



## Introduction

### A Note Before You Get Started

*Dear Leader,*

*Welcome to **be•coming•us**: Enlarging the Circle to Welcome Everyone. We have been praying for you!*

*As you prepare to lead a group through our four-part video series and discussion guide, here are few tips to help your group get the most out of your time together.*

*Show the teaser to increase interest in the study (time: 3:08).*

#### As you begin

*This section is to be used as an ice breaker or to help the group become familiar with the topic. Look through the section for the video you are going to view ahead of time, so you can choose what questions/activities best fit the group - or use the questions/activities as a springboard to come up with your own ice breakers. The better the group members know each other, the easier it will be to encourage one another to “make the circle bigger.”*

#### Watch the video

*The time is given, so you can know what to expect time-wise, and the name of the speaker is listed so you can reference them by name during the rest of the discussion.*

#### After watching the video

*There is a lot to do! Sometimes there is a quiz, sometimes an activity. There will always be an opportunity for discussion and to dig deeper into the Word or the world of international students or those with refugee status.*

You aren't expected to do every activity or question; pick which ones would best fit your group. Don't forget to push outside your own comfort zone as well! Making the circle bigger will require everyone to stretch and grow.

### Prayer points

*These are just a few ideas for prayer in your group! Prayer connects our tangible world with the spiritual. Please have someone keep a list of prayer needs and requests. Feel free to pray for specific people groups or countries that are going through turmoil. Pray for your group and church to rise up and connect with those from other cultures in a unique way. The list could go on and on!*

### Rise up for next week

*It's great to study and pray together, but it's also important to motivate each other to act. The activities and questions in this section are aimed at helping each other make a step toward making the circle bigger - even in small ways. Pick something or brainstorm other things that your group could do - whether individually or collectively - to get involved with international students or those resettling near you.*

### Keep going

*Just because there are only four parts to this series doesn't mean your group has to stop meeting when it is over! Get together regularly to pray for international students and those resettling in the U.S., countries and people groups, your community, our nation and the world. Continue to share ideas and activities will help your group open up to another culture - meet for dinner at an ethnic restaurant, go to an ethnic fair or festival, have a party with culture-specific food and music. You might find someone from another culture who would love to come and talk about their home and share a meal with you. The possibilities are endless.*

### Visit the website

*The website, [www.theriseproject.com](http://www.theriseproject.com), will have more ideas and resources so don't forget to check that out. It also has other video links to watch, books to read, and even sermon outlines to be used in a church setting, if desired.*

### Share it

*Feel free to share this study with others that you know! It can be downloaded or streamed online and makes it easy for a group to gather and understand some of what they can do to make the circle bigger for everyone.*





## **Video Session #1: Coming to America**

### **International Students Joining Us on College Campuses**

#### **As you begin**

As your group gathers, take time to introduce yourself and make sure everyone has the opportunity to tell a little about themselves.

Take a moment now and have everyone finish this sentence:

*"If I could summarize my expectation for this study in one word, my word would be \_\_\_\_\_."*

How many foreign countries have you visited? Who has traveled to the most foreign countries of anyone in your group? What was the most interesting thing about your experience?

Has anyone in the group gone to college? Where was it and what was your favorite memory?

#### **Watch the video**

Time: 14:35

Trainer: Greg Swinney—Crossroads International  
Student Ministries

#### **Post video quick quiz**

What are the top three nations that are sending international students to the U.S. to study?  
*Answer: China, India, Japan*

What percentage of international students never see the inside of an American home? Why do you think this is happening?  
*Answer: 70%; reasons will vary*

## Talk it over

Why do you think the U.S. is the number one destination for foreign students?

What did you see in the video that surprised you or that you didn't know before?

Which student did you enjoy listening to? Why? Did he/she say something that particularly spoke to you? If so, what was it?

A student from Japan said in the video, "Please just talk with me." Why do you think some people are afraid to talk to an international student? What are two or three obstacles that get in the way for most people to just start a conversation with a foreign guest?

One international student asked this question to a group of Americans, "How can I make friends with an American? They are always so busy." What do you think about that? How would you respond to the student?

## Digging deeper

*"Many international students, because they think of America as a Christian nation, are interested in learning something of the essence of Christianity. This interest may be nothing more than cultural curiosity, but it generally results in an openness to consider the gospel as part of the total learning process."* (quote by Paul Little)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

Read these two Scripture passages together:

**Leviticus 19:34**— "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." {NIV}

**Isaiah 60:3–4b**— "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you..." {NIV}

In your opinion, what makes someone a foreigner or outsider? Why do you think God asks us to treat outsiders like one of us?

Where have you noticed the nations entering your world and your community? At school? The hospital? The grocery store? If you haven't noticed ethnic diversity around you, pay extra attention as you go about your week and see if there is more diversity than you originally thought.

What would it look like if we treated those different than us like part of our family?

## Rise up for next week

Share with the group some things you enjoy (cooking, music, movies, shopping) that you think an international student would enjoy as well.

What could you change in your daily routine to give yourself an opportunity to meet people of a different nationality?

List a few colleges and universities in your area. Do you know if there are any international students attending there? Visit the local college or university website. Search their website with the words “international student services” or “international student programs.” Read closely to find any university events like cultural nights or conversation partners. Try to find a place where people can be involved.

Are there any international student organizations in your area? If so, what are they and how can you or your family connect with them?

In many towns there are different kinds of restaurants: Chinese, Ethiopian, Greek, Thai, etc. Each week you could gather enough money to purchase one or two dinners. Ask someone to pick up one of these dinners on their way to next week’s study. Have people describe which food they like best and why.

Or consider having dinner or snacks next week - include several “foreign” foods. You could ask each family to bring a “mystery cultural dish” (they can cook it or bring carry out).

Try the dishes and guess what culture each represents.

See who guessed correctly.

Ask each family to describe why they cooked what they did.



## Prayer points

Pray about what you and your family might do to show God’s love to people from other cultures in your area as you meet them in your everyday life.

Offer a prayer of gratitude that the Lord is bringing the nations within minutes of our homes and churches.

*Lord, we are so grateful that you have invited us to be your Ambassadors, help us shine Your light to the nations among us and let us do that with grace and truth.*

## More to think about

The U.S. hosts more international students than any other country in the world.

The top six countries that send students to study in the U.S. are:

China, India, Korea, Canada, Taiwan, and Japan. They total 56% of our international students.

The top five host states are California, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, and Illinois.

The city hosting the most international students is New York City.

The top fields of study for international students are:

business and management, engineering, physical and life sciences, and math and computer science.

Additional information may be found at: [www.iie.org](http://www.iie.org) (search for “Open Doors”).

*All I ask is that you just talk with me...  
just talk.”*

- Hirome, student from Japan



## **Video Session #2: Reaching Out**

### **Showing Hospitality to International Students**

#### **As you begin**

Give everyone in the group a chance to share about their week — Did any international students or foreign visitors cross their paths? If so, where and when did that happen?

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go? What would you miss most about being away from home?

Count to five in as many languages as you can. Extra Credit: introduce yourself in a foreign language! Did anyone study a foreign language in high school or college? If so, what language was it and how successful were you at learning it? Can you speak any of it now?

If someone was able to prepare an international dish or pick one up on the way to the study group, how was it different from the food you normally eat? What did you think of it?

Did anyone in the group find out if there are any international students or international student organizations in your area? If not, can someone look that up now? Does the college or organization have a schedule of “meet and greets” for the students? Is someone willing to call or email to find out how to get involved?

#### **Watch the video**

Time: 19:37

Trainer: Greg Swinney—Crossroads International  
Student Ministries



## Post video quick quiz

Several ideas were suggested in the video of ways to show kindness towards international students. List as many of these that you can remember.

What are some of the holidays or events mentioned in the video that would be good opportunities for international students to join you or your family? Can you think of others?

If one of your children or friends moved to a foreign country, what would you want to send them to remind them of home? How would you feel if a family there made them feel welcome and involved them with their family?

Several people from American families shared a little of their story. Which story tugged at your heart? Why?

## Talk it over

Imagine you were showing someone the best of your city, where would you take them? What would you do?

What would you say was the most “home grown” local event? What best depicts U.S. culture in your town?

Don’t feel you must entertain elaborately. Students appreciate anything that is done nicely for them. Generally, they don’t like to be considered as special guests but prefer to fit into the regular routine. What are some routine things that would make them feel like part of your family?

## Digging deeper

*“We were assigned a student from the Middle East by our local university international office. I will be honest, when I first saw where he was from, my heart skipped a few beats. I had my share of fears in regards to those from the Middle East. Still, I was excited to meet our new student.*

*We have developed a very special relationship with our student. He has been to our home multiple times for dinner, to surprise us with fun gifts, to play games, and just to hang out. Over Christmas he and a friend went with us to celebrate with our family and to learn some of our traditions. He seems to fit perfectly with our family, maybe because he is from a large family and we have seven children! We are a large, loud, and energetic family which often is mind blowing to some, but he thinks we are normal!*

*He has become a part of our family. Our kids refer to him as their brother, I call him “son,” and he calls me “mom.” He proudly introduces us to his friends as his family.*

*There are things for which I will be forever grateful for. Our student has shown us how important family is, what it means to be very hospitable, and what it means to give someone else your very best. He loves our children in such an amazing way.”*

*- Alice from Missouri*



What caused Alice's change of heart?

What does it take for people to overcome their fears about people they don't understand?  
How would you feel if you were assigned an international student from Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, or Ethiopia?

What do you think it would take for you to overcome your fears?

### Rise up for next week

Have the group download a page with a phrase in a number of languages ([Omniglot.com](http://Omniglot.com) has a lot including, "Stop the world, I want to get off!" and "My hovercraft is full of eels"). Pick a few to try to learn. Ask about them next week.

Bring another food to try next week. If dinners are too much, try a dessert or finger food. For example, Baklava and Gelato can often be purchased in the frozen food section of your grocery store. How about a sushi sampler?



You heard in the video, *"Every family has everything you need to begin showing hospitality towards international students."* What does your family have that would show an international student God's love in a fresh and new way?

If you haven't done so already, have someone in the group look up the contact phone number or email of the international student services of the local college.

Who in your group is willing to "adopt" an international student into their family? When will they begin this adventure? Please join together and pray for that individual or family and for the student that will soon join them.

### Taking action

In your opinion, why does international student ministry fit into a global perspective of world missions?

If your church or campus ministry does not have a ministry to international students, you can be instrumental in starting one. Check to see if you can partner with a local ministry. If not, present the idea to your church's leadership.

If you are involved in a campus ministry, ask the student leadership team to begin thinking about ideas to welcome international students. Are you a student at a Christian college? Consider a

spring break mission trip to a nearby university to host events for international students. Being close to a college or even a boarding high school offers so many opportunities to reach out.

The local college or university may not have a friendship family program. Perhaps your group could create a similar program that would match students with a family that would like to be friends throughout the school year. Most universities are open to this idea and are waiting for volunteers to step up and get something started.

Consider prayer walking around your local campus. Ask the Lord to make you especially aware of students from foreign countries, events on campus, and gathering places for international students.

What gentle nudge is the Lord giving you through this study?

### **Our Commitment**

Let's open our doors. Let's set another place at the table. Buy an extra gift or ticket for a guest. Beginning with you and me, let's share our lives with the international guests that are waiting for an invitation.

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

### **Praying together**

Ask the Lord to prepare your heart as you seek to establish a new relationship with an international student.

Pray for the international students on the campus near you, that they would find American families...Christian families to learn about the amazing love that God has for them. Pray for your church family—that they might think of ways as a body of believers to make international students feel welcome in their city, their community, and their church.

*"We have enjoyed being a Friendship Family for international students for many years. Over 30 nations have shared a meal with us in our small home. We've learned about their culture, and they have become part of our family."*

**- Orlin & Kay in Nebraska**

## Practical ways to engage international students

Airport pickup when arriving in the U.S.

“Welcome to the U.S.” party

English conversation partners

A small “welcome bag” with candy, toiletries, map of the city, popcorn, and a bottle of water

Fall Break trip to the zoo or a nearby museum

Thanksgiving meal with Friendship Families

Christmas Party/Fourth of July Picnic and Fireworks/ Labor Day Picnic

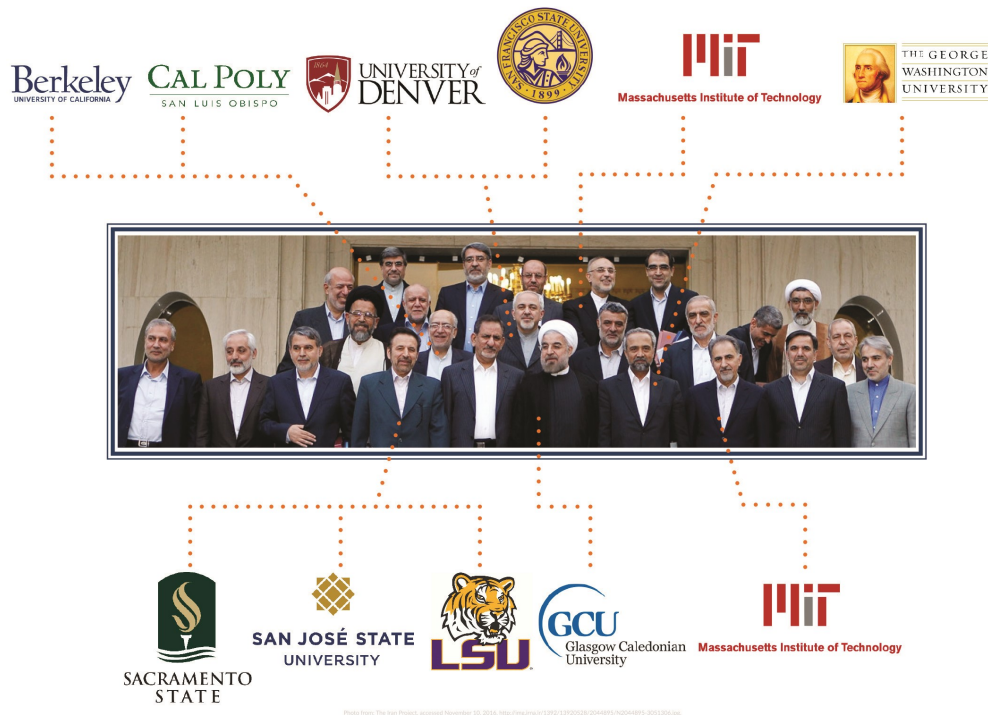
Graduation reception for students leaving for home

Celebrate birthdays together

Build a snowman - some have never seen snow before!

What else?

## Final thought



The president and cabinet members of Iran and where they attended college in the U.S.

Imagine how different our world might be if we would have extended a hand of friendship to these men while they were students in the U.S.

For additional resources or to apply for a grant, please visit the website: [www.therisproject.com](http://www.therisproject.com).

Further questions or comments? Contact Greg Swinney, the trainer for this segment at [greg@therisproject.com](mailto:greg@therisproject.com).



## Enlarging the Circle to Welcome Everyone

### Video Session #3: More Than a Refugee Understanding the Resettlement Journey

#### As you begin

When you hear the word “refugee,” what images come into your mind?

The following facts and definitions describe people who have left their homes. Which of these interests or surprises you the most?

#### Fact A

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, 65.3 million people were *forcibly* displaced from their homes in 2015. Of those, 21.3 million were refugees, 40.8 million were internally displaced persons, and 3.2 million were asylum seekers (see definitions below).

#### Fact B

Less than 1% of people defined as refugees in the world are “resettled,” or given the opportunity to start over in a new country like the U.S.

#### Fact C

Over 50% of people defined as refugees in the world are children under 18 years of age.

#### Fact D

The U.S. refugee resettlement program involves a more rigorous screening and security process than any other for people admitted to the U. S.

#### DEFINITIONS

Immigrants - People who have chosen to move to another country and settle there, often in search of safety, work or educational opportunities for their children.

Refugees - People who have fled their home country due to persecution based on race, religion,

nationality, social group, or political opinion. People who have come to the U.S. with refugee status have been granted permission to enter the country and to work upon arrival.

Internally Displaced Persons – People who have fled their homes due to persecution but are still within the borders of their home country.

Asylum Seekers – People who have fled their home country due to persecution and apply for protection in another country after they arrive there.

Do you know of any people recorded in the Bible who were forcibly displaced or who would be considered refugees? Consider this list and take a moment to discuss their situations.

Abraham & Sarah –	Genesis 12:10
Lot –	Genesis 14:11,12; Genesis 19:17
Hagar –	Genesis 16:6
Isaac & Rebecca –	Genesis 26:1-3
Jacob –	Genesis 47:4
Joseph –	Genesis 37:28
Moses –	Exodus 2:15; Hebrews 11:27
All of Israel –	Exodus 12:41
Naomi –	Ruth 1:1
Elijah –	1 Kings 17:7-9; 1 Kings 19:3,4
All of Israel –	2 Kings 17:23; 2 Kings 24:14,15
Nehemiah –	Ezra 2:1,2; Nehemiah 1:3,4
David –	1 Samuel 21:10; 1 Samuel 22:1; 1 Samuel 23:13; 1 Samuel 27:1
Esther & Mordecai –	Esther 2:5-7
Jeremiah –	Jeremiah 43:6
Ezekiel –	Ezekiel 1:1
Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego –	Daniel 1:2-4,6
Jesus, Mary & Joseph –	Matthew 2:13,14
The early church –	Acts 8:1; Acts 11:19
Phillip –	Acts 8:4,5
Peter –	Acts 12:17
Aquila and Pricilla –	Acts 18:1, 2



**Watch the video**

Time: 15:38

Trainer: Traci Harrod—Refuge Connections

## Talk it over

After viewing the video, take a moment and ask those in your group to finish these sentences:

Something in the video that surprised me was...

Something that touched me was...

Something that compelled me was...

## Emergency announcement

This exercise is an opportunity for you to imagine in a small way what it might be like if you were forced to suddenly leave your home and to ponder the decisions you would have to make. As you listen and reflect, keep in mind that many people who are forcibly displaced have no warning at all before being forced to flee their homes, nor anyone attempting to ensure their safety.

*This is an \*\* EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT \*\**

*We are sorry to inform you that you must immediately be evacuated from this country as each of your names are currently on a list which places you at very high risk. Your presence in this country also endangers your family. If you do not evacuate, you will be placing your family members in even greater danger.*

*Due to security concerns, we are not allowed to tell you of your exact destination, only that it is thousands of miles away from your current location.*

*You have one hour to go to your homes to say goodbye and gather your belongings. You may bring with you as many items as you can fit into a shoebox. We suggest that some of these items be pictures of your family as the trauma of your transition may cause some of your most cherished memories to become less distinct.*

*You must return in exactly one hour. You may not bring any other persons with you.*

Take a few moments to make two lists:

What you would carry with you in the shoebox?

What you would do in the hour you're given?

What were the most difficult decisions for you to make?

For people who are resettling in the U.S., how might the losses they've experienced affect their ability to adjust to life in their new homes?

Write a sentence that describes the progression of emotions you experienced.

## Digging deeper

Read together **Deuteronomy 10:17-19** and **Matthew 25:34-40**.

What do these references reveal to us about God's heart toward those who are displaced?

Read **Luke 10:29-37**.

What connections do you notice between this story and the video we just watched?

## Rise up for next week

Find out if folks are being resettled in your state/community. You can google "refugee resettlement \_\_\_\_\_ (name of city or state)."

If you'd like to learn more about the cultural background of a certain group, go to <http://www.culturalorientation.net/learning/backgrounders> and check out the "Refugee Backgrounders."

Check out the website for other resources and inspiration: [www.theriseproject.com](http://www.theriseproject.com).

Watch the following video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBQ-1oHfimQ>

What emotions did you feel? What thoughts ran through your mind?

*"How do we make our circles bigger? How do we, together, as a community, reflect the heart of God?"*





## Video Session #4: Making the Circle Bigger

### Creating Inclusive Communities

#### As you begin

Share something with the rest of the group that has impacted you from our last session or your own continued exploration of the subject.

When you are the newcomer in a school, a town, a neighborhood, or a workplace, what factors need to be in place for you to have confidence to engage and contribute?

What factors can make it more difficult to integrate into a new situation?

When you think about engaging with people who have come to this country through refugee resettlement, what scares you the most?

What excites you the most?

Read **Matthew 25:34-36**.

Why do you think Jesus chose to identify with the stranger?



#### Watch the video

Time: 19:42

Trainer: Traci Harrod—Refuge Connections

#### Talk it over

As compassionate human beings, most of us have a deep desire to extend friendship to our neighbors who have crossed international borders in search of safety and peace. What are some of the barriers that hold us back from carrying out our good intentions to personally engage with

people who are resettling here?

As a group, make a list of these barriers.

From the list, choose 2 or 3 that affect you personally and share those with the group.

What have you learned so far that might help you to get past those barriers?

Our relationships and friendships need to be mutual: everyone teaches and everyone learns.

What are some things we might learn from people who are on the resettlement journey?

## Moving forward together

Make a specific plan together for how you can faithfully...

...pray humbly – for displaced people around the world, for new families resettling in your community, for your own hearts as you seek to reflect the heart of Jesus;

...learn constantly – intentionally pursue learning through research, workshops, training, and mentoring;

...make your circle bigger – look for ways to make your churches, your homes, your lives more welcoming and inclusive to people from all backgrounds;

...build relationships (not programs) – look for opportunities to engage with people in ways that build mutual, long-term, dignity giving friendships.

Take time to brainstorm ways to achieve each of these goals

## Next steps

Choose at least one part of your group's plan to personally pursue this week.

Read Proverbs 31:8 - 9. How do these verses apply to the people we heard from in the video?

Check out the website for further resources or to apply for a grant: [www.theriseproject.com](http://www.theriseproject.com).

Further questions or comments? Contact Traci Harrod, the trainer for this segment at [traci@theriseproject.com](mailto:traci@theriseproject.com).

*"The best thing anyone ever did for me, when I first arrived in the USA...was to invite me over for dinner."*

- "Omar" from Saudi Arabia

## In appreciation

*Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the International Conference on Missions that embraced the vision to mobilize the church for Refugee and International Student Engagement—RISE.*

*To Mike Schrage, Jessica Agler, and partners at Good News Productions, International of Joplin, Missouri, for spearheading this project.*

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*To Mary Ka Powers of Sugar Maple Interactive for her diligent work to provide additional resources via our internet website — [www.theriseproject.com](http://www.theriseproject.com).*

*To Kyle Idleman of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, for helping introduce us to the vision to build meaningful relationships with people who are coming to us from all around the world.*

*To all the families and individuals in this series who described their experiences of building significant intercultural relationships with each other and for their joy in sharing. “I was a stranger...and you invited me in....”*

