

Ep #11: Serving Immigrants Together Across Faith Lines



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With Your Hosts

Tracie L. Morgan & Ashley Glimasinski

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

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Ashley: And that brings us back to the goal of this episode. Because if the goal is conversion, then every interaction becomes transactional. But if the goal is love, welcome and justice, then everything shifts.

Tracie: And it shifts in the best way. The goal isn't agreement here. It's not sameness. The goal is to reflect Christ through hospitality, dignity, and care. And that's not a compromise. That is true faithfulness.

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: Welcome back to Hope in Action, the podcast where we talk about what it looks like to live out our faith in real, complicated, and human ways, especially in the work of welcome. Today, we're asking a question that a lot of Christians feel, but don't always say out loud. What does it look like to live out our Christian calling while walking alongside people of other faiths, not to convert them, not to debate theology, but simply to love them?

Tracie: And that question can stir up a lot of emotions. For some people, it brings curiosity and for others, maybe discomfort. And for many Christians, if we're honest, there's fear underneath it. Fear of doing something wrong, fear of compromising faith, or fear of stepping into spaces that feel unfamiliar or even intimidating.

Ashley: Especially because immigration and refugee work puts us into interfaith spaces all the time: mosques, cultural centers, community meetings, and interfaith coalitions, and not just as visitors, but as partners.

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So today, we want to be really clear about what this episode is and what it's not.

Tracie: Yes. And so this is not an episode about theology debates. It's not about apologetics, and it's definitely not about who's right. This is an episode about stories, about humility, and about curiosity. It's also about collaboration and what happens when Christians choose presence over fear.

Ashley: So this matters because in immigration work, interfaith engagement isn't theoretical, it's everyday practice. That's one of my favorite words from seminary when it's praxis. It's not just in your head and theoretical, it's actually the way that you're living out your faith. So we don't just serve people from different countries, we serve people shaped by different religions, traditions, and sacred practices. That means working alongside Muslim leaders, partnering with Hindu and Buddhist community organizations, sitting at tables where not everyone shares the same beliefs, but everyone shares a commitment to human dignity.

Tracie: What we're also seeing right now is a shift: more interfaith coalitions, more shared public witness, increased moral clarity across religious lines. There is power in numbers and there is power when multiple faith traditions speak with one voice. That kind of religious authority registers with those in power. So if this space feels unfamiliar, I get it, and it's not because faith is being lost, it's because I believe faith is being mobilized. But still, you might be wondering, is it okay for me to be here? What if I say the wrong thing? What if my faith does feel challenged?

Ashley: Oh, I get that so much, Tracie. And if you've ever felt that tension, I want to say this clearly. That discomfort doesn't mean you lack faith. It just means you're human. This episode is about how we move through that discomfort, not away from people. Because following Jesus has always meant crossing boundaries.

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Tracie: Yes. And so, there's a question that often comes up, sometimes gently, sometimes more pointedly, when people hear us talk about interfaith work. It's this, if you're Christians, why aren't you trying to convert people?

Ashley: Yes. I was once asked how many souls has your ministry saved? And questions like these come wrapped in sincere concern because people will quote scripture. They'll mention the great commission and they'll say, aren't we supposed to be fishers of men? And I want to say first that yes, that question does matter. The question that I was asked does matter and it deserves an honest answer and not a defensive one.

Tracie: Absolutely, Ashley. But because we are Christians, our faith does matter deeply to us. We're not neutral about Jesus, and so this isn't about embarrassment or dilution.

Ashley: Right. It's about understanding how Jesus calls us to live out our faith, especially in vulnerable, cross cultural spaces like immigration work. And here's the distinction that's been really important for me. There's a difference between bearing witness and seeking conversion.

Tracie: Ooh, that's really good. Tell me more.

Ashley: I would love to. So I think that bearing witness is about how we live. It's about showing up with integrity, humility, compassion, and consistency, whether or not someone ever believes what we believe. So when that person asked how many people the ministry had saved, I gently told them that's not the initial point of this ministry. Yes, we want people to know Jesus, but first we want to meet them where they are. So I think that seeking conversion, especially in power imbalanced places, like when we're helping refugees who are new to our country, that can easily become transactional. And immigration work is full of those power imbalances.

Tracie: That's so true. And Ashley, what an important point. When someone is navigating asylum, legal status, housing, food, safety, they are

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vulnerable. And if we attach faith outcomes to our care, even unintentionally, it's going to change the relationship.

Ashley: Exactly. And that's when love stops being freely given. Help starts to feel conditional, and the gospel, which is supposed to be good news, can start to feel like pressure. That's not the kind of fishing that Jesus modeled.

Tracie: Yes. When Jesus said, follow me and I will make you fishers of men, he wasn't talking about coercion. He was talking about invitation. People followed Jesus because they saw how he loved, how he healed, and how he dignified other people that were ignored.

Ashley: And Jesus never leveraged someone's vulnerability to force belief. He healed people who never followed him. He fed people who didn't understand him, and he loved people who walked away. And something I think about often is that we don't know how those encounters affected people in the long term. The Bible gives us just a snapshot of those stories, and sometimes we do hear that they came to follow Jesus or they left their homes and proclaimed the good news. But for so many people, we don't know if their hearts changed later. And I wonder about those stories.

Tracie: And I think what's important here is we're not trying to actively convert people in interfaith spaces. What we're really saying is we trust the Holy Spirit to do only what the Holy Spirit can do.

Ashley: That's right. It's not up to us. And thank God for that. Because our role is not to manage outcomes. Our role is to be faithful in presence, to love without agenda, and to serve without strings. We want to walk alongside people, not steer them.

Tracie: And I've actually found that this kind of posture creates more honest spiritual conversations, not fewer. When people know you're not trying to change them, they're a lot more likely to ask real questions.

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Ashley: That's right. Because trust opens doors that pressure never will. And here's the piece I want listeners to hear clearly. Choosing not to pursue conversion in these spaces is not a lack of conviction. It's a commitment to dignity.

Tracie: It's saying you are not a project. You are a person, a neighbor, someone made in God's image.

Ashley: And when Christians live that way, when we embody patience, humility, generosity, and respect, we are fishing. We're just doing the way Jesus did with open hands and not hooks.

So we'd like to move this episode into a time of sharing some stories of when we entered our neighbors sacred spaces or when we had these interfaith encounters that changed us. And I remember there was one time, we talked about bearing witness instead of seeking conversion just a little bit ago. And I remember a Muslim Afghan man whose family I helped resettle with Welcome House. And he knew that I was a Christian. I knew that he was a Muslim. He knew that the ministry that was helping his family was Christian, but we never explicitly talked about faith. But I just got to know their family day after day, visiting them, helping them with things.

And after a few weeks of just spending time with his family, he told me through a translation app because he didn't speak English, his daughter did. But he said, "If you have a Bible in Dari," which was his language, "I will read it." So I was able to find that Bible for him, obviously. But I just think like some people say, "Well, you haven't told them about Jesus. You haven't mentioned, you know, what he should be believing or questioned his faith. So how could he ever know?"

He knew because he was watching me live my faith. And he noticed that the Christians in the community were coming around him and his family and helping them in ways that he had never seen before. "Why would you

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help me?" So I think that living out your faith speaks to those who have never seen this kind of Christian love before.

And I think also at Welcome House too, we partnered with the local Islamic Association when we did have Muslim families arrive, particularly families from Afghanistan. And that was so helpful to have that connection because they could say, "All right, we'll provide the groceries." And they would bring Halal chicken, which was so important for our families to have that something that they knew they could trust that they could eat this according to their faith. And the Islamic Association would bring so many different kinds of foods and they would bring things for the family that they recognized. We've talked about that in a previous episode, how important it is to get to a new place and to recognize the ingredients that are on your counter when you get to the kitchen.

So having that partnership with the Islamic Association was so important for us. And long term, we never said, "All right, you know, to become partners, we have to agree on the same things and have the same faith." But we recognized we shared a common humanity and we actually did share a lot in our faiths. That's something that I also realized recently. I don't know if our listeners have heard about the Walk for Peace. It's a group of Buddhist monks who are walking from Texas to DC. And their goal in this walk is just to share peace and loving kindness and compassion and to promote that sense of peace in our country.

And I went to their gathering. I saw them walk as they came through my city. And I have to say, I did feel the peace in their presence. I felt the peace that they practiced. Some people might say, "Well, you can't feel peace from someone of different faith because they're not a Christian." But then I don't know how to tell you what I felt when I was with them. And I think I recognized that we have different faiths, but we have so much in common.

We want to see the world at peace. We find peace within ourselves. We have compassion for others. I think when we recognize that, we can come

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together as humans and as people who still want the same things for our community. And this is another story that I think I can share as well. When I lived in Japan, I was taking flute lessons, traditional Japanese flute called the Shakuhachi. It's made out of bamboo. But my teacher was a monk, and so I went to his house, which was attached to the Buddhist temple that he was the head monk of. And I had never been in a Buddhist temple before. It was a new experience for me. And so sometimes after class, he was still seeing other students, but I would go into the temple part of the house and I would just look around. I was really curious to see like, oh, what is this? And, you know, here I am and there's like graves that are in the house. And I think, I think these are graves. Like my Japanese kanji was kind of limited.

But one day a monk saw me kind of poking around and he wasn't like, "What are you doing here? You don't know what's going on" or "You're not in the right place." But he asked, "Can I help you?" And I had so many questions. I had so many questions for what I had seen. And rather than be angry, he gently explained and answered my questions. And I think being appreciated for my curiosity in that moment and being not just told off for being curious, but someone meeting me in that space helped me have a better understanding of the Buddhist faith and also the kindness that my teacher had too. Every week he just wanted to talk in English. He wanted to practice English and he never said, "You must be Buddhist to come into this temple or to take lessons." But he was kind in his reactions to me as well.

Tracie: Ashley, those are such great stories, especially your first one. And I think I'm going to have the song, "They'll Know That We Are Christians by Our Love" stuck in my head all day. And that's not a bad thing. I'll take it. But thank you for sharing those and the vulnerability and just your willingness to put yourself in those situations that were required, but really maybe didn't feel comfortable in the moment. So I'm just grateful for you and your testimony there.

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For me, my interfaith moments really haven't come through necessarily work, which might be surprising, but they've come through friendships and moments of celebration. And I think I'm a little bit proud of that because it's shown me that I've been able to build relationships and really important friendships outside of my traditional comfort zone, I would say.

I want to talk first about a wedding. And this was probably about, gosh, by this point, 22, 25 years ago. And it was my best friend from college. We had been roommates for a while. Her family had come to the United States in the early '90s as refugees from Ukraine, and she's Jewish. And so it wasn't just a Jewish wedding, but we also had this ceremony that was really shaped by her family's immigrant experience. There was Russian, there was Ukrainian. Her husband was, he's from the Republic of Georgia. So throw that in, and then Hebrew. And oh my gosh, I didn't know up from down.

But I was so thankful because her sister, my friend's sister, she helped me navigate that space and say, "This is where you should sit. This is what you should do." And that helped me feel more at ease. It was still quite an experience, and I will always remember the copious amounts of blue eyeshadow and caviar on the tables. I think that was a big takeaway for me. But being there as an observer and being there for someone that I loved was just so important to me and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Fast forward, now I live in Georgia, the state, not the Republic, and I was invited to a Hindu wedding at the largest Hindu temple in Georgia. And I do mean the largest and the most beautiful. It was absolutely breathtaking. And I was really grateful that the couple had the foresight to realize that a lot of their guests may not be familiar with their traditions, may never have been to that temple before. So they actually arranged for tours of the temple after their ceremony. And I took advantage of that. I wanted to see

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because who knows when I'm going to be back again. And I think just wanting to take advantage of that moment was good.

The ceremony itself though, was incredible. There was henna. There was this amazing food. And there were horses. The groom came in on a horse and everything was just so vibrant and colorful and loud and alive in a way that I wasn't used to. And there were moments of prayer woven throughout the ceremony and I remember pausing, wondering, "What do I do now? Do I bow my head? Do I just look off in the distance?"

I prayed, not to Hindu gods obviously, but to God. And I use those moments to ask for blessings over the couple for their joy, their faithfulness, and for a good life together. So I wasn't participating in something that wasn't mine, but I was honoring what was mine, quietly and respectfully, I think, in that space.

And then the last story I want to share is a couple of years ago, I went to an engagement party for one of my Afghan interpreters who had become a dear friend. There were about 200 people in the room and I was maybe one of five white people there. I remember walking in and a couple at the door asked me, "Are you sure you're in the right place?" I nervously smiled and said the name of my friend and they're like, "Oh yes, of course, yes, welcome." And that immediately gave me a navigator for the night, a friend to walk me through just like at that wedding 25 years ago.

And that whole night, I was really struck by the kindness of everybody there. People looked out for me. They checked in. They explained what was happening in the celebration, maybe why the couple had changed outfits. They walked me through the food, what things were called, what was spicy, what was traditional, and what had special meaning. I was clearly an outsider. And instead of making me feel exposed, they made me feel cared for. And what stayed with me from that experience was just how excited people were to share.

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Sharing culture is an act of generosity and they could tell that I was open to learning. And I was just there, wanting to learn and wanting to be guided. So I think about these stories and that there are two common elements here. I had a relationship with those celebrating. I was invited. They wanted me there and I showed up for them. I also very much felt out of place and relied on the people around me, those seated next to me, the ushers who greeted me. I needed that help to navigate the ropes. I was very honest in my lack of understanding, but I think they also knew that I wanted to fit in as best as I could.

Ashley: Tracie, those stories are beautiful and I think they just speak so much, one to the heart that you have for the immigrant community and for those in your life who you've gotten to know. Like, no wonder they invited you because you're such an amazing person also. But I think I love the stories about how it shows hospitality and humility and community all in those spaces together. So, and I think about these stories and like I'm sure all the ones that we didn't have time to share as well. I keep coming back to how much they've shaped my instincts, and I'm sure yours as well, especially around fear and discomfort. Rather than be scared, rather than be, you know, unsure of how to interact, I think it's changed our perspectives.

Tracie: Oh, it's so true. And this fear, this uncertainty, it shows up so quickly. And usually it's pretty quietly. Like, it's not "I'm afraid," it's more like, "I don't want to mess this up. I don't want to be an embarrassment to my friend. I don't know enough to be here" or "This just feels risky."

Ashley: It's so true. I was so afraid of making mistakes sometimes. And then I had to realize making mistakes is okay. It's okay.

Tracie: So I think one of the biggest shifts for me has been choosing curiosity instead of fear. Fear says, "I don't understand this, so I'll just stay back over here and I won't engage," or, you know, you see it on TV like, "Oh, that looks, I could never be a part of that." And then you get invited

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and you're like, "Oh, could I? I don't know." So curiosity says, "I don't understand this. How can I learn?" And like you, you had someone to help you learn. I had people help me learn, looking for those places and just being open to curiosity, being open to learning something new.

Ashley: Oh gosh, yes. Curiosity is so powerful in these spaces.

Tracie: I think in part because it communicates respect. When we show up asking questions instead of making assumptions, people feel that difference. They know when they're being studied versus when they're being honored.

Ashley: That's so true. And another big lesson for me has been presence over certainty. I used to feel like I needed to know everything before stepping into interfaith spaces, like what I believed, how I could respond if my beliefs were questioned, what their beliefs were, how I could maybe point their beliefs to my faith, the culture, how to interact respectfully. But what I've learned through all my experiences is that people don't need your certainty. They just need you to be present.

Tracie: Yes, that is so true. And honestly, certainty can sometimes get in the way of love. I think about the invites to those weddings. If I hadn't shown up because I felt uncertain, I could have destroyed those friendships that were so near and dear to me. And when we're overly focused on being right, we're often less available to being kind, attentive, just human.

Ashley: Yeah. And that connects us to compassion over comfort, because these experiences are rarely comfortable. They will stretch us, usually culturally, spiritually, and emotionally.

Tracie: And sometimes also with your taste buds. But that stretching is actually really familiar territory for us Christians. Following Jesus has always required leaving what's familiar to love people well. Comfort was never the metric for faithfulness.

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Ashley: That's right. I think about the disciples when Jesus said, "Follow me." That was probably not comfortable to leave their homes and their families and their careers. So God stretched them just like he stretches us through these interfaith interactions. And like I said before, when I heard from the Buddhist monks is that something I've learned from these interfaith interactions is that we as Christians have so much more in common with other faiths than we realize. And I think that leads to the biggest takeaway for me, is that interfaith partnership isn't a threat to Christian identity. It's an invitation. An invitation to practice hospitality the way Jesus did without fear, without control, and without needing sameness.

So let's get really practical for a moment. When Christians ask, "Okay, but how do I do this well? I'm scared. Where do I even start?"

Tracie: So for me, I almost always start with humility. Enter these spaces assuming you have something to learn, not something to prove. You don't need to be an expert in someone else's faith. You need to be a respectful guest.

Ashley: And that word guest is so important because when you're a guest, you pay attention, you follow cues, you don't center yourself, and you're not in a place of power where you are in control. This can be really uncomfortable for those of us who like to know what's going on and what's going to happen next. But it's also important to experience being the guest and being in that place of not knowing.

Tracie: As uncomfortable as it is, it's true. Being a good guest also means asking honest questions. Not like gotcha questions. You're not wanting to debate someone. You're just genuinely curious. Questions like, "Is there anything I should know before we enter your sacred space?" Like, "Do I need to cover my shoulders, my ankles? What's appropriate here? What would be respectful? How can I show up well to this event?"

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Ashley: That's right. And people are usually really generous when they realize you're asking from a place of respect. Like you said, Tracie, everyone was so excited to help you navigate those events and to be present in that place.

Another big one for me has been honoring sacred space. Like you said, that might mean covering your head. It might mean removing your shoes, observing quietly instead of participating. You mentioned you didn't know what to do during the Hindu prayer, and I've been in places like that too. I can gently bow my head. I can show respect, even if I'm not praying to the god that the audience is praying to, I can still pray to my God in that moment.

Tracie: Absolutely. And it's so important here because doing that is not a compromise of your faith. It is communicating reverence, but it's not communicating agreement. And I think there's a really big difference there.

Ashley: I think that is important. And I also think this next point is also huge, knowing your own faith well enough that you don't need to defend it.

Tracie: Yes, so true. A grounded faith isn't reactive. If your faith feels constantly under threat, every difference is going to feel dangerous. But when your faith is rooted, you can stand calmly in difference without panicking.

Ashley: And that brings us back to the goal of this episode. Because if the goal is conversion, then every interaction becomes transactional. But if the goal is love, welcome, and justice, then everything shifts.

Tracie: And it shifts in the best way. The goal isn't agreement here. It's not sameness. The goal is to reflect Christ through hospitality, dignity, and care. And that's not a compromise. That is true faithfulness.

Ashley: So before we wrap up, we want to end with something really practical, because for a lot of people listening, the tension shows up in your

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everyday conversations, not on online debates and not theology classes, but casual comments at church or small group or over coffee.

Tracie: It's true. Sometimes we, you know, talk about our experiences with interfaith partners and someone might ask since surely, well, it can be with concern. Well, why are you as a Christian partnering with people of other religions? Isn't that confusing? Or actually, I think that could be wrong.

Ashley: Yeah, I've heard that before. And so that question can put people, and it puts me at least, on the defensive really fast. You feel like you need to explain everything, your theology, scripture, and strategy, why you're in this partnership all at once.

Tracie: And that's why these conversations go sideways. So let's slow it down. You don't need a speech. You don't need to win an argument, but you do need a grounded, honest response.

Ashley: One response that I found helpful sounds something like this. It's that Jesus taught us to love our neighbor and immigration work puts us next to neighbors of many faiths. Partnering doesn't mean agreeing, but it does mean showing up in love.

Tracie: That's a great response, Ashley. What I really like about that is that it's calm. It doesn't attack. It doesn't overexplain. It doesn't apologize. It just names your values.

Ashley: Exactly. And if the person wants to keep talking, that's great. Maybe you can continue that conversation in love. But if they don't, then that sentence is enough.

Tracie: And sometimes people will follow up with something like, "But don't you worry, people will get confused about what Christians believe?"

Ashley: Yeah, that one comes up a lot.

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Tracie: It sure does. My response to something like this is usually, "Well, I actually think loving people well clarifies what Christians believe more than words ever could."

Ashley: That's so good, Tracie. And especially because confusion usually doesn't come from the kindness Christians show, it usually comes from hypocrisy.

Tracie: Ding, ding, ding. So when Christians show up with humility, respect, and consistency, people aren't confused. They're often surprised and in a very good way.

Ashley: And that leads into our small action for the week, because this work doesn't start with big interfaith panels or formal partnerships. Though you may have those. For most of us, though, it starts really small.

Tracie: Really, really small, like a baby step. One tiny step into curiosity, not talking about mastering another faith, but really just an opportunity to stretch your heart.

Ashley: Yeah, that could look like visiting a refugee run business in your community, not to ask questions and not to explain yourself, but just to be present.

Tracie: It could also be something like learning about a local interfaith initiative. You don't have to join it. You just want to see who's already doing the work.

Ashley: Or praying something simple like, "God, help me enter unfamiliar spaces with humility and curiosity instead of fear."

Tracie: And because I'm a nerd, I like to read. And so I would recommend reading a short article about hospitality in another faith tradition, not to compare or to critique, but just to understand.

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Ashley: Because curiosity is a spiritual discipline.

Tracie: And hospitality is one of the clearest ways our faith becomes visible.

Ashley: So in closing, walking with people of other faiths doesn't weaken our Christianity. It refines it. It strips away fear. It deepens compassion. And it reminds us that love is not fragile.

Tracie: Thank you for walking with us today. If this episode stirred curiosity, discomfort, or hope, or all of them together, we would love to hear from you. Until next time though, keep choosing presence over comfort. This is Hope in Action. Thank you for joining us.

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