

On Refugee Crisis: Prudence or Compassion? By Thailer Jimerson

The title is a trick question. Why must it always be either/or with situations of this caliber?

Since this topic became the popular subject that everyone, on any platform, has addressed - I've been enlightened. Here's what I've learned. Whether it has been those who have decried the harsh sentiments against the Syrian refugees, or those who have called for some common sense before opening borders to terrorists going incognito – the spirit is the same among both: that of virtual crusaders with their keyboard courage ready to slay the demons of opposition to the opinion they formed on a subject with which they were just recently acquainted.

We have been stomping so hard through the polemical fields of religious and political thought that the haze we've kicked up has blinded us from seeing a solution – and, worse, the simplicity of gospel and what it has to weigh in on the subject.

To the refugee situation, I offer my humble opinion. (Yes, just an opinion like anyone else's, but divorced from the political jargon – I'm thinking of ones stance on the Obama administration and the so-called "ineptitude" of the gov't - that overcomplicates the truth.)

First, when I offer that the Bible solution is simple, I'm not ignoring the complexities of the situation. Yes, I'm aware of the ways ISIS has taken advantage of the refugee situation in Europe. Could our ISIS enemies enter in the Trojan horse of refugee groups? Probably. On the other hand though, are all Syrian refugees really ISIS members in disguise? No. Would it be more difficult to enter in the country as a refugee (because of all the vetting) than, let's say, a student? Probably. Are Syrians seeking to flee the persecution of ISIS in need of refuge? Certainly.

Despite all the previous questions though, think on this one for a moment: ***Which do you value more – personal safety and well-being, or the salvation of lost souls?*** If we go to the gospel, we know which one Christ valued the most. And if our heart focuses on that gospel-clarity through the fog of voices, we'll come to a God-glorifying answer, I think.

Yes, we are not only citizens of the heavenly kingdom, but we're citizens of America. But. But you are FIRST a citizen of the Christ-nation. And that means preferring the

commentary of Jesus on this situation before all others. When I think on his commentary for the situations he encountered that parallel our own, I think of two passages in particular. First, I think of the parable of the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10.25-37**. To make a long story short, let me ask a question: Who is the hero in the story? The Samaritan. And who was a Samaritan to a Jew? An enemy. In almost every way – spiritually, ethnically, politically – an enemy. The story which ends with Jesus calling us to “Go, and do likewise” is the story of a man loving his enemies. Secondly, we have to keep the coming judgment in mind too, and for this I think of **Matthew 25.35-40**. Again, to make a long story short, let me ask a question: Who is finally accepted into Christ’s kingdom, escaping the judgment? Answer: Those who fed the hungry, watered the thirsty, clothed the naked and welcomed the stranger.

And it’s really no wonder that this was Jesus’s own teaching considering the holy and matchless law of God contained the same injunction: “Love the foreigner, therefore, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt” (De.10.19). Notice the reasoning at the end of the verse, too, and apply it to our own situation. Why should we love strangers? Because most people residing in America today are not original to these lands. In fact, what does the lower pedestal of the very Statue of Liberty itself read? *"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

One of the most balanced, and yet concise, answers I’ve heard on the subject comes from Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the SBC. He says, *"The screening of refugees is a crucial aspect of national security, and we should insist on it...At the same time, evangelicals should be the ones calling the rest of the world to remember human dignity and the image of God, especially for those fleeing murderous Islamic radical jihadis....We should remember the history of the 20th century, of Jewish refugees from the Holocaust and refuseniks from the Soviet Union who were largely ignored by the world community. We can have prudential discussions and disagreements about how to maintain security. What we cannot do is to demagogue the issue, as many politicians are doing right now. An entire generation of those fleeing genocide will be asking, is there is an alternative to the toxic religion they’ve seen. Will they hear evangelicals saying ‘Jesus loves you’ or ‘Who then is my neighbor?’ There are massive implications for both answers."*

[\(http://www.religionnews.com/2015/11/18/evangelicals-torn-admitting-refugees-us-analysis/\)](http://www.religionnews.com/2015/11/18/evangelicals-torn-admitting-refugees-us-analysis/)

Unfortunately, judging by the words I've read, I think many of those in need will not see Christians obeying Jesus's "Go, and do likewise" but will hear Christians repeating the lawyer's "Who, then, is my neighbor?" But if we don't stand against the tide of the world's reaction to all this mess, who will? Did not Jesus say that we're not doing much more than the world if we love only those who love us – because everyone does that.

Fortunately, there are lights that shine in the darkness. Here's one example from facebook to encourage you: "Just read an update from a friend that said that they offered a blanket to a refugee in the name of Jesus. The man said, 'Who is this Jesus? Since I left home he has given me food, a place to stay and now a blanket. I want to know him.' Let that sink in for a moment." And that's what the gospel is about: to love the unloveables, because that's precisely what Jesus did for us miserable sinners on the cross.

Here's the bottom line. I know the situation is scary right now. I don't want my family, my neighbors, or myself to be beheaded as much as the next guy. But our anxiety is very revealing. Instead, we need to trust.

I heard a story once. Philip Melanchthon was often given to anxiety and worrying over various things, to which his friend Luther would respond, "Cease ruling the world, Philip." Our worries stem from an illusion of control, but there is only one sovereign God. The common sound from so many Christian posts about current events leads me to one conclusion: we all need a large helping of trust in God.