

IMMERSE

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Does Jesus love Americans more than Mexicans?

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Illegal immigration. The Bible has something to say about this issue. Don't believe me? Check out the following verses:

Exodus 22:21, 23:9

Leviticus 19:33

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

Deuteronomy 27:19

Psalms 146:7-9

Proverbs 31:8-9

Unfortunately, it seems as if one of the most vocal "go back to wherever you came from" voices is coming from the Christian community. And that's incredibly sad. We are once again on the wrong side of history (and of Scripture) on this issue—as we have been regarding racism, slavery, and host of other issues.

According to Scripture, those who believe illegal immigrants ought to go back to wherever it is they came from are simply wrong.

Let's deal with it.

A catchphrase that gets bandied about in opposition to this perspective is, "What part of *illegal* don't you understand?"

Here's a good story from John 8:1-11 that may shed some light. A Pharisee asks Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" Instead of falling for the trap and being accused by Pharisees, Jesus

bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, Jesus replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Okay, now imagine we bring a woman (or a man or a boy or girl) to Jesus and say, "Teacher, this person was caught working illegally in this country. In the Law, we are commanded to charge such a person with a misdemeanor—surely you've had a traffic ticket, Teacher, so you know what we're talking about—put such a person in jail, and then send such a person back to his or her home country. And besides, not only did this illegal alien come here, well, illegally, she's not even bothering to learn English!"

And what might Jesus say in response? Judging by how he handled the question about the woman caught in adultery: "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw the Mexican out."

Jesus Always Confuses the Issue, Doesn't He?

In the former scenario, the woman caught in adultery is guilty, not of a misdemeanor, but of a *capital offense*—worthy of the death penalty. The Pharisees could very well have said, "Hey, Jesus, what part of *illegal* don't you understand? She broke the law. She deserves to die."

But Jesus isn't about the Law. He's about grace. Mercy. Love. Stuff like that. And while he's also about justice, he's about justice *for the oppressed, the poor, the downtrodden*—not so much for the richest country in all of human history. Jesus might instead wonder why we—the citizens of the richest country in all of human history—are so upset about illegal immigrants.

"Well, Jesus," some might say, "you just don't understand. First, this isn't their country; they need to stay where they belong and work in their own countries. Second, they're taking jobs away from Americans, especially poor Americans. Third, their culture is a threat to our culture and our lifestyles. Fourth, they use our educational system and abuse our health care system, costing us money. Fifth, they refuse to learn English. Sixth, they use and abuse the social welfare system. Seventh, if they want to come here to work, they need to stand in line like everybody else and use the legal route. There's a system in place for applying to come here to work, and they should use it. Eighth, this is a country of laws, and they need to obey the laws just like the rest of us."

We could spend a lot of time going over that paragraph point by point, but suffice it to say, there is plenty of hard data demonstrating that apart from point four, the entirety of our prejudices and presuppositions about illegal immigrants is deeply flawed, ill-informed, and selfishly motivated.

For Instance, I Could Tell You...

That these immigrants not only take jobs that no one else wants, but also they create many jobs by their very presence and entrepreneurial spirits.

Most of them pay taxes and social security and get the benefits of neither. Most of them are hard-working, family-centered, churchgoing people of faith—exactly the kind of people we want in this country.

I could also tell you there are only 5,000 visas available annually for unskilled laborers, and that the waiting list is many years long. You might not know that when Colorado—my state—passed laws that forced immigrants out, our vegetables rotted on the vines because there were no workers. Now we're talking about using prisoners to harvest our crops.

Then we might talk about why there are no jobs in their countries—because clearly, if there were, they would stay with their families and work at those jobs, right? And then we might talk about why all the jobs are in this country rather than south of the border, and then we'd talk about trade barriers and tariffs and other unjust laws we've passed to protect and keep our own jobs because we certainly don't want jobs leaving the United States. So...all the jobs are here. Surprise, surprise, surprise.

You Need to Ask Yourself Just One Question

What would Jesus do?

Would he bundle them up and ship them off? Would he separate families, mothers, and fathers from their children? Would he let them be condemned by unjust laws passed by selfish people to perpetual poverty when the jobs are here, waiting and available? Would he prevent them from working hard to support their families, feed their children, and find a dream of greater things? Or would he be sympathetic to our concerns over keeping our wealth and lifestyles?

Do you believe Jesus loves Americans more than Mexicans?

The questions could go on and on, of course. But you get the point.

We need to fix this.

The church needs to get behind legislation that opens America's borders to legal immigration so that people from abroad can work for good wages and benefits, go home to their families, and benefit us, their families and villages, and their own countries.

Jesus commands it; Scripture commands it.

And then, in time, illegal immigrants may not need (or want) to come here anymore for low wages, no benefits, and no legal protections.

Gotta love the irony.