstancias de la inmigración de Rut? ¿Cuáles son las de la inmigración de su suegra Noemí y su familia?
- ¿Cómo era la situación económica de Noemí y Rut después de las muertes de sus esposos?
- ¿En qué aspectos son diferentes Rut y su suegra Noemí? ¿Cómo son diferentes sus reacciones al perder a sus esposos?
- ¿Cómo fue el trabajo de Rut al llegar a Judá?
- ¿Cuál fue el rol de Booz en la historia?

Interpretación:

- ¿Por qué insistió Rut en ir con Noemí? ¿Por qué, al principio, trataba Noemí de disuadirle?
- ¿Qué significa la promesa que Rut le da a Noemí, específicamente en cuanto a la fe? ¿Cómo cambiaría su vida como resultado de esto?
- ¿Cuáles son los desafíos que enfrentó Rut como inmigrante en Judá? ¿Cuáles serían sus temores?
- ¿Qué rol parece ocupar el pasado en la vida de Rut?
- ¿Cómo ciertos aspectos sociales y/o culturales pueden favorecer la integración de los inmigrantes a una nueva cultura?

Aplicación:

- ¿Cómo se relacionan la experiencia inmigrante de Rut y las experiencias de los inmigrantes de hoy que vienen sin documentos?
- ¿Con qué parte de la historia de Rut te relacionas más tú? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cómo nos ayuda la historia de Rut a enfrentar e integrarnos en otra cultura?
- ¿Puedes contar un momento de tu propia historia o inmigración, cuando tuviste que seguir adelante, a pesar de circunstancias duras?
- ¿Siempre es malo pensar en el pasado? ¿Cuándo se hace peligroso mirar hacia atrás?
- ¿Qué estrategias ha encontrado su familia para dejar su ansiedad sobre el futuro, el pasado o los documentos en las manos de Dios?

Señor, ayúdanos esta semana a confiarte nuestras vidas, exactamente como están en este momento. No queremos que el pasado o nuestros temores del futuro nos controlen. Sólo tú estás en control de nuestras vidas, y sabemos que eres bueno, y que tienes buenos planes para nuestras familias. Danos la fuerza que necesitamos para seguir creyendo y confiando en tu amor y protección esta semana. Enséñanos a guiar a nuestra familia en los caminos no de la ansiedad, sino de la paz y la esperanza que tú nos ofreces. Amen.

Mis metas para la semana que viene, a partir de mis descubrimientos:

RUT y NOEMÍ, II

Condiciones de inmigración: Noemí originalmente vino a Moab para escapar la hambruna en su país. Su retorno a Judá, su propia patria, se debe a circunstancias más tristes todavía: la pérdida de la familia. Vuelve a su país y a su gente con nada—salvo la leal hija que se le ganó por el matrimonio de su hijo: su nuera, Rut, quien sale de su país de Moab para buscar otra vida y escapar la pobreza.

Herencia: Aunque eran de diferentes culturas, edades y trasfondos, estas dos mujeres compartían un sólo dolor, y formaron su propia familia después de la muerte de sus esposos. La historia de ellas nos sirve de ejemplo del respeto y comunicación entre las generaciones de una familia inmigrante multicultural.

Pasajes Claves: Rut 1-4, especialmente 1:1-18

Historia: Cuando se murió su último hijo en Moab, Noemí empezó a esperar un momento en que podía volver a su país. Cuando oyó que de nuevo había comida en Judá, se preparó a regresar. Pero sus dos nueras no le quisieron salir sola-- insistieron en ir consigo. Noemí trató varias veces a persuadirles regresar a sus propias hogares en Moab, y al fin una se fue. Rut, sin embargo, se negó, declarando que nunca dejaría a Noemí, hasta la muerte.

Reflexiones de los inmigrantes de hoy:

*Mi desafío es mantener una calma, y buscar la forma de que mi hijo me entienda **hablado**. Gracias a Dios, he podido trabajar con mis hijos de una forma más civilizada, que es hablando constantemente—un diálogo.*

Se me viene dificultar un poco porque por el asunto del idioma, que a pesar de que nuestros hijos no sólo hablamos español, hay palabras que les están perdiendo constantemente. Algunas veces yo platico con mi hijo, y él parra para preguntarme <<¿qué es?>> Entonces en el ambiente en que estamos viviendo, todo ha venido cambiando.

Uno de los desafíos grandes es la indiferencia. Es decir—y esto no es sólo entre hijos y padres sino entre aún esposos—cuando se llegan a que ya no hay comprensión, ya no están sincronizados. Y hablando entre hijos, yo creo que por el cambio de contexto—la cultura—esto pone un poco más que todos estos elementos sean desafiados al punto de que el padre, aunque vive con su hijo, realmente ya no conoce a su hijo, y viceversa.

Preguntas de Conversación

Observación:

- ¿Cómo es la situación de las tres mujeres al principio de la historia? ¿Por qué deciden salir?
- ¿Cuál es el consejo de Noemí a sus nueras? ¿Cómo responden ellas?
- ¿Cómo dice Noemí que sus nueras le han tratado a Noemí y a los hijos de Noemí, sus esposos?
- ¿Qué dice Rut que, al fin, persuade a Noemí dejarle venir con ella?

Interpretación:

- ¿Por todo el pasaje, cómo se caracteriza la comunicación entre las mujeres?
- ¿Qué tipo de relación debían tener Noemí y sus nueras, que ellas le querían tanto?
- ¿Por qué Noemí les pide dejarle?
- ¿Cómo es la influencia que Noemí tiene con Rut, a partir de Rut 1:16-17?
- La última parte del versículo 1:13 nos muestra algo importante del amor que tiene Noemí hacia sus nueras. ¿Qué es?

Aplicación:

- ¿Cómo puede esta historia ayudarnos a adaptarnos e integrar en una nueva cultura?
- ¿Algunas veces te sientes que tus hijos o tus padres son de una cultura diferente de la tuya? ¿Cuándo y por qué?

- ¿Cómo se caracteriza la comunicación típica entre padres e hijos en las familias latinas?
- ¿Cómo es la comunicación en tu casa?
- ¿Qué impide la comunicación buena y respetuosa?
- ¿Hay algo que ha aprendido su familia, en cuanto a la comunicación?
- Rut declara a Noemí que <<tu Dios será mi Dios>>. ¿Tienes tú una relación con Dios que les hace que tus hijos quieran conocer a Él también?

Señor, ayúdanos a comunicar con nuestros hijos de una manera que les muestre tu amor, y les guíe a ti. Danos creatividad y buenas ideas para mejorar la comunicación en nuestras familias y hogares. Ayúdanos a usar palabras y acciones respetuosas, y usar nuestra autoridad como padres para ser buenos y cariñosos líderes a nuestros hijos. Te agradecemos tanto por dárnoslos. Haznos los padres y comunicadores que tú quieres que seamos. Amen.

Mis metas para la semana que viene, a partir de mis descubrimientos:

MOISÉS

Condiciones de inmigración: Moisés salió de una tierra bajo el reino de un autócrata corrupto, donde el pueblo hebreo vivía en la pobreza y esclavitud.

Herencia: Aunque Moisés se consideraba a si mismo incapaz y pobre orador, Dios le dio lo que necesitaba para liderar al pueblo de Israel fuera de su cautividad.

Pasajes Claves: Éxodo 3, 4:1-17

Historia: Hacía 40 años, Moisés—el famoso bebé del canastillo de Éxodo 2, y ya un hombre de muchos años—mató a un egipcio que vio maltratando a uno de los esclavos hebreos. Cuando se dio cuenta el próximo día de que se había visto su crimen, huyó a la tierra de Madián para escapar castigo. Al llegar allí, Moisés se puso a olvidar su pasado y crear una nueva vida, pero Dios tenía planes diferentes.

Aunque quizá a la ley egipcia Moisés se había olvidado durante los 40 años en Madián, sin embargo Dios nunca le dejó de ver ni renunció su propósito para su vida. En este pasaje, Dios viene a Moisés en Madián para encargarle con una gran misión: la de liberar al pueblo hebreo de la esclavitud. Moisés debe dejar la comodidad de su vida en Madián para volver a Egipto, el país

de donde se fue hace muchos años. Primero, sin embargo, debe enfrentar y dar a Dios su debilidad y temor más grande: la habla.

Reflexiones de los inmigrantes de hoy:

El inglés es un área bien difícil para los inmigrantes, empezando cuando a uno no le gusta estudiar. Se hace más difícil porque hay que hacerlo--por ejemplo en mi caso, fue bien difícil porque tenía la idea de regresar. No fui bueno para estudiar. Pero... si no buscaba trabajo, no comía, y si no hablaba inglés, ¿en dónde voy a trabajar?

Cuando mi papa estuvo enfermo, yo estuve allí todo el tiempo. Iba para todas las citas. Cuando se quedaba en el hospital, yo tenía que caber con él, por lo mismo que cuando en el hospital que les han para les traduzcan pero no llegan hasta la hora que está medico. Por eso me tenía que quedar allí, lo cuidaba, lo veía. A veces me canso: <<ay, quiero hacer otras cosas, necesito yo ir, necesito hacer lo que quiero>>, y a veces me da como coraje, de que si [mis padres] pudieran hablarlo, no estaría yo todo el tiempo allí. Pero como no pueden a veces, yo tengo que estar allí, no puedo hacer lo que otras niñas hacen.

Preguntas de Conversación

Observación:

- ¿Cómo es la vida para el pueblo de Israel en Egipto?
- ¿Cuál es la reacción de Dios a la sufrimiento de su pueblo?
- ¿Qué quiere Dios que Moisés haga?
- ¿Cuántas veces se niega Moisés a Dios?
- ¿Cuáles son algunas de sus excusas? ¿Cómo las contesta Dios?
- Al fin, ¿qué descubrimos es la verdadera razón que Moisés duda?
- ¿Cuál es la promesa que Dios le da a Moisés en el versículo 4:12? ¿La acepta él?

Interpretación:

- ¿A qué punto de la conversación se empieza a hablar de Aarón, el hermano de Moisés?
- ¿Era parte del plan original que Aarón hablaría por Moisés?
- ¿Por qué es difícil para Moisés creer en la habilidad de Dios de hacerle hablar?
- ¿Qué podemos aprender acerca del carácter de Dios, a partir de su conversación con Moisés?
- ¿Cuáles fueron los resultados de la decisión de Moisés de confiar en Dios?

Aplicación:

- ¿Cómo nos ayuda la historia de Moisés a enfrentar e integrarnos en una nueva cultura?
- ¿Cómo se relacionan el pasaje y las citas de los inmigrantes de arriba?
- ¿Tienes un <<Aarón>> en tu vida—un(a) hermano(a) o hijo(a) quien habla por ti?
- ¿Cómo se cambia el ambiente, o el dinámica, de la familia cuando los hijos llegan a ser los intérpretes de los padres?
- ¿Cuáles son los desafíos al aprender o hablar inglés?
- ¿Qué áreas de tu vida necesitas confiar a Dios?
- ¿Qué puedes hacer esta semana para mostrar agradecimiento a tus <<Aarónes>>?
- ¿Qué paso puedes tomar esta semana para mejorar tu inglés?

Señor, te damos gracias por la historia de Moisés, que nos recuerda que tus planes son más grandes que nuestras debilidades, y que tú proporcionas la ayuda que sabes que necesitamos. Gracias por escuchar al pueblo Israel, y gracias por escucharnos a nosotros hoy. Danos el valor para poder hablar, y muéstranos cómo liderar a nuestras familias, a pesar de las barreras de idioma. Te creemos cuando dices que tú nos creaste la boca, y que nos puedes enseñar qué decir. Enséñanos esta semana, Señor. Amen.

Mis metas para la semana que viene, a partir de mis descubrimientos:

DANIEL, SADRAC, MESAC Y ABED-NEGÓ

Condiciones de inmigración: Estos jóvenes se llevaron cautivos por la invasión de su tierra por otro poder. Peor todavía, fueron sacados de su patria por el nuevo gobierno para servir al mismo rey que había conquistado su tierra.

Herencia: Como cautivos, las vidas de Daniel, Sadrac, Mesac y Abed-negó dependían de su conformidad con las leyes, el religión y la cultura del nuevo país. Sin embargo, ellos adoptaron una actitud firme contra la contaminación de la cultura, y siguieron honrando al Dios verdadero.

Pasajes Claves: Daniel 1:1-21

Historia: Después de la conquista de su tierra, estos cuatro jóvenes fueron seleccionados y llevados desde Judá para servir al nuevo rey en Babilonia. Allí entraron en tres años de preparación para servir en el palacio real. Los jóvenes perdieron su libertad y aún sus nombres,

reemplazados con los nombres de Babilonia, pero nunca perdieron su identidad, que tenía como base el Señor. El capítulo uno de Daniel muestra la sabia y valiente respuesta de los jóvenes a su nueva cultura. Aunque no fue su decisión emigrar y sus derechos se les habían sacado, ellos no permitieron que el enojo o la desesperación les quitaran su fe o sus convicciones.

Reflexiones de los inmigrantes de hoy:

Es dos culturas bien distintas [dentro de una sola familia], aunque somos dos hispanos.

Creciendo en un lugar inmigrante...enfrentamos retos con hermanos y todos donde los padres siempre estuvieron a tanto, pero estaban limitados en cómo darnos acompañamiento. Entonces, nos encontramos, por ejemplo, todo el proceso de admisión de la escuela nunca tuvimos ni la guía de un padre ni la guía de un mentor. No es que los padres no estuvieron allí, o no nos dieron palabras de amor y de apoyo, pero ellos se encontraron en un lugar bien difícil.

[Es diferente] el respeto que les tenemos a nuestros padres. Nosotros no les gritamos o nos ponemos el mingo con ellos también. Y los americanos no, como que no les importa. Es como, que tú lo vas a hacer: <<reto tuyo lo hago>>. Aquí en nuestros barrios es como <<si yo te digo que hayas algo, lo haces. Tú no me dices por qué, o no me cuestionas, es como lo tienes que hacer, porque yo lo digo.>>

Preguntas de Conversación

Observación:

- ¿Cuáles fueron las circunstancias de la inmigración de Sadrac, Mesac, Daniel y Abed-negó?
- ¿Cómo se seleccionaron a estos jóvenes para servir al rey?
- ¿Cómo fue su tiempo de aculturación?
- ¿Qué tipo de sirvientes eran los jóvenes?
- ¿Cuál fue la petición de Daniel al mayordomo? ¿Cómo lo hizo?

Interpretación:

- ¿Cuál es la importancia del hecho que, en Babilonia, los jóvenes recibieron nombres diferentes?
- ¿Cuáles serían las vergüenzas que los jóvenes se obligaron a experimentar por su situación?
- ¿Por qué consideraron los jóvenes que no debían comer la comida del rey?

- ¿Cómo es posible que se vieron los jóvenes más saludables de los demás después de los 10 días?

Aplicación:

- ¿Cómo se relacionan el pasaje y las citas de los inmigrantes modernos?
- ¿A veces sientes que perteneces más a una cultura que la otra, o que eres de una cultura diferente de tus padres/hijos?
- ¿Qué has tenido que <<averiguar>> por si mismo como inmigrante en EE.UU.?
- ¿Ha cambiado tu identidad o la identidad de tu familia por haber inmigrado a EE.UU.? ¿De qué manera?
- ¿Qué has encontrado en la cultura estadounidense que te parece malo, o que sabes que no debes adoptar?
- ¿Qué papel decisivo pegan las metas, convicciones, objetivos, etc. en una nueva cultura?
- ¿Cómo podemos saber cuando, para nosotros, algo no es saludable o apropiado? ¿Cómo debemos comunicar esto a nuestras familias?
- ¿Cómo puedes encontrar tu identidad en Dios, y no en la cultura? ¿Cómo puedes animar a tus hijos a hacer lo mismo?

Señor, ayúdanos a encontrar nuestra identidad en ti. Las circunstancias y los costumbres cambian en diferentes países y ciudades, pero recuérdanos que lo más básico—tu amor y tu espíritu que vive dentro nosotros—sigue lo mismo. Danos gracia y sabiduría como vamos averiguando esta semana, y valor para enfrentar y rechazar las cosas e influencias que no te honran. Te amamos. Amen.

Mis metas para la semana que viene, a partir de mis descubrimientos:

JOSÉ

Condiciones de inmigración: José emigró de su tierra por la decisión de su familia. No tuvo voz en la decisión, y fue forzado a ir a otro país para ser esclavo.

Herencia: Aunque sus circunstancias estaban constantemente cambiando, la identidad de José era estable, porque la encontraba en Dios. Durante su vida, experimentó muchas circunstancias que no podía controlar, pero confiaba en el poder de Dios de controlar su futuro.

Pasajes Claves: Génesis 37, 39-41

Historia: La historia de José está llena de los extremos. La cronología de su vida corre rápidamente de momentos de gran éxito a momentos de profunda desilusión. En el principio, José

se aparece como el favorito hijo de un padre cariñoso—después, como un esclavo en el camino a Egipto—después, un hombre poderoso bajo el funcionario del faraón—después, prisionero acusado del adulterio—después, el segundo al faraón, encargado con toda la administración de la comida de Egipto.

La identidad de José tenía muchas oportunidades de cambiar, según lo que le estaba pasando, pero aprendemos del pasaje que Dios estaba con José en *todo* lo que hizo, sea en el palacio o el cárcel. Su identidad, entonces, tenía base fuerte y confiable.

Reflexiones de los inmigrantes de hoy:

Yo nací aquí, imagínese al adolescente, que viene aquí donde no tiene decisión y se educa aquí y ya, además de enfrentar las mismas experiencias que uno ha enfrentado de quién y qué, [debe] averiguar como si su futuro no lo pase nada. Ahora el asunto es documentos, que agrega a un nivel más estresante, porque no tienen opciones de finanzas como alguien que nace aquí. Lógico crea estrés y ansiedad.

Preguntas de Conversación

Observación:

- ¿Por qué les caía mal a sus hermanos José?
- ¿Cuáles fueron los momentos más altos y bajos de su historia?
- ¿Cómo logró él ganar el respeto de sus autoridades?
- ¿Cómo respondió José a la tentación en el capítulo 39? ¿Por qué resistió la petición de la esposa de Potifar?
- Según el versículo 41:16, ¿de dónde venía el poder de José?

Interpretación:

- ¿Qué cambios personales se ve en José a través de su historia?
- ¿Qué aspectos de su vida estaban fuera del control de José?
- ¿Qué aspectos sí podía controlar él?
- ¿Cuál fue el rol de Dios en la historia de José?
- ¿Qué parece ser su actitud, en medio de todo?

Aplicación:

- ¿Cómo nos ayuda esta historia a enfrentar e integrarnos en una nueva cultura?
- ¿Cómo se relacionan la narrativa y las citas de los inmigrantes modernos?
- ¿Tuviste tú voz en la decisión de tu familia de emigrar? ¿Cómo sentías al tener que salir?
- ¿Hay algunas circunstancias de tu vida que te gustaría cambiar?
- ¿Qué estrategias has encontrado para integrarse en una nueva situación sin perderse a sí mismo?
- ¿Es suficiente fuerte tu relación con Dios para sostenerte en los tiempos de grandes cambios? ¿Qué harás esta semana para pasar más tiempo con Él?

Señor, ayúdanos a derivar nuestra identidad de tu amor estable. Aún cuando nos encontramos en medio de circunstancias que no escogimos, muéstranos cómo te podemos seguir sirviendo. Ayúdanos a trabajar fuertemente para nuestros jefes y encargados, y mantener actitudes que reflejen tu esperanza. Te damos gracias porque Tú estás en control, y eres nuestro confiable Señor. Te confiamos nuestras vidas y nuestros futuros en la semana que viene. Amen.

Mis metas para la semana que viene, a partir de mis descubrimientos:

JOSÉ, PADRE DE JESUCRISTO

Condiciones de inmigración: José y María escaparon de un corrupto rey con su pequeño hijo. Sabían que su tierra no estaba segura bajo el líder actual, y se huyeron para proteger a su hijo. Volvieron unos años más tarde, cuando se había pasado el peligro.

Herencia: José era un hombre justo y benévolo que escuchaba bien a Dios. Lideró a su familia con compasión, buscando la voluntad de Dios para ellos y sirviéndoles como protector.

Pasajes Claves: Mateo 1:18-24, 2:13-23

Historia: Fue un gran riesgo para José casarse con María. Aún si fuera verdad lo que dijo el ángel, que el bebé era del Espíritu Santo y no de otro hombre, ¿qué desafíos tendría él al convencer a los demás, y a su familia! Y ¿qué tipo hombre podría criar al Hijo de Dios? Pero José había recibido su mandato, su llamada, de Dios—«toma a María por esposa»— y obedeció.

Dios usó a José para proteger a María y a su hijo, el Mesías. Fue a José que Dios habló cuando su país estaba a punto de desastre con la matanza de Herodes de los niños, avisándole a salir inmediatamente con María y el bebé. José no cuestionó a Dios—se levantó y ellos se fueron. Después de la muerte de Herodes, Dios habló a José otra vez, y otra vez José escuchó, llevando a su familia a Nazaret. Su leal liderazgo reflejó la preocupación y amor de Dios hacía su familia, y sus acciones les comunicaron el amor y la protección del Señor.

Reflexiones de los inmigrantes de hoy:

Todos pensamos en dar una vida mejor a la familia.

Yo, por experiencia en mi familia, creo que la educación de mis padres--yo hice un cambio en mi hogar. [En ese estilo de educación] le pegan mucho a los hijos. Era lo que hiciste para corregir al hijo. Entonces, yo cuando vine para acá, porque yo estaba llevando el mismo patrón de allá, me vine a dar cuenta de que el niño era humano, y entendía. Y que se podía educarle con castigos de diferentes formas, de diferentes técnicas, y no con cincha. Entonces cuando yo voy para allá, yo trato la manera de enseñarles lo que yo he aprendido aquí.

La educación, instrucción, conocimiento te da la escuela. Pero valores—es el lugar de tus padres.

Preguntas de Conversación

Observación:

- ¿Qué podemos inferir al leer en el capítulo uno que José era un «hombre justo»? ¿Qué significa?
- ¿Cómo se ve la integridad de José en la narrativa?
- ¿Por qué tenía la familia que salir de su país?
- ¿Por qué inició Herodes el genocidio?
- ¿Cómo emigró la familia?

Interpretación:

- ¿En qué circunstancias habló Dios a José?
- ¿Cuáles son algunos de los riesgos que corrió José para ser obediente al Señor y proteger a su familia?
- ¿Cuáles son las profecías que el liderazgo de José cumplió? ¿Cómo habría cambiado la narrativa si alguna vez José no escuchara a Dios?

Aplicación:

- ¿Cómo puede esta historia ayudarnos a adaptar e integrarnos en una nueva cultura?
- ¿Cómo se relacionan las citas de los inmigrantes modernos y la historia de José y su familia?
- ¿Cómo es el liderazgo de tu familia?
- ¿Por qué es importante que el esposo/el padre no sólo guía a su familia, sino que la guía con el respaldo y la gracia de Dios?
- ¿Qué puede ocurrir cuando uno intenta a ser líder sin reconocer a un líder más alto que él?
- La familia de José logró emigrar juntos, sin separarse. ¿Fue posible venir juntos a EE.UU. en el caso de tu familia? ¿Cuáles son los resultados emocionales de la separación?
- ¿A pesar del pasado, qué puedes hacer esta semana para impulsar la unidad de tu familia?
- ¿Cuál es el rol de los padres hacia sus hijos?
- ¿Cómo están en concordancia el estilo latino tradicional de la disciplina y la protección que José provee a su esposa y a su hijo? ¿Cómo son diferentes?

Señor, ayúdanos a guiar a nuestras familias hacia la unidad. Confesamos que a veces hay influencias de nuestra cultura o nuestros pasados que oponen la unidad entre esposo y esposa, y padres e hijos. Esto no es lo que queremos para nuestras familias. Deseamos que nuestro liderazgo de nuestras familias no sea un ejemplo de nuestra propia autoridad u orgullo, sino de Tu amor, cariño y fidelidad hacia nosotros. Entendemos que esto es algo que no se puede hacer sólo. Llénanos con tu Espíritu Santo, y respáldanos con Tu palabra y la ayuda de esta comunidad. Nos sometemos a Tu liderazgo, Señor, para poder liderar adecuadamente a nuestras familias. En el nombre de Jesucristo, Amen.

Mis metas para la semana que viene, a partir de mis descubrimientos:

LOS JUDÍOS EXILIOS

Condiciones de inmigración: Los exilios judíos se habían expuesto de su tierra por el rey que la había conquistado. En su propio país y bajo su propio gobierno, ellos eran personas importantes, que tenían buenos puestos en el palacio real. Cuando salieron a Babilonia al destierro con su derrotado líder, perdieron sus posiciones y prestigio.

Herencia: Nunca fueron olvidados por Dios los exilios. Aunque el pueblo de Israel no había sido fiel al Señor, Él les siguió amando, y les escribió una carta de ánimo por el profeta Jeremías, dándoles instrucciones para vivir en una nueva tierra.

Pasajes Claves: Jeremías 29:1-23

Historia: Los exilios fueron forzados a inmigrar a Babilonia, el país del rey que había conquistado su tierra. Se puede imaginar que, para ellos, Babilonia era una tierra fea, que representaba su fracaso y la pérdida de sus buenas vidas anteriores.

Los exilios tenían dos opciones: Seguir enojados a la situación y negarse a adaptar, desesperadamente esperando el momento en que podrían regresar, o empezar a crear nuevas vidas en Babilonia, confiando en Dios y trabajando y orando por su nueva ciudad. En la carta, Dios les dio instrucciones para hacer la segunda. Él recordó a su gente de los buenos planes que tenía para ellos, que no se habían destruido por el cambio de lugar. Les invitó a ser fieles a Él otra vez, y en palabras que hasta hoy en día hablan, les enseñó a enfrentar un nuevo país.

Reflexiones de los inmigrantes de hoy:

“Si uno trajera la idea de decir que... <<No, voy a ir, y me voy a superar>>, si esa fuera una meta principal, uno superaba todo lo que le pone a rete. Pero uno trae la idea de más el dinero: <<Voy a hacer dinero y en uno, dos o tres años, me voy>>. Y algunos [podían] lograr ese buen poco de dinero, pero lamentablemente, se regresaban a nuestros países, se lo gastaban todo, y al final estarían en la misma situación de venir y regresar.

Preguntas de Conversación

Observación:

- ¿Qué dice el primer párrafo del pasaje, acerca de la situación de los exilios?
- ¿Cuáles son algunas de las instrucciones específicas que Dios les dio a los exilios en la carta?
- ¿Cuáles son sus advertencias?
- ¿Cuál es la relación que Dios hace entre el bienestar del país y el bienestar del pueblo?

Interpretación:

- ¿Cuáles fueron las razones políticas y espirituales que se habían exilado los judíos?
- En general, ¿cómo se caracteriza la actitud de Dios hacía su pueblo en esta carta?
- ¿Cuál es la respuesta que Él desea de ellos?

Aplicación:

- ¿Cómo puede ayudarnos la historia de los exilios a enfrentar e integrarnos en una nueva cultura?
- ¿Cómo se relacionan la historia y la cita de arriba? ¿Cómo se diferencian?
- ¿Has experimentado tú alguna pérdida de posición desde venir a EE.UU.? ¿Cómo ha afectado la manera de que ves el país, o a sí mismo?

- ¿Cómo se puede orar por un país o una ciudad donde, verdaderamente, uno no quiere estar?
- ¿Cuál es tu pensamiento acerca de tu tiempo en EE.UU.? ¿Es más similar de la cita, o a la carta?
- ¿Cómo puedes honrar a Dios con tu trabajo mientras vivir en EE.UU.?
- ¿Cómo puedes trabajar a favor de tu ciudad aquí?

Señor, te oramos por esta ciudad, a donde nos has llevado. Pedimos tu ayuda en establecernos aquí, por cualquier tiempo que nos debemos quedar. Es difícil plantar árboles aquí cuando sólo queremos regresar a nuestras familias y tierra, pero danos el deseo y la motivación, y muéstranos maneras específicas de trabajar a favor de este país. Que nuestro tiempo aquí no sea desperdiciado o interesado, sino usado para aprender más de ti, y dedicarnos a tu trabajo en este lugar. Amen.

Mis metas para la semana que viene, a partir de mis descubrimientos: