

Now You Know!

Scripture used: [Matthew 25:34-37, 40](#)

OVERVIEW

In this message, which concludes the *Different!* series, we look at how Jesus followers should be different in the way they engage with public discourse and tackle the most challenging topics of our times. Before we ask, “What does my political party believe?” or “What do I feel?”, the first responsibility for a Jesus follower is to ask the question, “What is God’s heart?” This week, we tackle the controversial topic of immigration that has been all over the news and social media recently. We see that God’s heart in Scripture about immigrants, foreigners, and aliens is very clear -- that God cares about and loves immigrants, because Israel experienced being aliens in Egypt, Jesus and his family experienced being refugees in Egypt, and God has a special place in his heart for the vulnerable and overlooked. This means that no matter what our policy conclusions (and Jesus followers could arrive at a wide variety of public policy stances), we first and foremost should approach the issue of immigration with compassion, humility, awareness, and accountability to Jesus.

KEY POINTS

- 1) **The Bible reveals God’s heart toward immigrants.** In [Matthew 25](#), Jesus identifies with the “stranger.” The Greek word for “stranger” is the word *xenos*, which means alien, foreigner, or immigrant (from which we get the word xenophobia). This teaching is an extension of the clear command of God in the Old Testament where “immigrant” is mentioned 91 times, with God’s heart revealed in verses like [Exodus 23:9](#), [Leviticus 19:33](#), [Deuteronomy 10:17-19](#), and [Zechariah 7:10](#). God wants His people to remember that they were immigrants when they fled their land out of desperation ([Genesis 42:5](#)), and so they should always treat immigrants with empathy and compassion.
- 2) **We should be aware of how those without power can be unjustly labeled.** Because immigration is such a hot-button political issue, immigrant populations can often be labeled with negative associations - like being rapists or criminals. Pastor Hurmon shared his own story of growing up in Coshhatta, Louisiana, when African-Americans were often negatively labeled in the same way. The reality is, rapists and criminals do exist, but they don’t belong to just one culture or group. When we see people groups or cultures being unjustly slandered or labeled, Jesus followers need to stand up and represent God’s heart that loves and values every single person.
- 3) **We should engage others, especially those who are different from us, with radical hospitality.** Pastor Hurmon reflected on the inscription on the Statue of Liberty (which begins, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”), and how it reflects God’s heart of radical hospitality found in Jesus’ words in [Matthew 11:28-30](#). We see in Matthew 25 that Jesus expects His followers to be different by expressing radical care and generosity to others, including those who are strangers and those who are poor and vulnerable. This is the place where all of us can start being “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth” by loving others with the love of Jesus. This is how Jesus followers should be different. And if we live this way, we will make the ultimate difference in the world.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What was your reaction to this message? Can you empathize with those who may have a different opinion on this issue than you? Do you feel like you are able to engage from a place of compassion and humility? Why or why not?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Review the Scripture that was shared in this message in the Old Testament and New Testament. While Scripture does not require a particular policy outcome, because it comes from a different historical context, it does give a clear indication of God’s heart toward immigrants. What difference would it make if all Jesus followers saw Jesus himself in the faces of the immigrants at the center of the immigration debate, as [Matthew 25](#) implies?
- 3) **DO** - There are 4 easy ways to be different by practicing love.
 - a. Pray and ask God for more insight and to engage this issue with His love
 - b. Dialogue with others unlike you
 - c. Refuse to look the other way and speak up with love
 - d. Reach out to those experiencing anxiety, fear, or pain