

Confessions of a Compassionate Conservative: 3 Steps to Solve Immigration the Jesus Way

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” (Mark 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—release 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 now exacerbated by the recent 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 our president, 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 42 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 while determining available resources in dealing with people's legitimate needs.

"Multitudes came together to hear and be healed by Jesus of their infirmities, but he withdrew to a lonely place and prayed" (Luke 5:15–16). If we operate out of sentimentality, Jesus appears to be uncaring and inconsiderate, doesn't he?

In Matthew 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 Corinthians 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.

Our president will 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 his approach say that they want America open to those who are want to come, but let's do it the proper way, while being honest that we are mainly bringing the poor, illiterate, sick and uneducated as well as criminals and potential terrorists, underscoring why it has to be done in a responsible and orderly way.

While I pray for President Obama every single day (for 38 years I've served as a board member at Intercessors for America promoting prayer and fasting for our nation), I strongly yet respectfully disagree with his handling of this entire crisis over the years.

Gov. Rick Perry of Texas stated that he explicitly warned Barack Obama in a 2009 letter regarding this now chaotic situation. He pleaded for 1,000 National Guardsmen to secure the border but to no avail. Now he's asking for \$500 million to cover the tax money Texans have spent because of President Obama's inaction.

The President's failure to act plus his rhetoric has communicated to Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala that America is wide open to immigrants, especially children, freely coming and not having to worry about deportation. California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein said recently, "... 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 of America from both parties are asking if this was a man-made crisis to garner votes and change Texas into a Democratic state? Remember the President'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 President Obama's pledge to "fundamentally transform the United States of America?"

Barack Obama is flanked on both sides by influential people echoing his current thinking. Sen. Nancy Pelosi of California embraces 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" (John 10:1).

3 Steps to Solve the Crisis

As we proceed, let's remember that immigration is a very volatile 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 (James 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 -14).

If a lifeboat has a sign stating “Limit of 12,” it may appear compassionate to try to 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 plus two of his family. The plane began its ascent but quickly began a decent that brought a devastating crash killing all on board.

Headlines last week 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 Duggard family with 19 children?

Today America faces over \$17 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* on the July 4th weekend said that we have added 300,000 more illegal immigrants since April 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 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?

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 of America, a bipartisan team of public servants need 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?”

Our President has recently 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 is 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 1,000 National Guard troops to the southern border; utilize daily drone flights along the border to identify those involved in human trafficking and drug cartels; 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.). Finally, allocate generous amounts to compensate the kindhearted citizens who respond to the call for a national sponsorship service corps (.).

Come on. Let's get going and get this done! Projections for unaccompanied immigrant children are currently 90,000 for this year and 150,000 for 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 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.

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 partners 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.