



"And now I am no more in the world,
but these are in the world..." (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance
of this week's lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®
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WHO IS AN AMERICAN?

This year's political campaigns have been filled with arguments about immigration. Some candidates (and their supporters) are troubled by the new wave of immigrants who are unlike most Americans; and people of this persuasion often claim that immigrants take jobs away from Americans by working for lower wages. Others contend that such attitudes are basically racist—often noting that even Americans who were born here are descended from immigrants, thus making us all “immigrants” of sorts.

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

In New Testament times, the church had its own ongoing argument about ethnic identity. Some Jewish Christians believed the Gentiles entering their ranks were spiritual “immigrants” who didn't measure up to the “real” Christians who, ethnically, were descendants of Abraham. Paul approached the issue from a different perspective. He asserted that God is far less concerned than we are with physical identity. Instead, he looks at what is in one's heart. And everything depends on God's mercy.

1. In light of America's history, why should immigration be an issue now? Is there a “Christian view”? If so, what is it?
2. How can America get past the current argument over “identity politics”?
3. What situations have you personally encountered where ethnic identity became a problem? How was it dealt with?
4. Has your church experienced ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic tensions? How did the leaders handle it?
5. What have you done to reduce tensions in regard to diverse populations in your church or community?

—Charles R. Boatman

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