

Ep #12: Why Churches Struggle to Speak  
Clearly on Immigration



**Full Episode Transcript**

With Your Hosts

**Tracie L. Morgan & Ashley Glimasinski**

[Hope In Action: Navigating Immigration with Faith and Care](#)

## Ep #12: Why Churches Struggle to Speak Clearly on Immigration

Ashley: When the church chooses people over power and courage over comfort, the gospel becomes visible again.

Tracie: And you don't have to do everything. You don't have to say everything.

Ashley: But silence in the face of fear is not neutrality, and faithfulness often begins with something small: a prayer, a sentence, a posture that says you belong here.

Tracie: The church does not need to be louder. It needs to be more clear, clear about who God is, and clear about who belongs.

Welcome to Hope in Action, where we offer clear insights, practical tools, and inspiring stories to navigate immigration with confidence, compassion, and faith.

Each week, we break down the law, share real-world examples, and help you speak up, live out your values, and make a difference in your community.

Whether you're looking to understand immigration through a faith-driven lens, have courageous conversations with those who matter to you, or take small steps toward justice, you're in the right place. Let's dive in.

Tracie: Welcome back to Hope in Action, where we talk about faith, immigration, and what it looks like to follow Jesus in complicated times. Today, we're talking about something that a lot of people feel in their churches, but don't always know exactly how to name it. That is, why is it so hard for some church leadership to take a clear stance on immigration? For today's episode, we're focusing on churches that are predominantly white and middle class. There's a huge variety of churches out there, of course, but in thinking about where Ashley and I go to church, we want to think about where our listeners go to church as well. And we're thinking

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your stories may be very similar to ours and that immigration just doesn't come up very much, if at all.

Ashley: That's right, Tracie. It doesn't come up in my church because as I look around, there aren't very many immigrants in my church. So it feels like our community is a little bit more disconnected than other churches who may have immigrants daily in their churches who are living in fear of the state of the world that we're in right now. But we feel that because this issue sits right at the intersection of faith, fear, and politics, and that intersection makes a lot of churches freeze. You might have noticed it as silence. That's what I've noticed in my church, or awkwardness, or sermons that feel like they're circling the issue, but never quite landing. You might have felt this confusion. Like, we talk about loving our neighbors all the time. So why don't we talk about this?

Tracie: It's so true. I'm right there with you, Ashley. And what makes this really painful is that immigration isn't theoretical. It's not abstract. It's happening to real people, often people sitting quietly in the pews right next to us.

Ashley: And people who worship faithfully while carrying fear about family separation, legal uncertainty, or whether their church would speak up if something happened to them.

Tracie: So today, we're not here to shame pastors or churches. We are here to name the tension honestly, to ground ourselves in scripture, and to talk about what courage can look like without turning churches into political battlegrounds. And later in this episode, we'll have a guest, a former church pastor who'll come and talk with us about what he's seen from both sides of the pulpit.

Ashley: So before we talk about solutions, we need to talk about pressure, because pastors and church leaders are under a lot of it. And in a previous

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episode, we talked with Dr. Jer Swigart from the Global Immersion, and he did a great job of explaining the hierarchical structure of a lot of churches and the pressure that our pastors might feel to keep their congregations happy and unified, but also to simply keep their job.

Tracie: And I would wager to say most church leaders aren't silent because they don't care. I would say that they're probably silent because they're afraid.

Ashley: And they're afraid for many different reasons. One of those is that they might be afraid of being labeled political.

Tracie: Or they may be afraid of upsetting donors, elders, or other influential members.

Ashley: And they're also afraid of division, of losing trust, stability, or of losing people.

Tracie: And sometimes, I think they're afraid because they don't feel equipped. Immigration law is super complicated, and media narratives are confusing. Leaders worry that they'll say something inaccurate or incomplete.

Ashley: And when fear of making a mistake or saying something divisive is driving the conversation, then silence can really just feel safer than engagement. Rather than creating conflict, let me just stay silent on this.

Tracie: I know I can be very guilty of that in my personal life. But we want to say this clearly here today, that these are real pressures. We're not ignoring them. Pastors feel them deeply.

Ashley: But we also recognize that while pressure explains hesitation, it also doesn't erase impact.

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Tracie: And it doesn't remove the church's responsibility to love people well.

Ashley: So what does the scripture say about this? I think one of the biggest misunderstandings we see is the idea that if the Bible doesn't give a policy position, the church shouldn't speak on the topic at all. For example, I've heard some people say the Bible doesn't mention anything about how we should handle immigration in the 21st century. So while we can talk about caring for immigrants, that care doesn't necessarily extend to policy and laws.

Tracie: But I would counter that, and I would say scripture is incredibly clear about people.

Ashley: I would definitely agree with you, Tracie. And we talk a lot about hospitality in this podcast, and hospitality, especially towards strangers, as we've talked about, is not optional in the Bible. It's woven throughout the story of God's people.

Tracie: And hospitality in scripture isn't just about being friendly. It's protection, it's provision, it's making safe spaces for belonging.

Ashley: And another major theme that we see is care for the vulnerable.

Tracie: Over and over, scripture points us to the measure of faithfulness being how communities treat people with less power, the widows, the orphans, the poor, and yes, the stranger.

Ashley: Justice and mercy aren't political categories. They're spiritual ones. The prophet Micah speaks to what the Lord requires: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.

Tracie: Yes. And unity in Christ reminds us that our primary identity is not national, cultural, or political. It's rooted in the gospel. Philippians 3:20 reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven, not in earthly kingdoms. And

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that truth isn't meant to pull us away from real-world suffering, but to anchor us as we face it because our ultimate loyalty is to God's kingdom, where we actually are free to name injustice, extend mercy, and stand with those whose dignity is threatened here and now.

Ashley: That's right. Clarity doesn't require partisanship.

Tracie: And faithfulness certainly doesn't require a voting guide.

Ashley: But silence from church leadership does communicate something, especially to immigrant members who are watching and wondering if their church sees them.

Tracie: Now, I do want to start this next section where we're talking about some practical reflections. Ashley and I are not pastors. We are presenting this from the viewpoint of those who are sitting in the pews as members of the congregation. So no pun intended, we hope we don't come across as too preachy on this. The part of the conversation that often gets skipped, and I think where a lot of unintended harm may happen is because of the silence, trying to keep the peace, so to speak. And many immigrant church members and those who love them may already feel invisible, even in these communities such as the church that genuinely care about them.

Ashley: That's right. Because they're worshiping, serving, giving, volunteering, and carrying fear that never gets named out loud, fear about family separation, fear about raids, fear of whether their children are safe, fear about what happens if something goes wrong. Their reality is different from others in the church who don't carry that same immigrant connection.

Tracie: And when church leadership never acknowledges that reality, that silence can feel like a distance, even if that's not the intention. It can feel like the immigrant is sitting there saying, maybe this part of my life doesn't belong here. Do I even belong here?

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Ashley: That's right. And I think that also extends to the people in our church communities who care about immigrants, who have immigrant neighbors and friends and people that they're walking alongside. So when those things aren't mentioned in your church, it can feel like, is this important to my church? Does this part of my life belong here? And like we said, do I belong here? So we want to talk honestly about what that silence feels like and also about how congregations can respond with grace instead of resentment.

Tracie: Because really, here's the thing. Most pastors don't wake up wanting to ignore people's pain. Often, they're afraid of saying the wrong thing, creating division, or stepping into something that they just don't feel equipped to handle.

Ashley: But from the pew, silence still communicates something, even unintentional silence can feel like avoidance, or worse, like our fear isn't worth naming, or it's not worth the consequences of naming it.

Tracie: And we've heard over and over from immigrant church members and advocates that even just a single sentence, a prayer, an acknowledgement, something can be the difference between feeling invisible and feeling held and cared for.

Ashley: Something as simple as a pastoral prayer that says, "God, we lift up families in our congregation who are carrying fear or uncertainty around immigration, and we ask for your protection and peace." That's one line in a prayer, and that can speak volumes. And I can say that this happened at my church because a minister did include a one-sentence, just one sentence in their prayer one day, something like, "We remember the refugees and immigrants in our community who are scared." And in that moment, I felt seen and validated in both my compassion and my fear.

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Tracie: I'll tell you this, Ashley, we just talked with our pastor about this recently. Reworked his prayer on Sunday to mention that exact same thing, and it was amazing. Not just for me, but I think for the other immigrants who are in our pews sitting next to us, and it was definitely a game changer. This naming of the fear, this even just one sentence, it does two things at once, I think. It tells immigrant members and advocates, you are seen here. And it also tells the rest of the congregation, this issue is part of our shared life together. We can't ignore it.

Ashley: So we've talked about some things that our pastors and our ministers can do, but what can we as congregants do when we long for that kind of leadership, but we aren't seeing it?

Tracie: I think one option is just a gentle relational encouragement. Talk with your pastor just one on one, not a confrontation, not accusing them of anything, but spark it with curiosity, maybe asking something like, how can we as a church be praying for families affected by immigration right now? Or would it maybe be helpful to name what some of our members are carrying through this season?

Ashley: That kind of question gives pastors permission. It signals you won't be alone if you speak. And if you haven't already voiced your concern for immigrants, it may let them know that there are people in the congregation who care about this topic. We really can't expect anyone to understand what we're thinking unless we voice it out loud, and the same goes for our pastors.

Tracie: So true. I think another way that congregations and we can help is by offering resources instead of expecting our pastors to have all the answers. They are after all human. So you can approach your pastor and say, hey, if it's helpful, I know of these great trusted organizations who could educate or support our community in this area. And that can lower the tension and the pressure significantly.

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Ashley: And that's something that I did in my church, Tracie, because I noticed that my church didn't have any classes about immigration that were offered on our usual Sunday or Wednesday night schedules. And so I asked, well, who makes decisions about our church curriculum? And that led me to our discipleship and education minister, which you think maybe I would have started there first with a title like that. But I went to her and she told me about the discipleship committee that makes those decisions. I'm a Baptist, and so we love a good committee, obviously. And when I heard that there was a committee that decided that curriculum, I decided I wanted to join the committee so I could propose topics that I want our church to study. And sometimes there's no one who can lead those kinds of topics, and so I lead it.

I'll find a book, I'll find a study guide, something with videos to show or questions that are already prepared. And then I can just get that on our church calendar. I'll teach it for a few weeks, and whoever wants to come can come. And I think this is something that we can all do in our church. We can see the need, we can work through the proper channels of our church communities, put forth the effort, and then like in my church, we now have classes that teach about immigration and other topics. Maybe you don't feel like you're like me and you have a teaching background and you don't feel like you can feel confident in teaching, or maybe it's not something that you are comfortable with. But I think that each of us, we talked about in a previous episode, each of us has something in our hands that we can do, something that we can use. And I feel like the story of Moses is really good in this situation because Moses, God told him to go and speak to Pharaoh. And Moses basically responds in fear and says, "But I'm not a good speaker." So one, God told Moses, look in your hand, what's in your hand? And how can you use that? And it was his shepherd staff. But God also gave Moses Aaron to speak for him. So I hope that you can pray to God to help you find your Aaron, whether that's in your church or a friend or someone else who you can work with to bring up this topic of

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immigration to your congregation and to your pastor. And if you don't know where to start with any of these topics, then we have some ideas in the show notes for curriculum or book ideas.

Tracie: Actually, that reminds me of a prior episode where we talked about how sometimes we are the answers to our prayers. And if I feel like something is missing in my small church of 35 people, odds are good that I'm going to be the one who wants to fill that gap. So if it's going to be leading a group study on immigration and the Bible, ding, ding, ding, I know who's going to lead that. And I just, I need to be a little bit more bold in saying yes to those opportunities. I think we can all do that.

I think we need to acknowledge that what we're looking for from pastors will look different in different contexts. Different-sized congregations, different resources, different backgrounds, and I just want to say that boldness does not always mean going out to protest, giving bold public statements, or even teaching a class on immigration at your church. Sometimes boldness looks like a prayer, like that one sentence we talked about a little earlier. It can mean maybe a pastoral letter during a season of heightened fear or allowing space for education for others to fill in. It can simply mean that you say out loud, immigrants are made in the image of God and deserve dignity and safety.

Ashley: And sentences like that are not partisan. Actions like that are not partisan. They're pastoral, and congregations feel the difference.

Tracie: I feel like at the end of the day, we may not, or at least I know I may not remember every sermon, but we do remember how we felt afterwards.

Ashley: Immigrant members remember when their fear was acknowledged, and the same goes for advocates. They also remember whether silence or care filled the room when it mattered.

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Tracie: And often, the most faithful shifts are also the most ordinary: the sentence, a prayer, or just an invitation.

Ashley: Those small acts tell people, you belong here, all of you. When pastors choose presence over avoidance, it changes everything. And sometimes that courage is strengthened by hearing from leaders who've wrestled with these exact choices.

Tracie: Which brings us to our very special guest today. We are so honored to be joined today by Rondell Treviño. Rondell served for years as a pastor, and he is now the founder and president of The Immigration Coalition, working to care for people on both sides of the border by providing food and water and other necessities. For full transparency, I do serve on the board of directors for TIC, and I am so grateful for Rondell's heart and wisdom for serving the immigrant community so faithfully.

Ashley: Rondell, we're so glad you're here.

Rondell: Thank you so much. It's an honor.

Tracie: I'd like to start by going back to a time before I knew you, before focusing on your current work with The Immigration Coalition, back when you were a pastor. When you were doing that, how did you feel about bringing up the topic of immigration when you were at the pulpit?

Ashley: And I have another question to add to that. Were you ever told either directly or indirectly to stay away from topics like immigration because they were seen as too political?

Rondell: Yeah, immigration already, when people say the word, it's already associated with a political party, whether right or left, right? So naturally, even for Christians who follow the Lord for many years, there's just a natural thread over many years that people naturally associate immigration

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specifically with policies and politics. And because people wrestle with, well, we can't dive deeply into allowing the church to talk about politics and we just need to stick to the scriptures. And so a lot of times, there, when I was a pastor, it was a struggle for me personally. Especially being Mexican American, being a part of, it was a predominantly conservative Presbyterian church, there was a lot of hesitation on my part. But it was unique because I also, and y'all know this, as Christians, we're called to be in community and build relationships. And so even though I was at on level 10, a lot of my brothers and sisters in Christ who were more conservative were probably on a one when it comes to, maybe a 10 when it comes to policies or at least what they think, but a one or two or three when it comes to like, how do I actually do it? I feel like sometimes the hesitation for some conservative Christians is just or just Christians in general is just, they don't know how to engage that conversation right off the bat, right? Ashley, what was your question?

Ashley: So were you ever told as a pastor, whether it was directly or indirectly, to stay away from topics like immigration because they were seen as too political?

Rondell: Yeah, sometimes. It depends also on the circle, right? So if you're preaching from the pulpit, there was a encouragement to say, well, we don't want to touch on that as much because it's messy and we don't want to mix politics with Christianity. But if it was a one-on-one or a small group, there was probably a little bit more room to have authentic conversations with that. But I think the bigger struggle there was many of my brothers and sisters in Christ who were at that specific church or in different circles, they just didn't know, they just didn't know how to engage that conversation. And I think when people don't know how or they lack proximity with immigrants, there's a natural fear to step back and not want to engage as much unless you're talking about specifically borders.

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And so I think sometimes there's also, and you can get this on both sides sometimes, sometimes there's a struggle too for Christians to think that immigration is not tied to welcoming the immigrant, right? And showing compassion and love. And at The Immigration Coalition, we're pretty big on striving to live in the tension of both sides because I believe there's some truth on both sides. It's easier to be one way or the other because you get to point fingers at the other side. I think as Christians, we got to live in the tension of both. How do I show compassion, but also how do I meet people where they are, like Jesus, and build relationships to help them come alongside to know what it means to love the immigrant, but also for me to understand them, right? Because everybody has a story.

Tracie: That is so true. Living in the tension. That could have been a name for our podcast, Ashley. We missed out. It's so true. So when you were able to speak about immigration, it sounds like you did it in a variety of different platforms. How did people generally respond either congregationally or in those small groups?

Rondell: It depends on the circle, right? So the audience, and one of the blessings was knowing the audience before. So if I'm speaking to a predominantly conservative audience, it was, it was coming out, coming to them where they are, right? Which is they want to hear border security, they want to hear pro-America. And so my angle would be, I love America and I care about the United States and I'm grateful to live here. At the same time, I do believe in a healthy approach to border security, right? That's multifaceted. And that would allow me to break the ice, if you will, to get to the point where, well, on the other side of this, as Christians, we're ultimately called to show compassion and mercy to all people, even if you don't fully understand or if you disagree on certain specifics, right? My heart as a Christian should be, as long as I continue to strive to pursue Jesus and the more I fall more in love with him, there's a natural implication for me to fall more in love with those who are not like me or vote like me or

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think like me or have documentation status like me. And it doesn't mean I don't, I can't go, man, I don't understand, help me to figure this out. It's more of I get pushed to wanting to be engaged in relationship with that person because I know Jesus did the same thing when I was spiritually undocumented and didn't have a relationship with him. He didn't move away, he came near. And as a Christian, we're called to do the same thing.

Ashley: Yeah, I agree with that. I think that God continually calls us into closer love and relationship with others, just like God came into closer relationship with us. God chose to love us first, and we can choose to love others first in the same way.

Rondell: Exactly.

Ashley: And I think it's so true what you're talking about knowing your context as well, knowing who you're talking to. How do we approach this conversation? That matters when we have conversations. And it makes me think also, I mean, when you go to your pastor, it might help if you know already some of their thoughts. But when you think pastors hear the word immigration, what do you think they're afraid that they're stepping into? Like if I went to my pastor and said, can we talk about immigration? What's the fear that a pastor might have when I mention that?

Rondell: Yeah, I said it a little bit. I think probably complex, and the answer is complex, right? I think you have people who, man, I just don't know enough about the topic biblically, right? So sometimes because we lean, we allow our politics to inform our Christianity more than our Christianity and scriptures to inform our politics, we will lean toward thinking that there's an assumption of, well, I don't even really need to look for immigration within the scriptures, right? Sometimes there's a shying away from it because it feels like, well, you're getting too political. And this is not what we're called to do. I also think sometimes a misunderstanding of probably what pro-life means, I think.

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You know, I've often said this at The Immigration Coalition, and Tracie, you know this, I'm pro-life from the womb to the tomb for all people. So I'm called to love all people. And the scriptures talk about that. And so I think one of the biggest fears is just, they just don't know how to engage the topic as much as they probably would like to say. And some pastors would like to say they love expositional preaching and but sometimes they get to some scriptures and it becomes exegesis where they pick and choose what they believe as if the Bible is a buffet, like you're at Cicis Pizza or something like that. And you're like, I want that one. I don't want, but I, I think as Christians we're called to the fully engage that the entirety of the scriptures.

And I think sometimes it's also a fear of rejection. At the root of us as Christians, sin is it's selfishness. It's I want, I want to be liked, I want to matter, I want to be influential. Maybe as pastors, sometimes the temptation can be I am fearful of what of the rejection of what people will think of me. And so sometimes we get so wrapped up in our own image of ourself, which is the root of sin and ego and pride, that it pushes us away to go, well, I'm just going to share what they really, really want to hear instead of understanding that Jesus came to live in an uncomfortable life. And as Christians, if that is the case, we have to do that too. And sometimes, probably more so than sometimes, oftentimes, if we are sharing something courageous that the scriptures calls us to share, and it rubs us the wrong way and it's very uncomfortable and it's uncomfortable for others, a lot of times it's the Lord's way of saying that's what I need you to do and say and engage because that's where we grow. We grow in that uncomfortable place.

Tracie: That's so true, but it's so hard to hear and actually live that out.

Rondell: It is hard.

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Tracie: It's interesting thinking about the politics, immigration, pro-life, all of it. And you know, I grew up with a stepdad from Mexico and we went to church. I don't recall ever hearing anyone talk about immigration. And yet my stepdad was a loved member of the congregation and he definitely had document challenges. And then you fast forward 30, maybe 40-ish years, I don't want to age myself too much. And now you mention immigration, it's like everybody freezes. So where did this, like, why does immigration feel so political these days?

Rondell: Just to be honest, it becomes political because since 2014, 2015, it's become a huge topic, right? It was something that respectfully our current president was going to run on, which is we're going to get America back to where it used to be, whatever that means, right? And immigration became the scapegoat for that, right? And fear is a terrible motivator, but it motivates, right? And I think that is what had happened since 2015 is this, this unhealthy approach to saying, in order for us to get back to where America once was, we have to get rid of these certain individuals.

And one of the scary things that we sometimes struggle with falling into as Christians is one, we always want someone to follow. I mean, we see that in scripture when Saul became king, even if they're broken and in need of grace. And then two, we, we sometimes fall into the temptation to generalize a particular group of people, right? As they're all like that. And that's just tremendously un-Christian and not the way we are called to live as Christians and just human beings in general, no matter where you come from, is the unhealthiness of generalizing particular group of people. And so I think it had started around then, right? And it's continuing and it's you see pockets of it here and there now, right? It's still big and integration such a, such a, you have ICE and then you have the border and then you have, I mean, the refugees, there's so many topics within that big umbrella of immigration, it can become an easy scapegoat for folks.

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And here's the thing too, it's also sometimes I just said like the sin of selfishness and we all, us three, we fall into this category too. But sometimes when our identity is wrapped into where we live and where we are on this earth, even though we're passing through, then, then anything that is so opposite of who I am becomes a problem to solve, not people to engage with. And I think that's what has, in many ways, has happened is we get so tied, some of us to our identity is not just within what Jesus has done for us, it's also tied to I'm a Christian and I'm a I'm an American. Well, we know Jesus plus anything equals, you know, nothing, right? Like it's Jesus plus my brokenness. Now Jesus can work with something there. Right? And I think our identity gets too tied with our citizenship in America and not enough into the eternal perspective where we're going, which will be a multi-ethnic, multi-generational heaven where people we probably some of us don't like will be in heaven because it's going to be a motley crew of people worshiping Jesus. And if we think eternally that way and know how it's going to end, we should be trying to bring that kingdom here and celebrating that and knowing that it's a part of the scriptures in a healthy way.

Ashley: Rondell, I'm listening to you preach right now. I feel like I'm like listening to a really good sermon. And it just makes me wonder, you were a pastor for so long and now you're the president of The Immigration Coalition. What prompted that change to go from being a pastor to working in the nonprofit world? Was there something that in your pastoring experience that pushed you to mission work outside of the church structure?

Rondell: This is out of respect for the church. I think, you know, I love the local church and what we're called to do and sometimes we get we struggle with falling into the Christian bubble, if you will. That's what I call it. And I was like, man, it's good to talk about loving your neighbor as yourself and things of that sort. And I felt like the Lord was calling me to be more in

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proximity. And so I wanted to step out of that bubble and go, man, I want to specifically navigate this niche of immigration so that we can truly figure out how can we bridge the gap between people who might be a Christian conservative or a Christian progressive or a Christian who is living in the tension of both and says they're politically homeless and go, man, regardless, we need to provide food and basic essentials to people in need. And, and so I, I felt like the Lord was pushing me to do that, which has been fun. It's been hard, but it's been, it's been fun.

Tracie: And you excel at it.

Rondell: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Tracie: Yeah, thank you. Now, we've been talking some in this episode about pastors and their hesitation, but some of them may even think we don't have immigrants here in our congregation at our church. That may or may not be true, but what would you say to someone to a pastor who believes immigration isn't a concern for the people they're caring for?

Rondell: If I'm sitting down having coffee with this pastor, I would probably graciously try to speak truth with grace and go, I think we have to get out of our sometimes our own what I say like little kingdoms, if you will, sometimes that we create and we have to be willing to also like listen and hear things outside of our own what we watch, right? So, you know, I can go through seasons where I'm, you know, leading the immigration coalition and I'm like, what had happened? And Tracie, I hit you up and I'm like, Tracie, can you help? Because we get tied into our own little thing that we're doing, which is not a bad thing. We also have to think outside of ourselves. Just because it might not be hurting the community I'm in, doesn't mean that it that I can't engage.

So you probably hit on an important topic of just because it's not in my neighborhood doesn't mean that I can't love my neighbor outside of that

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neighborhood who needs me, right? Or needs me to stand up and speak up. And sometimes I think, you know what's interesting? Sometimes I think people, we think that we have to hit home runs to make a big difference, right? And we think we need to hit like this home run and we have to, you know, make this big move to impact the immigrant community. And sometimes that's true, but I think more so than hitting big, big runs and big home runs, it's specifically what are the small things that I can do to start out with to make an impact? Maybe it's calling your representative and only you and God know.

Maybe it's you're starting to pray as a family for the immigrant community. Maybe it's bringing up in the church and you're praying for the marginalized. Maybe it's donating to a local nonprofit. Those are big changes, especially when there's many Christians who do it at the same time. So I think it's the small steps that we got to be willing to take, not so much, man, I either have to hit a home run or I don't I can't do anything. There's always something. I think it's just understanding that you could take small steps in doing so.

Ashley: I agree that small steps are really important. None of us are going to start out big. None of us on this call started out big with immigration. It was the little things.

Rondell: Yeah. That's exactly right. Exactly.

Ashley: And I think about these steps that you've just given our listeners, things that they can do to, you know, bring immigration into their own lives or to get closer to caring about these issues. What is the small step you would recommend that our listeners can do to encourage their pastors to be more bold on the issue?

Rondell: Being willing to and you said this somewhere in some of the notes that I saw, it was like courageous. I saw that and I was like, man, that's so

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good because you forget that anytime we're doing work for the marginalized, it is courageous, right? I mean, you're you're willing to step up what the odds may seem like to love the marginalized and I think we got to be willing to be courageous and we got to be willing to step in and go, I mean it's it's as simple as having a conversation with that pastor, especially if they're your pastor, you should feel safe enough to share your heart and your thoughts on, can we talk about this from the pulpit or start a Bible study on what this looks like from a practical level of just loving your neighbor as yourself?

And we don't need to get into the politics of it, but what does it just look like to love your neighbor as yourself? And you know, it's so interesting because when I was a pastor, I really think that sometimes we want to make and there's a place for it, right? We want to make the Bible deeply theological and we want to say these big words and we and I'm like, now that I'm outside of that, 99% of people don't even care about that stuff. It matters. Don't get me wrong. It matters. It matters. I think there's a place for good theology. I love that stuff. But most people need to hear love God, love your neighbor. I mean, it's as I think we try to make it so it's not rocket science. We try to make it like we're dealing with NASA here and it's like, no, man, it's just, man, love people.

And guess what? If you read the scriptures and you pray and you're humble before God and knowing that you were broken and you needed a savior, the natural implication is to go, I want to show mercy and grace to anybody, even if I don't agree, I can sit down and I can show mercy and I will long to serve. Reminds me of Zacchaeus in Luke 19, right? Like he's the tax collector, he's stolen money from people, and he gets on the tree to find Jesus. They say he's a small man, so he climbed up a tree. That was a grind climbing up a tree. And then he comes down, he receives Jesus as his Lord and Savior. And when Jesus goes to his house, he basically returns money to the people that he stole money from. The practical

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application there is like, man, when Jesus transforms your heart, the natural implication as a Christian is to what can I do for others? What am I doing? How can I serve? What do I need to do? And because you notice how broken you are and Jesus came to you, the only natural implication is to do that for others. And we're not perfect, right? We're we're not going to get this right all the time, but a good implication that my relationship with Jesus is in a good season is when I am not thinking so much about I want, I want, I want, but man, my heart breaks for the undocumented immigrant because they're humans created in God's image and Jesus died for that individual.

Tracie: That is so good. Thinking about how lives are transformed by the power of the cross, we've also seen a transformation, I think in the public space when it comes to people and especially leaders in the faith communities step up in this administration. We've seen Catholic bishops create a video. We have seen Bishop Mariann Budde talking about loving the vulnerable at the National Prayer Day. We have seen other ministers talking about getting your wills in order because you may be called out to the front lines to protect your vulnerable immigrant neighbors. And I am curious, you know, we've been talking about silence. On the flip side, we're seeing such a loud response in some areas. Where do you think that's coming from? Why now? And is this all positive? Can this be a slippery slope? I'd love to get your thoughts on this.

Rondell: It's positive, right? When people maybe there is, we don't know the mystery of the Lord in many ways, but maybe there is a revival happening, right? So here's the thing, like this makes me think, and I've said this before, yeah, in 2015, 2016, when immigration became so such a hot topic, the problem was, you know, the rhetoric toward immigrants was unhealthy, generalizing them was unhealthy. The other side of that is the topic became hot and important. To where people who didn't know were like, dang, now I got to actually make a response to this. And so now that

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it's carried over for 10, 11 years, maybe the Lord has shaped and moved people's hearts in a way where they can't get away from it and they have to respond. And maybe the last 10 years, people have stepped up because and I don't know their personal stories, but maybe they've been in proximity with some immigrants. Maybe they've had some constituents who were immigrants and shared their story. But more so then and I like that you said this Tracie, it's not so much the negative of silence, but maybe the speaking up is a revival in a way for us to just talk about the importance of how valuable immigrants are, no matter their documentation status.

Ashley: It feels like an invitation. It feels like we've been invited in the last 10 years to start thinking about topics that maybe were outside of our normal scope of understanding.

Rondell: Yes. Exactly.

Ashley: That goes for both the congregants in the pews and also the pastors too. And some of us have tried to jump in and it's been a whirlwind. That's been my story at least. And it feels like some of us still need, we feel like we need more education. We feel like we need to know more before we can speak up. But I think you've given us good advice about speaking boldly, about having courage, about following the Lord and learning to love our neighbors and reach out to them as well.

Rondell: So, Rondell, I want to thank you for being with us, for your honesty and your courage, and the voice that you've given us. Like, I just felt like I listened to a sermon. That was amazing. But I think that you call us to faithfulness, and it reminds us that it's, you know, faithfulness is not being loud for the sake of being loud. It's actually rooted in love, and it's willing to be with others and to listen to their stories. So thank you so much for being with us today.

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Rondell: Thank you. I appreciate y'all and the work you're doing. It's awesome.

Tracie: Thank you. All right. We will go ahead and talk a little bit about some next steps about what Rondell has just told us about those small steps growing into larger impacts. So we'll go ahead and switch over now and talk about some conversation tips when things may feel a little heated.

Ashley: As always in our episodes, we want to leave you with some action steps and a conversation tip that you can take with you and try to put into your life throughout this week. So when someone says, our church shouldn't talk about immigration, it's too political, you might respond with...

Tracie: Yes, I understand that concern, absolutely. But I am not asking for politics. I'm just hoping that we can talk about what scripture calls us to do for people who are vulnerable. I mean, I don't know a pastor or church member who would shy away from discussing scripture when asked, do you?

Ashley: I don't think so. But another small step that you can take this week, and this is going to be a list, so don't feel like you have to do all of them, just try one, but some things that you can do. You could share scripture about hospitality with a small group that you're a part of. You can ask your pastor how the church supports immigrant members or immigrants in your community. You can attend or host a low-stakes educational conversation about immigration. Maybe you use some of the things that you've learned in this podcast and tell those to your friends and to your family and community members. You can also pray for courage and clarity in your conversation and in your congregation.

Tracie: Faithfulness usually starts smaller than we expect, but it definitely grows.

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Ashley: It's that mustard seed analogy. We start small and then we get so much bigger. So as we close, we want to speak directly to a couple of groups who may be listening today.

Tracie: First, to pastors and church leaders, if this conversation feels heavy or complicated, that does not mean you're failing. It means that you're leading in a moment where faithfulness actually costs something.

Ashley: And that question is the gospel still good news when it costs you something is such an important one. It's a question from the book *Subversive Witness* by Dominique Gilliard that has stuck with me and I read this book a few years ago. It's actually one that I taught at my church if that's something that you might want to consider as well. But this line shows us again and again that God often calls people to use their privilege, their position, safety, or influence, not to protect themselves, but to love others in ways that do come with cost. And having that cost isn't wrong. It's a sign that they're standing in the long biblical tradition of faithful people who chose obedience even when it wasn't comfortable or safe.

Tracie: And I would like to remind you too that what your people need, what we need as a people right now in general, is presence. We need honesty, and we need to see the courage to let scripture, not fear, guide our leader's tone.

Ashley: And also to church members who feel frustrated or grieved by silence, know that your concern does make sense.

Tracie: But change rarely starts with pressure. If you're worried about your pastor ignoring this subject, you can't ignore it either. You need to start with an invitation.

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Ashley: An invitation to conversation, to awareness. Start with looking at seeing who's already in the room around you in your congregation and in your community.

Tracie: And ultimately, immigration does not have to be and should not be a dividing issue for the church.

Ashley: When the church chooses people over power and courage over comfort, the gospel becomes visible again.

Tracie: And you don't have to do everything. You don't have to say everything.

Ashley: But silence in the face of fear is not neutrality. And faithfulness often begins with something small, a prayer, a sentence, a posture that says you belong here.

Tracie: The church does not need to be louder. It needs to be more clear, clear about who God is and clear about who belongs.

Ashley: Thanks for joining us on Hope in Action. We're so grateful you're here, and we'll see you next time.

Tracie: This podcast is to inform, educate, and entertain and does not constitute legal advice. If you are making decisions related to immigration or any legal matter, please consult a licensed attorney in your state of residence.