

## A Film Guide to Discussing Faith and Immigration

### **DYING TO LIVE: A MIGRANT'S JOURNEY**

**Genre:** Documentary (unrated); 33 minutes

**Issue:** *Dying to Live* exposes the dangers faced by migrants crossing the border from Mexico into the United States. It raises questions about what border security is accomplishing—and at what costs.

**Synopsis:** *Dying to Live* takes a profound look at the human face of immigrants who cross the southern U.S. border with Mexico. It delves into who immigrants are, why they leave their homes and their families, and what price they pay to do so. The film presents insights from theologians, church leaders, activists, musicians, Pulitzer Prize-winning photographers, and the immigrants themselves. It is a reflection on the human struggle for a more dignified life.

**Faith Perspective:** For Christians, the film explores questions of our shared humanity with immigrants and challenges us to think about how we are participating in their suffering. The film presents immigrants as “the other” on whom we should have compassion, because it is in the other that we see the face of God.

**Guide:** Theological reflection from Sojourners below.

**Website:** <http://dyingtolive.nd.edu> (DVD available for purchase)



### **DYING TO LIVE Theological Reflection**

1. *I tell you the truth, whatever you did to the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*

—Matthew 25:40

At the beginning of the film, the narrator opines that normally God comes to us in “the other.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Have you experienced this in your own life? What makes a person “other” to you?

2. The journey across the desert from Mexico to the U.S. is described as a descent into hell. Why do you think people are willing to go through such a dangerous migration? What factors would convince you to take these kinds of risks?

3. The movie addressed “push-and-pull politics,” meaning that many immigrants are forced to leave their homes (the “push”) because, as much as they want to work to put food on the table for their families, there are no opportunities in Mexico. On the flip side, there is a promise of employment if they can make it across the border (the “pull”). Have you ever thought of the two sides of this problem? In both ways, the economy of the countries and families’ personal economic reality drive people to migrate. Do you think the average U.S. citizen has a responsibility to undocumented workers because we offer them jobs, buy what they produce, and benefit from their services?

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4. What are the implications of building a wall between the United States and Mexico? Should border conditions be of concern to Americans? Why or why not?

5. Think about the images of the migrants in the desert. Imagine their journey. Now, think about the way many immigrants are treated once they arrive in the U.S.: called thieves, treated as not human, seen as scary and dangerous. What did this film teach you about the immigrants whom we sometimes label or look down on?

6. An immigrant's journey across the Mexican-American border can be compared to the Israelites' 40-year exile in the desert. Compare the faith of the migrants displayed in the movie with the faith of Moses in the wilderness. Why do you think their faith stays strong? What can we learn from them? When are you most open to God's presence in your life?

7. *In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God ... the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.* —Isaiah 40:3, 10

Does this verse speak to the immigrant experience? Why is God so attuned to those who are "lost"?

8. How do you think the conversation about immigration in the United States has been affected by 9/11?

9. *Jesus ... was led into the wilderness where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.* —Luke 4:1-2

The movie depicts a migrant who says that his time traveling the desert from Mexico to the United States was like the temptation of Jesus and that the memory of his children gave him the strength to go on. What gives you strength to go on in the deserts of your life? Have you ever felt isolated and hopeless? If so, what gave you strength?

10. *The way of the immigrant is the way of the cross. They face economic crucifixion in their poverty; social crucifixion when they leave their homes and families; and political crucifixion when they are deemed illegal aliens. For those who die, it is an actual crucifixion.* —Film narrator

Reflect on this powerful statement and what it means for a Christian understanding of, and involvement in, immigration issues.