*Illegal Immigration*

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*Three Steps to Solve Immigration the Jesus Way* My father was an immigrant who came here from Poland as a child. We lived a poor life with no car, no vacations and my dad worked as a janitor and my disabled mother scrubbed floors on her knees three days a week. I start here because I have real compassion for immigrants and support immigration - *legal* immigration.

For those harboring images of Jesus as a meek and mild, religious figure with naked baby cherubs encircling His frisbee-haloed head, the following biblical event may be challenging to consider. It happened as parents brought their kids to Jesus so He could "touch and bless them" (Mk. 10:13), but His disciples resented the intrusion.

"When Jesus saw this, He became furious and told them, 'Let the little children come to me..." (Matt. 10:14 ISV). Other translations say He was "moved with indignation" or "became indignant."

Why the intense display of emotion?

The old classic hymn makes it plain. "Jesus loves the little children...all the children of the world. Be they yellow, black or white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world."

After touching them as a token of affirmation and blessing (today He'd most likely give them a fist-bump and a high-five!), Jesus did what He always did after ministering to children – released them back to dad and mom.

Though the case could be made that these little ones would certainly fare better leaving parental ties to enjoy a better way of life by following the One who could heal any sickness, feed multitudes and provide extraordinary instruction, Jesus Christ modeled a maxim throughout His ministry: Express compassion. Honor authority.

A similar standard of conduct relevant to us today would be, “Demonstrate love. Uphold law.”

In light of the continuing illegal immigration crisis and humanitarian crisis (exacerbated by the not long ago unprecedented surge of over 60,000 children from Central America crossing our border without parental oversight), we'd do well to follow the method of the Master before this steady flood becomes an overwhelming tsunami.

Many well-intentioned but I believe misdirected individuals (I respectfully include here presidents and presidential candidates, influential politicians and news commentators) seem to believe the compassionate solution to the escalating border crisis is to extend our arms and declare, "Ya'all come in!" Guilt is projected on those who sincerely disagree and dare to say, "You're missing it and not handling this the way Jesus would." Who's right?

*W. W. J. D.?* Over four decades ago, I worked at the AFL-CIO headquarters across the street from the White House in Washington, DC. My job was in the Community Relations Department helping union members and their families with humanitarian needs outside of the union contract. Early on I discovered there were requirements and limitations to assistance being offered.

When I transitioned to vocational ministry, where I've served people's needs for over 50 years, I read an influential book from 1896, *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?"* by Charles Sheldon. It's the story of a pastor challenging his church members to spend one full year asking the question "What would Jesus do?" before making any decision.

This classic reinforced what I learned in my union position and in my study of the Gospels: Jesus did not try to meet every need in every place at every time. Need does not necessarily constitute ministry! Like Him, we need to be discerning plus determine available resources in dealing with peoples’ legitimate needs.

 *"Multitudes came together to hear and be healed by Jesus of their infirmities but he withdrew to a lonely place and prayed." (Lk.5:15–16).*

If we operate out of sentimentality, Jesus appears to be uncaring and inconsiderate, doesn't He?

In Mathew 22:11-14 Jesus told a parable of a man desiring entrance to an event but refused entrance because of not honoring the requirements.

In Matthew 25:1-13 He told of 10 young maidens desiring to gain entrance to a special occasion and yet five were turned away and called "foolish" because they did not fulfill the requirements.

That same chapter cites individuals being given different "talents" but one who failed to do what he was told was called "lazy," had the gift taken away and was barred from the estate.

In 2 Cor. 8:12 we have the record of the early Christian community being reminded that giving to the needy in Jerusalem was "according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have." In other words, there are times we need to be realistic regarding our resources.

*Boundaries and Borders* When it comes to immigration policy, there are many influential leaders whose philosophy is to have "open borders," removing limitations and giving access to all desiring to come in.

Some cite our motto "E pluribus unum" (Out of many, one) and try to strike a sympathetic cord in saying "Don't make it harder for the best and the brightest to come here!"

Those who differ with this approach say that they want America open to those who want to come but let's do it the proper way, plus be honest that we are mainly bringing the poor, illiterate, sick and uneducated as well as criminals and potential terrorists (what about ISIS infiltration and our security?) - underscoring why it has to be done in a responsible and orderly way. Eighty to ninety percent come to us from Third World countries and the facts show their higher rates of crime, incarceration, spousal abuse, disease, child abuse, drug abuse, dropouts, illiteracy and obesity. Children are more involved in gangs and they consume record levels of taxpayer-funded social service benefits.

“But it’s cheap labor isn’t it?!” Yes, but as we’ll see, they must do it the right way and not be given illegal entry and entitlements to “pad” the base of a political party, whose strategy is to bring in 30 million new voters! This is serious.

While I pray for certain politicians every single day (for nearly 50 years I've served as a board member with Intercessors for America promoting prayer and fasting for our nation), I strongly yet respectfully disagree with many politicians’ handling of this entire crisis over the years.

Former Governor Rick Perry of Texas stated that he explicitly warned Barack Obama in a letter regarding our southern border’s chaotic situation. He pled for 1000 National Guardsmen to secure the border but to no avail and $500 million to cover the tax money Texans spent because of Obama's inaction. His failure to act plus his rhetoric communicated to Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala that America is wide open to illegal immigrants, especially children, freely coming and not having to worry about deportation. California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein said, "... my staff learned that many of the children were smuggled across the border after hearing radio ads promising they would not be deported."

The word is out on the street that you can come to America, derive all the benefits and not be sent back. The Breitbart Report revealed that in 2013, 98% of minors who came were allowed to stay (DHS-ICE figures).

People across the United States from both parties are asking if this was a man-made crisis to garner votes and change Texas into a Democratic state? Remember Obama’s former chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel's philosophy:

 *"You never want a serious crisis to go to waste... It's an opportunity to do things that you think you could not do before."*

Recall Obama's initial pledge to *"fundamentally transform the United States of America?"*

Barack Obama was flanked on both sides by influential people echoing his thinking. Senator Nancy Pelosi of California embraced the idea of open borders without restraints. Democratic columnist and commentator, Kirsten Powers, states emphatically that she supports open borders and believes we must stop putting limitations and boundaries on people wanting to come here.

**Here's the deal:** Amidst all the turmoil and confusion, it's time to embrace scriptural counsel from the Good Shepherd who referred to himself as the "Gate" stating, *"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of the sheepfold rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber" (Jn. 10:1).*

*Three Steps to Solve the Crisis* As we proceed, let's remember that immigration is a very volatile social justice issue. Character is revealed when we listen respectfully to others with whom we disagree. We must choose to remain civil in the midst of spirited discussion. If we resort to name calling and arrogant attitudes, we'll experience the inevitable. *"If you bite and devour one another, take heed lest you are consumed by one another" (Gal. 5:15).*

 **1.** Extend genuine love to all immigrants.

 God commands us to love our neighbor as a directive not an elective. Love is not based on emotion or sentiment but an unselfish choice for the greatest good of another person. As the bumper sticker says, "Love is a verb."

 God directs us to "help the weak and be patient with everyone" (1 Thess. 4:13) plus care for the poor, widow and orphan (Jam. 1:27-8; Gal. 2:14).

 In the Old Testament, immigrants were to be granted acceptance (Lev. 19:33-4; Ex. 22:21); given opportunities to collect food (Lev. 19: 9-10); and were to be treated justly (Lev. 1:16). This was not some blanket entitlement, as God required the immigrant to keep the laws of the land just like the native people (Ex. 12:48-9: Ex. 23:12).

 **2.** Respect realistic limits.

 Just as boundaries need to be determined and adhered to on the personal level, so too does this apply on the national level. Disregarding this principle brings disastrous results.

 Idealism says, "Open the gates and let everybody in!" Realism says, "Assess our resources and capabilities to responsibly determine what we can do at this particular time."

 *"Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup, you have made my life secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places, surely, I have a delightful inheritance" (Ps. 16:5-6).*

 Individuals who discipline themselves to honor their God-given assignment and boundaries find security, a pleasant life and a delightful inheritance. This is why the apostle Paul wisely told a church, "We however will not boast beyond proper limits but will confine our boasting to the spheres of service God himself has assigned us, a sphere that also includes you" (2 Cor. 10:13-14).

 If a lifeboat has a sign stating "Limit of 12", it may appear compassionate to try and rescue 25 but the result can be the drowning of everyone!

 Years ago, one of Christianity's most gifted musicians, Keith Green, tragically decided to risk overloading a plane with additional passengers including two of his family. The plane began its ascent but quickly began a decent that brought a devastating crash, killing all on board.

 Headlines recently stated that it now takes approximately $130,000 yearly for a family of four to fulfill the American Dream. Assessing their current station in life, a couple decides that two, three or maybe four children are probably the limit for them. Is it right for someone to chide this couple for not being like the Duggar family with 19 children?

 Today America faces $31 trillion in debt. Cities are going bankrupt or on the precipice of insolvency. The welfare system is exploding. We are stretched to the max in our emergency rooms, schools, healthcare and social service agencies.

 The *New York Times* said that we added 300,000 more illegal immigrants in one 3- month period in 2014! At present, the floodtide shows no signs of receding.

 Isn't it common sense that we appeal to those who may be well intentioned but could be taking us on the path to destruction if we are not responsible in setting realistic limits for immigration before it's too late?

 **3.** Obey the government and its laws.

 This point is so plainly simple yet blatantly disregarded; it's embarrassing that it has to be stated!

 God tells us, *"If you are willing (consent in your wills) and obedient (carry out the action) you shall eat the good of the land (reap abundant blessings)” (Is. 1:19).* One result of obedience is that immigrants shall not devour a nation's crops (see v. 7). Sadly, hasn't this been happening?

 It is unmistakable that the divine directive is for citizens to obey the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). The one exception is if the government forces us to violate a law of God (Acts 5:29). Why is this so difficult for many American citizens and illegal immigrants to grasp? When people argue, “We need to help bring people out of the shadows,” there is a reason they’re in the shadows in the first place! Scores broke the law and are hiding. Jesus said, *“Everyone who does evil, hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” (Jn .3:20)*

 In our nation, when citizens sincerely believe that a law is unfair and should be changed, we have the recourse of doing it! Until such time, existing laws need to be obeyed or the result is lawlessness, which we are seeing increasingly in our country.

 For the millions of illegal immigrants presently in the United States, a bipartisan team of public servants needs to humbly come together to hammer out a pathway to citizenship that does not compromise existing laws or make a mockery of their predecessors who achieved their citizenship the proper way.

Be honest, what is your reaction when you have stood in line for 20–30 minutes for a ticket or restaurant seat and someone selfishly barges in line? "Hey! Hey! Excuse me, you need to wait in line like the rest of us!"

This is not an insurmountable task. Local post offices can be used for registration. Illegal immigrants can be told they have 30 days to comply, receive help in the 8-step process for citizenship, plus secure their identification card (green card) attesting to their permanent residence. Sponsors can be invited to come forth and serve as a "big-brother" or "big-sister" supporting our immigrant friends who are understandably insecure and apprehensive. And yes, failure to comply would result in fines and/or possible jail time to impress upon individuals the seriousness of getting this done once and for all. Only then can we as the American family begin to put this unfortunate chapter behind us to find a brighter future.

"But Larry, this would probably cost money. Can we afford it?"

Barack Obama not long ago asked for $3.7 billion to basically alleviate the humanitarian crisis on our southern border (which should never have happened in the first place!). Only 1.8% of this sum was suggested for bolstering border security which is critical to resolving this crisis and avoiding similar crises like this in the future.

Why don't we direct a larger amount to support the immediate training of qualified Border Patrol agents; deploy at least a 1,00 National Guard troops to the southern border and utilize daily drone flights along the border to identify those involved in human trafficking and drug cartels.

We must, I say it again, we must rebuild and extend the long overdue border fence. Yes, walls and fences do work or why else do we have them around the White House? Israel and China have relied on them for decades and centuries.

The Wall of China is 13,000 miles long, was built centuries before Christ, and it works for them! When elitists who live in gated communities tell us “Fences don’t work!” I ask, then why do they have them?! As Ann Coulter, author of 10 *New Your Times* bestsellers puts it, “When the bathtub is overflowing, the very first thing you do is: TURN OFF THE WATER. You don’t debate whether to use a rag or a mop...The number one priority is: Shut off the water!”

Finally, allocate generous amounts to compensate the kindhearted citizens who respond to the call for a national sponsorship service corps (N.S.S.C.).

Come on. Let's get going and get this done! Projections for unaccompanied immigrant children are currently 90,000 for one year and 150,000 for the next year! The heinous crime of human trafficking is epidemic. Parentless children warehoused in close-knit conditions are an invitation for abuse of every kind, plus a breeding ground for communicable diseases like Covid, polio, tuberculosis, flu and measles. This public health risk is only exceeded by the national security risk of terrorists and drug cartel members slipping into our nation to link with sleeper cells.

Reckless and lax enforcement of immigration and deportation laws must be stopped. In 2013, I.C.E. (Immigration Customs Enforcement) allegedly released 36,007 convicted criminals awaiting deportation. Over 100 had homicide convictions and others had convictions for kidnapping and sexual assaults. Things are at a critical, “threat level” and social justice - caring for our own families and society at large - demands action now! (For further info read *“Adios, America! The Left’s Plan to Turn our Country Into a Third World Hellhole”* by author and syndicated columnist, Ann Coulter (Regnery Publishing, 2015).

This is a pivotal time and a defining moment in our history. We need a unified response here in America and among our Central American neighbors who need to know that we will severely curtail financial aid if they fail to cooperate. One leader has even called for a boycott of Mexico tourism until they comply.

Jesus loves all the little children of the world. He modeled the maxim of demonstrating love **and** honoring authority.

We've squandered enough time and treasure trying things our way. It's time we humble ourselves and embrace the method of the Master in this area of social justice.