

**Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs.
the Law of God's Kingdom**



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With Your Hosts

Tracie L. Morgan & Ashley Glimasinski

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Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

In Romans 13, we are told, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities." But in Acts 5:29, Luke declares, "We must obey God rather than men." And I think this tension is especially seen in immigration. We have restrictive and complicated laws, but we are also called to love our neighbors as ourselves. It can often feel like we're having to choose between one or the other. In today's episode, we want to instead show that it's not an either/or issue, but a both/and. We are called to live in this tension. We can welcome the stranger and encourage people to follow the law.

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.

Ashley: So hi, I'm Ashley Glimasinski, a community advocate, a former ESL teacher, and a friend of immigrants. And I also happen to have a seminary degree, a Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary. And I sometimes refer to it as my not-a-pastor degree because you can actually go to seminary and not become a pastor. The number of times people said, "Oh, great, you're going to teach now." And I'm like, "Actually, not a pastor." I do like teaching, but not a pastor. So, instead, I went to seminary because I felt God calling me to go deeper in my faith, to understand why I believed what I believed, and maybe work out

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

for myself some of those beliefs and refresh them along the way. And I did my degree in intercultural studies because of my passion for other cultures and for intercultural communication. I also loved learning how to put theology into practice, or praxis theology, which might be handy in this episode.

Tracie: I suspect it very much will be. I am Tracie L. Morgan. I am an immigration lawyer with 16 years of immigration law experience, and we focus on humanitarian and family immigration. I wish, Ashley, I had your background in theology, but I did a Master's degree in International Studies at the University of Kansas and had a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. So I went completely opposite of everything I knew. And let me tell you, it was eye-opening to learn about new people, new cultures, and I think that's part of what started this journey here. So I think with our combined experiences, we definitely have our work cut out for us today.

When I heard you talk about Romans 13 and Acts 5 just now, it made me think about how the verse in Romans sets a general rule that Christians should honor and obey governing authorities. We see government as part of God's order to restrain chaos and promote justice. We should pay taxes and honor our leaders, for example. But Acts tells us that there's an exception. When human laws directly contradict God's commands, Christians must obey God, even if it means facing consequences. Loyalty to Christ comes before loyalty to the state.

Ashley: Yeah, and I think that's a great framework that we can start with. And just to be clear, we're not advocating or going to advocate that anyone does break the law. But instead, we want to look at how our calling as Christians and citizens of heaven is our

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

highest calling. The Bible is not silent on how we do this. There are over 120 verses that touch on God's concern for the foreigner and stranger or speak to the experiences of being one.

So of course, in this episode, we're going to go deep into the Bible and give you some of the background and foundation for God's heart for the stranger. So let's first look at the Old Testament and the principles in Leviticus and Exodus. That's specifically Leviticus 19:33 through 34 and Exodus 22 through 21. In the books of Leviticus and Exodus, they lay the Old Testament foundation for how we are to treat the foreigner. There are five pillars that God shares with us, just as relevant today as they were in ancient times. So in Exodus, we see Israel as foreigners in Egypt. Exodus 22:21 says, "Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt." This is echoed in the next chapter, 23:9, where it's not just a command to do something, but a reminder to show empathy. It says, "Do not oppress a foreigner. You yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt." Israel is reminded to remember their hardships when engaging with the marginalized in their community.

And that's our first principle, empathy. God calls Christians to show empathy first, even when immigration feels complex and political. We can do this by reflecting on our own family stories of migration, hardship, or marginalization, or by truly listening to an immigrant's story about their journey to the United States. This kind of listening is not just listening to respond or to add your already formulated ideas about immigration, but it's listening to truly understand and allowing it to shape your own beliefs instead.

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

Tracie: And our second principle is justice, that is, equal treatment under the law. Leviticus 24:22 says, "You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the Lord your God."

Both the native and the foreign-born are subject to the same laws and to adhere to them. All of us are deserving of access to justice. Treating people differently violates biblical justice.

The third principle we see in the Old Testament is hospitality and love. Back to Leviticus 19:33 and 34, we say the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born and commands us to love them as yourself. This points to our teaching of Jesus that comes later, which is to love God and love your neighbor. This shows us that hospitality and love isn't optional. They are a duty. Today, we can live out this command by inviting immigrants into our church communities, mentoring or teaching ESL, or simply offering friendship. Small acts like a smile, sharing a meal, or just listening as Ashley just talked about embody how we can be God's hands and feet here on Earth.

Ashley: That's right. And you can also remember that hospitality can go both ways. We often think of hosting immigrants in our homes and our churches and our spaces, basically inviting them to places where we are comfortable because we know what to expect. And you can consider that a power imbalance where we are on the higher end and our immigrant friends are always accepting help from us. That's comfortable for us. But instead, and this is going to be harder and uncomfortable if it's your first time doing this, try accepting an invitation from them to be hosted and be on the receiving end of hospitality. Visit their home or their church and be open to receiving what they and God might have

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

for you in that place, especially if you're uncomfortable in that place.

And Leviticus 23:22 shows us how to provide for the immigrant. Here, in this verse, the Israelites were told to leave the edges of your fields for the poor and the foreigner. This is God showing us how to care for people. It's not about providing charity. And later, in Ruth, we see exactly how this played out in real life. When Naomi and Ruth went to Bethlehem, Ruth, as a poor foreign widow, went to the fields and was able to find sustenance because Boaz followed this rule set out in Leviticus. Immigrants had access to resources through the way God had told his people to behave. And that is still true today. You can live out this life today by supporting programs that help immigrants meet their basic needs, such as housing, food, and legal assistance. This is following God's blueprint for community care. And to be clear, we believe this kind of assistance should be available for everyone in our communities, not just immigrants. Like we said earlier, it's not either/or. We don't have to care for Americans or immigrants. We can care for both Americans and the foreigner residing among us.

Tracie: That's brilliant. That goes perfectly into our last Old Testament principle, which is inclusion. We're in this together. In Exodus 12:49, it says, "The same law applies to both the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you." This wasn't in regards to laws and statutes, but rather to how people participated in religious festivals and covenant practices. God is showing us his heart for belonging and being in relationship. Immigrants are to be spiritually included. Churches today should create inclusive spaces where immigrants can fully participate in worship, teaching, and community life. It may look like having dual

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

language services, or I read about a church recently where the service and worship songs were held in slower, less complicated English. So even beginner and intermediate English learners could understand and participate. If there's a large immigrant population in your church, then consider having people from that group on church staff or a committee having an equal say in church decisions and programming. Inclusion practices like these reinforce human dignity, belonging, and God's love.

So, moving now into the New Testament, we see that God told people in the Old Testament, told his people to love the foreigner, to treat them justly, to provide for their needs, and to include them in community. These were laws that showed that God's heart is for outsiders. But when Jesus comes, he takes these principles even further. He doesn't just reaffirm the law, he deepens it. I would say that he takes the legal duties we see in the Old Testament and he turns our treatment of the foreigner into a matter of the heart, teaching us that how we treat immigrants reflects our love for God himself.

Ashley: Yeah, and I think that's why the use of terms like illegal and alien that we hear these days to refer to immigrants, it really bothers me because when we call people by these titles, we're interrupting our ability to see the image of God in these people and to respect the image of God in them because we've dehumanized them to a point where we can't recognize them as worthy of God's love or of our love. So I think the words that we use also matter and it changes our hearts and how we reflect God's love.

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

So we also see that Jesus clearly identifies with the stranger. And what's probably the most often quoted verse on immigration, Matthew 25:35, Jesus says, "For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me." And this is a clear call for us to see immigrants and foreigners as neighbors and as representatives of Christ. A little earlier in Matthew too, we actually see Jesus and his family as refugees. They fled to Egypt to escape Herod's persecution. So Jesus directly knew what it was like to be a displaced person. And next, we learn about hospitality and radical love. The best example of this is the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25 through 37.

The Samaritan crosses cultural, ethnic, and religious boundaries to help a stranger. And remember that Samaritans were not liked by Jews. They would go completely around the country of Samaria rather than cut through it. So Samaritans really were the other, the ones that they didn't like, the ones you would not expect to be the hero of this story. But the Samaritan is the one who steps in and offers compassion and mercy in this story. So we are to do the same, to act compassionately towards outsiders, even when it's inconvenient or costly. And this core principle is again shown in Hebrews 13:2 where it says, "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing, some people have entertained angels without knowing it." And that's just a beautiful thought because it shows that hospitality isn't optional, it's actually a spiritual discipline. We want to have a proactive attitude towards welcoming those who may be different, those who may be foreigners.

And sometimes we have to consider when the law is made more for religious doctrine rather than what God has instructed. We

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

need to look at the spirit of the law, not the letter of the law. And Jesus provides an example of this in Mark 3:4 when he healed on the Sabbath. He healed multiple people and the religious people got really upset and said, "You can't do that. It's the Sabbath. You're supposed to rest on the Sabbath." And as we know, the Torah did prohibit work on the Sabbath. So the religious leaders treated healing as work. But Jesus healed the people anyways and he asked, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" So he reframed the law in this moment. The Sabbath was made for human flourishing, not to burden people. Mercy and empathy were more important than the strict application of the law.

Tracie: I think about that every day, Ashley, when I am working on my briefs and trying to figure out how to fit the law to human needs and there's a lot of wiggle room. I think people aren't happy with attorneys sometimes because we live in the gray area. But I lead with my heart, I lead with compassion, and hope that the law will accommodate accordingly.

Moving along in the New Testament, we see that we as Christians are uniquely placed on Earth. We are citizens of heaven, according to Philippians 3:20. Our allegiance is not to a country, but to God. And this means that our concern should be saved by kingdom values, including justice and mercy for foreigners. Looking at this from another perspective is Peter 2:11, where the Apostle Peter directs, "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against your soul." He is describing us as Christians as being foreigners in this world, being in spiritual exile. Our identity is not fixed by national boundaries,

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

but we are citizens of God's kingdom. And I have to tell you, in these last few months, that thought is what's keeping me going.

And then finally, we see the inclusion of all people in Galatians 3:28. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In the early church, immigrants and outsiders were fully included in the covenant community. It was part of what made the early church so radical and different from the cultures around them. They welcomed all and they considered each as their spiritual equals. The gospel breaks down the barriers of ethnicity, nationality, and status. We are to include immigrants in worship, in fellowship, and in acts of service.

Ashley: That's right. So to summarize what we've seen in both the Old and New Testaments, some things that we can do are to see immigrants as neighbors, not statistics. We should welcome newcomers into our churches and communities. We can advocate for fair treatment and protection of vulnerable migrants and immigrants. And we can recognize that following Christ may sometimes challenge national or cultural biases.

So how do Jesus's words challenge us when we think about people at the border or those seeking refuge? Jesus doesn't tell us just how to treat foreigners legally. He calls our hearts to courage, mercy, and empathy. He turns law into love, obligation into worship, and strangers into opportunities to encounter him. To address a practical concern I often hear, people say, "But we can't care for all those people. There's just too many of them." And it may seem overwhelming, but studies have shown that immigrants contribute more to our economy than they take. Even the few immigrants that can receive public benefits like refugees,

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

over time will spend more in taxes than what they initially received. Benjamin Kramer says that God's economy is not one of scarcity, but of abundance. The early church shared everything they had and there was no needy person among them. And that's from Acts 4. So when we say there isn't enough to go around, we're often protecting our comfort, not preserving justice. Hospitality isn't a matter of capacity, it's a matter of compassion. So in an age where fear, nationalism, or scarcity often dominate conversations about borders, Jesus's teaching calls us to love even when fear says, "Protect yourself first." We should be focused not on, "Is this safe?" but really focused on, "Is this loving?"

Tracie: That's such a beautiful message. Ashley, thank you so much. We also look at exile, displacement, migration. These aren't necessarily detours from God's plan. They're the very places he does some of his deepest work. In the Old Testament, God used his people in exile and captivity to spread knowledge of his name and his glory. Think of Daniel interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, for example. The early church diaspora, when Christians were scattered from their communities due to persecution, led to the gospel being spread to new communities and across the world. So many times, we're looking at this from our perspective, but God actually talks about what the exiled, or what we would say, maybe asylees or refugees, what they should do in their new land. We can look to Jeremiah 29 verse 4, where the prophet Jeremiah writes to the exiles in Babylon, tells them to build houses and settle down, plant gardens and eat what they produce, marry and have sons and daughters, increase in number there, do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

So here, God is directing the exile to settle in, make a new life, grow roots, start families. And I read through this and I wonder, sometimes are we trying to stymie or stop God's plans for asylees or refugees when we overly complicate the law or try to keep them out of our country entirely? They are called to do these things to be part of our communities and we're putting up a giant stop sign. And that to me just seems the opposite of what the gospel calls us to do.

Ashley: It does feel like we're putting up a giant stop sign, but I also feel like there's nothing we can do to stop God's plans. We may not want it to happen, but if God wants it to happen, are we going to stand in the way and make it harder for ourselves really, because God can conquer the day no matter what, I think in those situations.

So as we reflect on this, we can think if Jesus were here today, would he look at our immigration system and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" And I'm asking this question not just to cause guilt, but it's about alignment with Jesus's values. This question invites Christians to evaluate, are we reflecting his mercy, justice, and hospitality in how we treat immigrants? Jesus shows us that we are to take action, not just to pity someone. The New Testament reframes immigration from a policy issue to a spiritual, moral, and discipleship issue. And ultimately, I think we have a lot of room to grow and show kingdom values in the immigration debate, as we call it.

Tracie: Moving into modern day, absolutely. I want to just give a really quick summary for those of you who may not have listened to an earlier episode about the legal framework, but just again,

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

super quick summary. So citizenship is the process of becoming a US citizen. Citizens can sponsor family members for visas, they can vote, and they can access government benefits. A step directly below that is someone who's a lawful permanent resident or someone who has a green card, same thing just used interchangeably. And this type of status allows someone to live and work in the US indefinitely, but without the benefits of citizenship.

Visas regulate who may enter the country temporarily or permanently in some cases. This includes work visas, student visas, or refugee and asylee protections. Each visa has specific requirements like employment, education, or family relationships. But I do want to talk about enforcement. Enforcement is a major focus of our current immigration regime. Immigration authorities monitor compliance, they pursue unauthorized entries, and detain or deport individuals who violate our immigration laws. Policies often prioritize border security and removal over integration or protection. In the current administration, we see a huge emphasis on this. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, also known as ICE, was recently given a budget of \$75 billion over the next four years. That makes their budget 62% larger than the entire federal prison system. There's also a \$45 billion line item allotted for immigration detention facilities, which quadruples ICE's budget for detention. And the goal, they say, is to detain more than 100,000 people per day. Right now, we're already at records at about 62,000 detentions and it's just going to grow and depending on your opinion, get worse.

Ashley: That's true. And I think about the stats that show that the majority of the people they're detaining don't have a criminal

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

record, or if there is a criminal record, it's a nonviolent criminal record. And I think about all the people who are being placed in these detention centers who could be working, could be with their families, could be outside and free, rather than spending time in a detention center on taxpayer dollars. So I just think there's a lot that goes into that isn't loving, isn't compassionate, and maybe isn't what the gospel would have us consider right as Christians.

So as we think about the legal system and how it might be at odds with biblical teachings of compassion and mercy, what Tracie just shared is a big part of that, I think. It's a good place to start. But as we think about just the general idea, let's think about how biblical teaching prioritizes love, mercy, and justice, but our modern laws focus on compliance, documentation, and enforcement. And this strict legal approach can treat people as cases or numbers rather than as human beings in need of care. We talk about again, the 100,000 people that they want to detain in detention centers. That's a number. We talked in a previous episode about how numbers grab our attention, but it may seem abstract. We don't know the individual people. But when we think about them as individual humans in need of care, how some need their medication, how some might have children at home to care for. It humanizes the aspect and we remember, oh, these are mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters, just like I am, just like my friend is. And it brings the compassion that God asks for us to have as we think about the other, as we think about the stranger.

Immigration law also emphasizes detention, deportation, and punishment for violations. But scripture emphasizes restoration and protection for the vulnerable, for strangers, widows, orphans,

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

and foreigners. Punishing people for seeking safety or opportunity may contradict God's call to care for the outsider. And legal categories often exclude or marginalize people. Undocumented workers, asylum seekers, and refugees can face systemic barriers. God's law in the Old Testament included foreigners fully in community and worship. And denying access or opportunities can conflict with the biblical call to include and protect strangers. Policies often operate out of fear, fear of scarcity, crime, or cultural change. Scripture repeatedly calls believers to act in love and courage, not fear. 1 John 4:18 tells us, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear has to do with punishment. Whoever fears has not been perfected in love." And a lot of laws today and what we hear in the news is all about fear. Fear-driven enforcement overshadows mercy and hospitality.

The tension isn't just about breaking laws, it's about hearts and priorities. Biblical teaching calls for mercy, empathy, and hospitality, whereas the legal system often prioritizes order, efficiency, control, and increasingly, profit. Recognizing this tension is the first step for Christians who want to live faithfully while engaging with immigration issues.

Tracie: I tell you, Ashley, I want to say amen after every sentence you just shared with us. So thinking about laws, as a lawyer, of course, this is where I live day in and day out, laws often exclude or create barriers for vulnerable people, which can seem and should seem unjust from a Christian perspective. Legal complexities definitely create these barriers. Processes are highly technical. They require documentation, legal knowledge, and resources, not to mention some proficiency in English. I think about clients of mine who were victims of violent crimes like armed robbery. And

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

when you think about, "Well, can I get maybe some legal status based on my cooperation with law enforcement?" Maybe. It depends on where you just threatened or were you actually harmed. And if you were actually harmed, you might be able to apply for a U visa. But if you were just scared for your life, that's not going to be enough. Did you maybe turn 21 while your parents were waiting in line for a green card? If you did, oops, sorry, you got old. You have to go back to the starting line and wait years, sometimes even decades to try and obtain your own status. So these technicalities, these little turns of things we have no control over can totally change a story.

We look at vulnerable populations such as children, low-income families, refugees, or people fleeing trauma. They often cannot navigate these legal systems alone, but they're forced to. People who are in any sort of immigration proceeding, be it in court or be it filing for an asylum application, there is no right to an attorney for any of this. And so people try to do it on their own. And I can't imagine going to another country, not knowing the laws, not being great at the language, and trying to navigate that system. What they're asked to do is truly just monumental.

And from a biblical perspective, this challenges the command to protect and provide for the strangers and the marginalized because we're not helping them. Again, we're putting up stop signs and hazards every single step of the way. We also look at the undocumented population. They face exclusion. Without legal status, immigrants may be denied work, education, healthcare, and certainly they don't have safety from deportation. In many states, for example, Georgia where I live, if you don't have lawful status, you cannot get a driver's license. So no work permit as a

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

minimum means no driver's license. In Georgia, not even Atlanta has a great public transportation system. But as a human being, you still have children to get to school, you have to get to work, you have to go to the doctor, and every single time you get in the car, you're taking a huge risk.

If you get pulled over for not fully stopping at a stop sign or having a busted taillight, that can lead to pretty significant consequences. It could lead to detainment, it can lead to deportation, just for driving. And again, I'm not saying you should drive without a license. It's just we've made it so hard for people to live their lives and do what they need to do to survive, that's where I have the struggle.

So these policies can separate families and deny basic dignity, even when the individuals have lived peacefully in the country for years and just want to do the right thing. And scripture emphasizes that inclusion and protection of foreigners, denying access to these things conflicts with God's call to mercy and hospitality.

Ashley: You've talked about undocumented people and the legal complexities that people face, and I think about the refugees and asylum seekers that I know and the barriers that they encounter. So laws often impose a high evidentiary burdens or limit access to legal representation like you mentioned. You don't just get a lawyer as an immigrant in the country, especially in the immigration courts. It's not provided. You have to pay for your own. And so, also some judges are asking for verification from the very people who did the harm in order to grant asylum. So it's like, "Yeah, sure, let me just contact the gang that I'm running from

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

and ask why they're trying to kill me. And then I'll get that evidence right to you." How does that make sense?

And I also think about refugees and asylum seekers who have had to flee their home, often quickly with no time to gather their most treasured belongings, much less their documents or any kind of evidence for why they had to flee in the first place. So they don't have these things to prove and to give to the judge and say, "Like, this is why I fled. Will you take this and accept it as evidence in this case?" The only thing they have to go on is their story, and most of the time in the court of law, that's not going to be enough to certify their case for asylum. So I think about the barriers that we've put in place and we've made it really difficult for people to prove that they do have a legitimate case for asylum.

I also think about some other burdens that exist, like if a refugee doesn't file for an adjustment of status to legal permanent residency within one year of entering the US, they could very easily lose their chance to ever apply. And we talked about, how do you navigate a system that is completely new to you? Again, we've talked about most Americans don't even know this system. How do you navigate it when you don't have the English proficiency to know that there's a law that says you have to apply for this status within one year of arriving? You have to rely on agencies, on nonprofit organizations, and if they're helping a lot of other people, you might just not get the attention that you need to do this application on your own. So it's really difficult when there's so many things going on at the same time that you just don't know, and it's hard to keep up with.

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

So from a Christian lens, this feels unjust because God repeatedly commands us to care for the oppressed and the vulnerable. And it feels like we have a lot of exceptions that we make for that just according to our laws. It's like the man who asked Jesus, "Like, who is my neighbor?" He wasn't asking because he wanted to know how he could love more. He was asking because he wanted to know how can I love less? Who do I not have to worry about in this equation? And sometimes I feel like our laws are doing the same. Who can I not care for and get away with it? And that just makes me sad when I think that God has called us to care and love for so many people outside of who we want to care for.

Tracie: So sorry, Ashley, I wanted to break in and just say that asylum we were talking about how difficult it is. In Atlanta where I practice, the approval rate in the immigration court for defensive asylum is 1%. And it's not skewing the numbers. It's not me being dramatic, but a 1% approval rate. And when you have representation, your chances for success go up. I think it's something like a 60% increase across the nation if you do have representation. But when you look at those numbers, a 1% chance, like, what are we doing wrong to have that number be our normal? And it's just heartbreaking.

Ashley: It is, and it feels like there's something we could do to change that. I feel like there are some programs. We might have some ideas for you in the show notes. But we've mentioned some examples of tension in all of these. So how do we reconcile these harsh policies with the biblical idea that all people are made in God's image? And I think we can look at how every person, regardless of their nationality, their status, or their legality, they each bear God's image. Policies that dehumanize or harm

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

immigrants, like family separation, directly conflict with this fundamental truth that we are called to as Christians. And the dehumanization through actions or words, as we talked about earlier, or harsh treatment of immigrants cannot be reconciled with the biblical understanding of imago dei. That's being made in the image of God. So for Christians, it's not just a policy issue. None of these are just policy issues if you're a Christian. It's a moral and spiritual call to restore dignity, protect the vulnerable, and act in mercy.

Tracie: So this feels overwhelming. As people of faith, what are we called to do in light of these tensions? We're called to actively protect those who are powerless, children, families, refugees. We're not to treat them as problems to be managed, but people to love. We need to recognize that laws and policies can serve legitimate societal purposes, but legality and paperwork is not the ultimate measure of justice. Compare policies against the gospel standard. Do they honor human dignity, family integrity, and compassion? And when policies violate these principles, Christians are called to advocate, intervene, and care, even if it means challenging authorities, looking back at Acts 5.

Ashley: That's right. And some people might be asking now, how can we advocate for justice and mercy while respecting the rule of law? What's the balance? We've talked about the tension. We can feel both sides pulling at us. How do we find a balance somewhere in the middle? And I think we can say that Christians often face tension between political realities and biblical principles. Immigration law and policy may not reflect the values of mercy, justice, and hospitality found in scripture, but our faith calls us to act even when politics fall short.

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

Faith must inform our actions. Scripture calls us to love, protect, and welcome the stranger. That's Leviticus 19:34 and Matthew 25:35 that we mentioned earlier. And also faith should come before politics. Obedience to God isn't optional, even when the political system is slow, unjust, or fear-driven. We can reflect. Acting in line with God's heart sometimes means going against the grain of public opinion, party lines, or bureaucratic norms. Remember when Jesus healed on the Sabbath and the religious leaders weren't happy? They were kind of like the law of the time. And Jesus still healed. Jesus said this compassion, this mercy is more important for this person. How much is this person's life going to change today because of the mercy that they've received instead of if I said, "Oh, I'm sorry, it's the Sabbath. I can't heal you today." Jesus looked past the law and saw the humans beneath.

Another practical and faith-guided action that you can take is to support immigrant rights organizations. There's a lot of immigrant legal justice funds out there right now who are trying to support immigrants. Like we said, immigrants are not provided an attorney in immigration court. They have to pay for it themselves. And so some of these immigrant justice funds are raising funds to pay for attorneys so that they can support the immigrants who need attorneys right now. You can also donate or volunteer with nonprofits that provide legal aid, shelter, or advocacy for immigrants and refugees. You can do things like help families access legal representation, healthcare, or safe housing.

You can also engage in compassionate dialogue. Listen to stories of immigrants and refugees. As we talked about before, really listen. Allow yourself and your beliefs to be open to changing based on what you hear. Share those stories in your community to

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

humanize the issues beyond politics or headlines. But before sharing, make sure you have permission from your immigrant friend to share their story, especially if it was told only to you. And when you can, anonymize the story without names or specific places to protect their identity and protect their safety here in the United States. Also, you can encourage empathy and understanding rather than fear or judgment. Like we said, listening starts with true listening without coming with your preconceived notions. And I think I want to hear this from this story. Come with an open heart and an open mind and be ready just to listen.

Tracie: And for our courageous warriors out there, advocate for policy change. Get outside your comfort zone. Talk to those who have the power to change our laws and policies. Contact representatives to promote fair and humane immigration laws. As we've seen recently, our representatives don't necessarily read everything that gets put before them before a vote. So sharing your story is huge. It may be the only time they hear it. You'll want to participate in campaigns or church initiatives that align policy with biblical values of justice and mercy. There are some amazing organizations out there that we'll provide notes too. Advocate not as a partisan, but as a citizen guided by Christ's call to care for the vulnerable. I think by focusing on our shared Christianity, that's sometimes where we're able to get a little further in the conversation than otherwise.

We can also practice personal hospitality, welcoming newcomers into our churches or our communities, mentoring immigrant youth, providing language help, or sharing meals with refugee families is huge. Some of the most meaningful dinner

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

conversations I've had have been with refugees and asylees. Small acts of kindness like this reflect the heart of God and create tangible, life-changing impact. And remember, faith in action is kingdom building. Acting from faith transforms lives, communities, and even broader systems over time. When Christians live out mercy, justice, and hospitality, they model God's kingdom on Earth, even in a world of imperfect laws. Remember, politics may falter and policies may fail, but faith calls us to courageous, compassionate action, whether through advocacy, dialogue, service, or personal hospitality, Christians can bring God's justice and mercy into real-world systems that too often forget the stranger.

Ashley: That's right. So each week, we like to give a little conversation tip and an action step for you to take as you go about your week. And this week's conversation tip is when discussing immigration, especially with someone who may not share your perspective, try responding with something like, "I believe we're called to show mercy and justice to everyone, especially the vulnerable, like the immigrant, the stranger, and the foreigner among us. Have you considered how our immigration laws impact families and individuals seeking safety?" This keeps the conversation grounded in compassion while addressing the complexity of the issue.

Tracie: Another thing that you can do is to take action. It may not be engaging in that conversation, but to take a few minutes to research a local resource or an organization that supports immigrants, whether it's an informational website or a community group. In a previous episode, we mentioned World Relief or We Choose Welcome as good places to start. Share what you find with

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

a friend or a family member. Simple actions like this help spread awareness and foster understanding in your circles. I would also suggest listening to a prior episode where we go into resources and understanding the media. But these are really great actions to take to understand the situation better.

Ashley: As we reflect on today's episode, it's worth remembering that at the heart of scripture is a call to grace and mercy. God's love is not reserved for those who are convenient, familiar, or easy to love. It reaches the stranger, the vulnerable, and the marginalized. The Bible calls us to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. That means our faith is not just words or beliefs, it's actions. It's welcoming the immigrant, speaking up for the oppressed, and showing compassion where the system falls short. And grace doesn't excuse inaction. It empowers us. Mercy doesn't wait for perfection. It acts. And when we step into that call, we participate in God's work of restoring dignity, hope, and belonging to those who need it most.

So your call to action this week, as you go about your week, ask yourself, "Where can I extend God's grace? How can I show mercy? How can I be his hands and feet to the strangers and newcomers in my community?" And remember, every act of kindness, advocacy, and hospitality is part of a larger story, the story of God's kingdom breaking into our world. Let's be faithful to play our part.

Tracie: As we close today, remember this, faith is not passive. God calls us to act with compassion, mercy, and justice, even when the systems around us fall short. Welcoming the stranger, advocating for the vulnerable, and speaking truth with love, these are not optional extras. They are the tangible ways that we live out the

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

Ep #4: U.S. Immigration Law vs. the Law of God's Kingdom

gospel in the world. At the same time, our actions must be informed by knowledge. Educate yourself about immigration issues, the laws, the policies, and the human stories. And reflect on how scripture calls us to respond. Let your faith guide your understanding and let your understanding fuel faithful and loving action. Every small step, whether it's volunteering, mentoring, advocating, or simply listening, is part of God's work of mercy in this world. As Christians, we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus, bringing hope, dignity, and love to those who need it most. So go forward with courage, compassion, and commitment, knowing that your faithful actions, guided by God's word, makes a real difference.

Ashley: And if this episode resonated with you today, we encourage you to share it with someone who may be struggling to reconcile their faith with their views on immigration. Take your small action this week. Remember, every act of kindness, advocacy, and hospitality is part of a larger story, the story of God's kingdom breaking into our world. Let's be faithful to play our part in that story. Thank you for listening to Hope in Action, navigating immigration with faith and care. See you next time.