

When It Comes to This Explosive Issue, Remember These 3 Biblical Principles

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) is an executive order issued by President Obama in 2012 that grants temporary legal status to those brought to the US as children. According to government figures, 787,580 people (known as “Dreamers”) have been approved for the program.

They have been able to obtain driver’s licenses, enroll in college and secure jobs. They also pay income taxes. The program doesn’t give them a path to become U.S. citizens or even legal permanent residents. But they can apply to defer deportation and legally reside in the U.S. for two years. Then they can apply for renewal. Nearly 800,000 renewals have been approved since the program began.

On Tuesday, the Trump administration announced it would rescind the program in six months unless Congress and the president enact a law reviving it. The president believes that such legislation should originate with Congress, not the White House. Officials will no longer accept new applicants to the program, but protections for current DACA recipients remain in effect.

Two-thirds of American evangelicals favor giving work permits to Dreamers, while only 22 percent oppose such permits. Fifty-seven percent of evangelicals believe DACA recipients should be allowed to become citizens; 15 percent believe they should be allowed to become legal residents but not citizens; and 19 percent believe they should be deported.

How should we think biblically about this divisive issue? Three principles in Scripture are relative to the debate.

One: We should care for immigrants.

Scripture is clear: “You must neither wrong a foreigner nor oppress him, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 22:21). Should our immigrants not receive compassion and support, especially if they are children brought into our country through no decision of their own?

Two: We should uphold the rule of law.

Scripture teaches, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1). Border security is a biblical priority (Prov. 22:28, 23:10; Deut. 32:8). While the Dreamers did not choose to come to America illegally, their parents made this decision for them. Does granting them citizenship reward the illegal actions of their parents?

Three: Children are not to be punished for the sins of their parents.

Ezekiel 18:20 states, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the punishment of the iniquity of the father.” Is it fair for us to deport the Dreamers for breaking immigration laws they did not choose to violate?

You can see why this is such a challenging dilemma. We should not reward the illegal actions of the parents of Dreamers, but we should not punish children for their parents’ acts.

A middle approach relevant to this debate was proposed by President George W. Bush in 2004. He specified that illegal immigrants would pay a fee to enter “temporary worker status.” Such a person could apply for citizenship but would be placed in line behind those who have already begun this process. Such a compromise could serve both Dreamers and the rule of law.

Of course, our ultimate biblical responsibility to Dreamers is to share God’s dream with them. Our Father “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim.

2:4, ESV). No matter how people come to America, he wants them to come to Christ. {eoa}

This article originally appeared on The Denison Forum.