

Our Commitment to the “Foreigner”

Series: Cracks – Navigating Our Divided Times
Brad Bailey – March 13, 2022

NOTE: The following notes were used as a reference and were more extensive than time would allow to be fully give, The fourth and final point was made but was not expanded upon with all that is in the notes. One will also find “further resources” with links and extensive footnotes that I hope can serve them.

Intro

Today we’re continuing in our series focused on navigating through our divided times.

Our goal is to identify some of the issues which have brought division within our culture at large...but also within the general Christian culture...**to allow God to speak to us through the Scriptures. Our goal is not to settle every difference of perspective and policy... but to establish our common ground in the mind and heart of God.**

Today...we are engaging our relationship to the “foreigner” ... more specifically to the immigrants... and refugees of our current world.

This has become a growing source of contention within our culture... with increasingly polarized political postures regarding immigration and refugees. On one side are positions which seem so open in terms of our borders and policy...that seems to bear chaos. On the other side are position that seek to close us off ... seeing the very nature of foreigners as dangerous... and forget our history as immigrants.

The politics of immigration and refugee policy are valuable and valid. The Scriptures refer to the validity of borders and boundaries that define nations... and they affirm that God deems human governance to manage those boundaries. That is a challenging responsibility...and worthy of debate about policies. But as this wages through our news outlets... what is lost in the hostility are the actual lives created in God’s image.

And how timely it is...that we had planned to let God speak to us about our commitment to foreigners...as we watch images of lives fleeing Ukraine... many with just a child in one arm...and a small bag in the other. As of this weekend...over 2.5 million lives have left everything... and face the reality of a future in which they will be foreigners in a new land. And that could reach 4 or 5 million or more in the coming months. This is the biggest single refugee crisis Europe has faced since World War Two.

Many of us have been looking... and wondering... what happens to such lives.

Those who have given their lives to working with refugees... are glad that we are looking and wondering. They know that the tragedy we see in Ukraine represents the latest in what has become the most immediate humanitarian crisis.

They know that the numbers of people being displaced by large scale violence... by drought and hunger and economic collapse... have been growing dramatically.

The mass of lives that are fleeing Ukraine is coming amidst...the greatest increase in refugees in modern history. [1]

In the past decade, the global refugee population has more than doubled.

“The world is facing the largest refugee crisis since World War II, with nearly 60 million individuals globally forcibly displaced from their homes because of persecution and violence.

Over half of refugees are children. [2]

They know that the massive human tragedy in really human...that every life has a name and a soul. every individual life faced profound challenges. ... and hope we will look more deeply.

So I want to invite us to hear God’s heart.

PRAY

Overwhelmed... seek your call... not to alleviate all suffering...but to become aligned with you.

Not to solve ...but to share your heart.
 Not the political pundits... not the fear that can only think of our protection and prosperity.
 Join your heart.

There is an underlying message that God has for those he created... and it is this:
This is no longer our ultimate home. We are all foreigners.

In the Genesis narrative, God makes a covenant with a pagan named Abraham (Gen 12, 15), promising him land, offspring, and blessing. With these promises...He sets Abraham and his descendants... on a migration to the promised land.

Along the way, his descendants become slaves in Egypt for over 400 (Exod 1-14). To put it lightly, they were poorly treated immigrants.

And God had foretold that his would be a part of the future... a part of their identity... they would be immigrants... refugees...who had come in need of food... and then oppressed. (Gen 15:13).

After being delivered from Egypt, the Israelites resume their migration. As they are sojourning, God gives his people the law (Exod 20), within which God displays his love and concern for the immigrant. As such, the Israelites were required to treat foreigners with love and kindness, contrary to the way they were treated in Egypt (Exod 22:21; Deut 23:7). [3]

Exodus 22:21 (NLT)

“You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

Here God begins to speak of the unique position of the foreigner. He reminds them that it is a position that they have known... as they lived in Egypt for generations. [4]

It is a term which speaks of the nature of an outsider... of living somewhere in which you are not deemed to be truly equal in terms of respect or rights.

Different English translations have used different English words to translate this position... and they can help us hear what this position represents.

“Foreigner” is certainly the most natural rendering used in the **most current translations**... but other English words identify the position... as that of a **“sojourner”**... **one who knows that where they are is not their destination**... another term is that of the **“alien”**... or more accurately the **“resident alien”**...**that of one who is both truly residing in one place... but never at home... never truly settled or secure.**

And to those around... they are **the “stranger”**... **the one who is in need of being welcomed.**

foreigner (NIV, NLT, ABPE)

sojourner (ASV)

alien (ISV, NRSV)

resident alien (ESV)

stranger (KJV, NKJV, NASB, AMP)

In fact, the **law extended to strangers the same social protections as native Israelites.**

Leviticus 19:33-34

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

Of course, the history of Israel underscores that **Israel did not heed the law**, for they wronged, abused, and mistreated the immigrant. **The prophets raged against Israel’s treatment** of the foreigner (Ezek 22:7-9; Mal

3:5). Israel's flagrant abuse of the immigrant was one of the major reasons why they were eventually sent into exile.

Ezekiel 22:7

they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the foreigner and mistreated the fatherless and the widow.

Malachi 3:5

“So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty.

And Israel would not last long in that promised land. They would **become exiles ...immigrants ...longing for home.** And it captures the larger reality... that there is no place in this current nature of the world that is ultimately our home. They were never to find their identity in a king or the land...but in God. [5]

But God was not done... just as the **prophets foretold...**God sent one to truly represent Him. Through the line of Abraham.... the one called out to create a new people... came that the Savior...the Messiah... the Christ.

And **Christ bore a declaration and demonstration that a new kingdom had come...** and as he explained...**“My kingdom is not of this world.”**

This is what Jesus brings forward... that we are never home in this world. We belong to a different kingdom.

This transformed everything. The kingdom that Jesus had been teaching about... and demonstrating... is bigger than this world. They could be part of **something bigger than this world.**

One of Jesus' disciples,,, the Apostle Peter... understood that the true identity of those who join this kingdom... is that of being and living as immigrants in the present world. [6]

This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners - 1 Peter 1:1

They are a strange people, for their allegiance to Jesus necessitates that they abstain from the sinful behavior of the citizens of the present world

Dear friends, I warn you as temporary residents and foreigners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. - 1 Peter 2:11

What does this all mean for present day Christians?

As Dr. Miguel Ecchevaria said,

“I will be blunt: We are immigrants—you and me, all of us. Though we may feel very comfortable in the United States, this is not our home. Our primary citizenship is not associated with our present geographical borders. The New Testament underscores that the present status of all Christians— regardless of socioeconomic status, color of skin, or legal standing—is one of immigrant. We are a peculiar people, citizens of a land with a distinct set of values and

commitments from the one in which we presently live.” - Dr. Miguel Ecchevaria, SBT Seminary

So what is our commitment to the foreigner? To those come or hope to come to our land?

Well... our first commitment is that...

1. We are to identify with the foreigner.

Every difference that tries to define and divide is now secondary.

We must not feed upon the identity politics that create an “us vs them” mindset.

We share the same God-given sacred value and same human nature...of which nationality makes no differentiation.

This begins with getting some perspective on our national pride.

National pride is sort of a strange thing...particularly when it presumes something better about ourselves.

How many chose where they were born?

None of us chose where we were born. And so it should seem a little strange to find great pride in our nationality... if we didn't have anything to do with it.

(Some people actually choose to become citizen.... earn it... but the naturally born citizens feel the most proud.)

How many here today...or watching... are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants?

I would venture to say everyone... unless you are a native American... or on a temporary status.

More than any nation on the earth...we should identify as earthly immigrants... as those who are here because our families came looking for a better life.

We should embrace the words declared upon the Statue of Liberty, which says:

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free.”

Realizing that we are “foreigners”...is not a matter of seeing one's own nation as less honorable...but of seeing what lies beyond it as more ultimate. Our ultimate citizenship in God's Kingdom transcends all national identity and distinction.

We will never live freely and fully in relationship with God until we can identify with being immigrants.

That may sound strange to us... but it is actually a part of how God formed the lives of those he called out to lead. If you read the story of the first lives and leaders of faith... they were formed as those who lived at some point as sojourners... as refugees.

- **Abraham**... called to leave his country and live as a sojourner... always an outsider.
- **Moses**... a Hebrew raised in Egypt...who later fled... and spent 40 years among the Midianites.
- **Joseph** – taken away as a slave to Egypt
- **David** – Went to live in Philistia when Saul was pursuing him (1 Sam. 27).

And the list goes on. [7]

And no one captures this more than **Jesus himself**...

Jesus himself is the **ultimate immigrant, coming from heaven** to point the way back to God and God's ways (2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8). **As an infant, Jesus was forced to flee** as a refugee to Egypt... for safety from the danger of King Herod...a danger similar for many today.

He knew what it was like to be an outsider.

And he never deemed this world his home. **He spoke of how** “The son of God **has no place to lay his head.**”

So we do well to ask ourselves...

Do we live and speak as those whose identity is bound to our nationality ... or as those who are exiles... those whose strongest identify is that of a citizen of an eternal kingdom...even while we live in this land?

2. We are to create space ...a safe refuge ...for the foreigner.

Psalm 146:9

The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

God's heart cares. And over and over he speaks of caring for the foreigner as he cares for the widow and the orphans.

What do they all share in common? They are all alone... uncovered...and vulnerable.

God care for those who are most vulnerable to human oppression... most easily marginalized and exploited.

And **creating a safe space begins with how we think and speak about the foreigner.**

Do we see someone only **as a threat** to our comfort and position... or as an equally sacred life we should welcome?

Creating a safe space is at the root of what true hospitality represents.

The word “hospitality” literally means, “Showing kindness to or entertaining strangers.”

God is very clear... that we who understand the nature of being a foreigner... should care for the foreigner.

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

Jesus raised the reality of what that involved when he responded to the question... “Who is my neighbor?” ...by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. The one who loves their neighbor is the one who crosses the road of indifference... and ethnic and cultural animosity...and binds up the wounds... carries them to help... and pays for it.

3. Help provide for the needs of the foreigner.

Deuteronomy 24:19-21 (NLT)

“When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don't go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all you do. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your olive trees, don't go over the boughs twice. Leave the

remaining olives for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. ²¹ When you gather the grapes in your vineyard, don't glean the vines after they are picked. Leave the remaining grapes for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.

We are to give from what we are able to give.

This may include considering sponsoring a refugee family. [8]

4. Support governing policies that embrace God-given principles ...including the dignity of all, maintaining the unity of families, the rule of law, and justice for all.

It's important to understand that there is a valid role for human governance. We are participants in a nation... and the governance of the boundaries and borders and process of inclusion.

As the Apostle Paul wrote...

Romans 3:1-2, 6-7

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

⁶ This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

In a world that is operating apart from the life and love of God... chaos, oppression, and violence will abound. The Bible speaks of how God uses human governance to contain evil ...governing order to counter chaos. Such governance is to be respected...not because it is always good...but because it is generally a source of maintaining greater order and good.

No government serves good in every way... but actually more than we may think. [9]

The governance of each nation includes the responsibilities to manage it's boundaries and borders. Each nation must manage.... a level of boundaries and order that are essential in managing a nation's central values and structures. [10]

Jesus stunned the minds of all when he was asked about paying taxes to Caesar... a question that was intended to get him in trouble with the Roman authorities... and he said... "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's... and give to God what s Gods'"

You can imagine that this was a challenge for Christ's first followers... but it becomes clear that they understood it. It wasn't a deference to everything that the Roman Empire did...nor any government....but the general fact that a government bears a responsibility.

As those who participate in this nation...we should support the responsibility of our government to join the world in meeting the need at hand. [11]

We may have different ideas about immigration policies... but we can be united in God's heart to make a place for those in need.

“As we support our nation to create a space between closure and chaos ...let us lead the way of filling that space with compassion ...a compassion that always sees what Christ sees.”

CLOSING PRAYER:

Some Further Resources:

The Evangelical Immigration Table - <https://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/>

“The Evangelical Immigration Table exists to encourage distinctly biblical thinking about issues of immigration, providing discipleship resources focused on immigration from a biblical and missional perspective as well as advocating for public policies consistent with biblical values.”

This call includes a commitment to principles which many denominations have signed agreement to...including the Vineyard.

Notes that...

- “Immigrants, whether lawfully present or not, commit crimes at lower rates than native-born U.S. citizens.” - Cato, 2017
- “44 out of 46 economists surveyed by the Wall Street Journal said they believe that the net economic impact of illegal immigration is positive for the United States.” - Wall Street Journal, 2006
- “86% of the immigrant population in North America are likely to either be Christians or become Christians, which is far above the national average.” - Dr. Tim Tennent, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2011

The Stranger – a 45 minute documentary about how to think about immigration. - [here](#)

World Relief - Church Leader's Resources on the Refugee Crisis and Immigration [here](#)

Theology: A Biblical Perspective on Immigration Dr. Miguel Ecchevaria, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Greek, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary - [here](#)

Another similar good “theology of immigration” is: **Daniel Montañez – The Theology Of Migration**, which can be read [here](#)

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants: Three Reasons People Flee Home, Kim Mack (2018) [here](#)

Notes:

1. Under U.S. law, a “refugee” is a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a “well-founded fear of persecution” due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin. This encompasses only a subset of the entire population of forcibly displaced individuals. Individuals who are not defined as “refugees” may be forced to leave their homes for reasons other than “a well-founded fear of persecution,” such as resource scarcity and extreme weather events. For instance, as of 2020, there were 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad who did not qualify as either refugees or asylum seekers.

From: An Overview of U.S. Refugee Law and Policy - [here](#)

2. World Relief <https://worldrelief.org/church-leaders-resources-download/>

Elsewhere it is stated: Over 82 million According to the UNHCR, 82.4 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes. Among them are over 26 million refugees, the highest population on record. - THE 10 LARGEST REFUGEE CRISES TO FOLLOW IN 2022, December 18, 2021 -

<https://www.concernusa.org/story/largest-refugee-crises/>

3. Drawn from Dr. Miguel Ecchevaria, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Greek, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

4. Also: Deuteronomy 23:7

Do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country.

It is striking that God specifically calls them to treat well those among them who represent the people who they had been oppressed by.

5. Tim Keller elaborates on the nature of the new creation and new kingdom.

“At the end of Galatians, Paul says: “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation” (Galatians 6:15). “Circumcision and uncircumcision” is a metaphor for racial and ethnic differences, and when Paul says such distinctions mean nothing, he is not speaking absolutely. Elsewhere, he points to his love and proportional pride in his Jewish heritage (cf. Romans 9:1-5). What he means is that such racial and cultural distinctions are nothing in comparison to the new creation. And what is that?

The new creation is a renewed material world, wiped clean of all death, suffering and tears, war and injustice, sin and shame (Isaiah 25:7-8; 65:17-25). It will be established at the end of time, but part of the good news is that this is brought forward partially into the present. Herman Ridderbos writes that the new creation in Galatians 6:15 is: “the new reality of the kingdom of God. Through Christ this new thing is not merely future-eschatological (Revelation 21:1–5, 3:12 and Mark 14:25) but is already present, is already in man. This new creation is first of all a gift, but it brings its task with it.”

Many Christians think that Jesus saved us merely through the cross, where he paid the penalty of our sin, and the resurrection was just a grand miracle by which God proved that Jesus was the Son of God. It was that—but far more (Romans 4:25). This inadequate view conceives of the gift of salvation in exclusively individualistic terms—as a new personal relationship with God and little else. But Jesus rose as the “first fruits” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) of the future resurrection from the dead, and as such he brings us the Holy Spirit which is the “downpayment” or “first installment” of the future renewed world and universe (1 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14-16).

The Bible shows us that one of the important features of that new creation is to practice equality of the races and the healing of their relationships, because “in Christ...there is neither Jew nor Gentile.”

Through Christ’s resurrection we are united spiritually and vitally not only to him and to all others who believe, but to that future world cleansed of all suffering, tears, injustice, evil, and sin. The same power that will purify the universe at the end of time is what regenerates and comes into our lives now through the new birth (cf. word *palengensia*—in both Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5). The new heavens and new earth will not only contain saved individuals—it will have a new humanity without violence and conflict, war and injustice. The power of that new creation is partially but actually with us now. That is why Ridderbos can say this gift “brings its task with it.” We are to behave not according to the old age of sin and darkness, but to live in accordance with the world of light which is to come (Romans 13:11-14).

One of the marks of that new future world will be the end of all racial, ethnic, and national strife, alienation, and violence. God will say: “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance” (Isaiah 19:25)—a vivid expression of racial equality before the Lord in the new heavens and new earth. When Isaiah describes that new creation (Isaiah 65:25), he speaks of the nations and kings of the earth uniting before God (Isaiah 60:1-7). Revelation echoes this when it foresees the kings of all the nations bringing their glory into the City of God (Revelation 21:4) and the people of God consisting of “every tongue, tribe, people and nation” (Revelation 7:9).

These remarkable visions of the final new creation show that our distinct ‘peoplehoods’ and nationalities do mean something. They are so important that they will be carried over, not eradicated, into the new creation. They will be purified of all the sinful distortions, just as our bodies with their distinctions will be brought in and purified of all weakness and decay. It is this future—this new creation—that Christians must bear witness to and practice now, to the greatest degree that we can. The Bible shows us that one of the important features of that new creation is to practice equality of the races and the healing of their relationships, because “in Christ...there is neither Jew nor Gentile” (Galatians 3:26-28).

From: The Sin of Racism By Dr. Timothy Keller - [here](#)

6. Paul even takes the vocabulary of sojourner and stranger and applies it to the former life of gentiles (all non-ethnic Jews), before becoming citizens of the household of God (Eph 2:19).

Ephesians 2:19 (NLT)

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

7. See Immigrants of the Bible [Immigrants of the Bible](#) and [Biblical Figures You Probably Didn't Realize Were Refugees](#)

8. Some information about how to provide forms of support and sponsorship to refugees, see:

[Refugee Council USA](#)

[How to sponsor an Afghan refugee family](#)

9. The Biblical idea that human governance is “given” or “under” God can be difficult in light of the atrocities that have and are still carried out by governments. Some of the windows into God's view of human governance can be heard in these texts:

Isaiah 45:1

Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed,
Whom I have taken by the right hand,
To subdue nations before him
And to loose the loins of kings;
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

John 19:11

Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

1 Peter 2:13

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, Romans 13:4

for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Romans 13:6

For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

1 Timothy 2:2

for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

1 Peter 2:14

or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

10. We find that boundaries and borders are a part of God's design.

Acts 17:26

From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands.

Psalms 74:17

You set all the boundaries of the earth; You made the summer and winter.

Genesis 10:5 (NIV)

From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.

Exodus 23:31 (NIV)

"I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you.

Deuteronomy 32:8

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.

Note: There are various issues with how the end of this verse should be translated.

Nehemiah 9:22 (NIV)

"You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan.

11. While this message did not seem fitting to expand on relationship between the need and U.S. policy, I believe that there is a moral responsibility on our nation to bear an appropriate level of provision in refugee resettlement. The following helps capture the picture.

There are 10 countries with such violence that between a half million and two and a half million ... that being Afghanistan... and then there is Syria with 6.7 million.

And it leads to the cost that each country that chooses to not turn them away.

Lebanon, with a population of 6.8 million, is currently hosting an estimated 1.5 million refugees from Syria ...and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees.

In Lebanon, one in four people is a refugee.

Unemployment is sky-high and the country's currency has dropped in value by 85 per cent, meaning much of the population is no longer able to afford the necessities of survival.

Recent surveys put more than 50 per cent of the population below the poverty line.

From "Global Figure" – <https://www.nrc.no/shorthand/fr/a-few-countries-take-responsibility-for-most-of-the-worlds-refugees/index.html>

In [Sudan](#), as with the DRC and other countries on this list, we can see one of the complications that has grown out of the global refugee crisis: While Sudan is the fifth largest country of asylum for refugees (including the largest population of refugees from South Sudan), it's also a country that's producing an increasing number of refugees — over **805,000** as of December 2021. Many Sudanese are fleeing protracted violence or climate change-induced drought and famine. – From <https://www.concernusa.org/story/largest-refugee-crises/>

Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees, with 3.7 million people.

How many refugees were admitted into the US? 2021?

At the end of this past Fall the official number was 11,411 refugees.

From FY 2021 Refugee Resettlement Roundup - <https://cis.org/Report/FY-2021-Refugee-Resettlement-Roundup>

- The top five countries of origin of resettled refugees in FY 2021 were: Democratic Republic of the Congo (42.9 percent); Syria (10.9 percent); Afghanistan (7.6 percent); Ukraine (7.0 percent); and Burma (6.8 percent).
- The top five placement states in FY 2021 were: California (8.6 percent); Texas (8.0 percent); New York (6.2 percent); Kentucky (5.7 percent); and Michigan (4.7 percent).

It has been a tragic dynamic for those who lead in resettling refugees... nearly all are faith based... mostly rooted in the call and compassion of Christ... and they have seen the United States turn away from that calling.

They know that it is unlikely that the U.S. will admit it's more historic levels of 125,000 refugees anytime soon... but they hope that there will be a reversing of policies and a rebuilding of the process.

Faith-based refugee resettlement groups describe what it will take to rebuild program after Trump cuts BY EMILY MCFARLAN MILLER AND JACK JENKINS, Posted Feb 5, 2021 - <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2021/02/05/faith-based-refugee-resettlement-groups-describe-what-it-will-take-to-rebuild-program-after-trump-cuts/>

Faith based groups are rooted in the call to love our neighbor.

The faith based refugee resettlement organizations includes, HIAS - Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Founded as the in 1881 to assist Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe
The IRC, International Rescue Committee, founded at the call of Albert Einstein in 1933.
have had to flee... the majority of which have yet to find a home...

Although historically the U.S. has [resettled](#) more refugees than any other country, its resettlement program has not kept up with increase of the global refugee population.

As explained by the National Immigration Forum ([here](#)).

The President of the United States determines the number of refugee admissions. The number of refugees accepted to the United States each year is [set by the President](#) in consultation with Congress that must occur before October 1 each year.

In FY 2016, the U.S. admitted nearly [85,000 refugees](#), a number that declined to fewer than [54,000 refugees](#) in FY 2017, the lowest number in a decade after President Trump [reduced the cap](#) on refugee admissions via [executive order](#). In [FY 2018](#), the president further reduced the refugee admission cap to 45,000, the lowest since the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980. For 2019, the administration [cut](#) the number of admissions even more to 30,000. For FY 2020, the administration further cut the number of refugee admissions to [18,000](#). However, the cap represents the maximum number of refugees that may be resettled in a year and the Trump administration only resettled 11,814 people in FY 2020. On September 30, 2020 the Trump Administration sent a [report to Congress](#) proposing a ceiling of 15,000 refugees for admission to the U.S in FY 2021. The [Presidential Determination](#) officially setting the refugee ceiling was issued on October 28, 2020 for 15,000 refugees to be resettled in FY 2021.

While President Biden increased the FY 2021 ceiling to 62,500 in May 2021 and set the FY 2022 ceiling at 125,000, refugee resettlement infrastructure remains depleted and the administration has struggled to reach these targets in terms of actual refugees resettled.

For more introduction and perspective on U.S. refugee policies and process, see:
An Overview of U.S. Refugee Law and Policy - [here](#)

Some additional points of perspective related to immigrants:

As Rod Benson states, “The biblical witness is crystal clear when it comes to how Christians should feel and act toward immigrants. There is a coherent vision of community wellbeing, and a consistent emphasis on justice, grace and neighbour-love toward all who are in need, summed up most profoundly in the biblical concept of shalom, “a picture of community, of life in relationships, in which things are as they are supposed to be [and where people] live in harmony and delight with God, each other, and the world” - Andrew Sloane, *At Home in a Strange Land: Using the Old Testament in Christian Ethics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), p. 28.

Does religiosity make people more welcoming — or more suspicious — of the stranger?

[Sociologists of religion](#) have been wrestling with this [question](#) for years. Some [researchers](#) have suggested that religion promotes altruistic norms that encourage people to help strangers, pointing to faith-based organizations that [play crucial roles](#) in [partnering](#) with or [even pushing](#) governments to welcome refugees. [Other researchers](#) have argued that increased religiosity is actually linked to stronger prejudices against migrants, particularly when a majority religious group feels their position is being threatened by newcomers.

Does Religion Make People More Likely to Welcome Refugees? It's Complicated.
A new study investigates how religion shapes Europeans' attitudes toward migrants.
 By Carol Kuruville, December 7, 2021 - [here](#)

For decades, the U.S. government has proved that it does carefully vet those seeking to enter the U.S. lawfully. The U.S. refugee resettlement program is a great example: Since 1980, when the Refugee Act was signed into law, roughly 3 million refugees have been identified overseas, vetted and then invited to rebuild their lives in the U.S. The vetting process currently in place for the refugee program is extremely thorough, including multiple layers of background checks, retina scans, fingerprints and in-person interviews with trained officers of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. It's been remarkably effective: Of those 3 million refugees admitted since 1980, not a single one has taken an American life in a terrorist attack. (Alex Nowrasteh, "[Terrorism and Immigration: A Risk Analysis](#)," Cato Institute, Sept. 13, 2016).

President Trump brought the greatest reversals to the moral nature of nations care for refugees... cutting our nations commitment and compassion.

Not surprisingly, six of the nine agencies contracted to resettle refugees in the country are faith-based. Refugee advocates had consequently pushed the new Trump administration to adopt at least a [95,000 cap](#) on refugee admissions, the average annual resettlement goal before Trump took office, but still lower than the cap of 110,000 under the Obama administration. That didn't come to pass.

Trump, then campaigning for president, stirred up more fear, suggesting that Syrian refugees were [raising an army](#) to launch an attack on the US and promising that all of them would be "going back" if he won the election. He said that he would [tell Syrian children](#) to their faces that they could not come to the US, speculating that they could be a "Trojan horse."

When Trump eventually took office, he delivered on his promise to slash refugee admissions from Syria, suspending refugee admissions altogether from January to October 2017. From October 2017 to October 2018, the US [admitted only 62](#).

Under Trump, the refugee program has almost collapsed. Last year, the administration set a ceiling of just 18,000 refugees. It actually admitted 10,000. Several weeks ago, the administration announced that the ceiling for fiscal year 2021 will go down to 15,000. Becca Heller, the executive director of the International Refugee Assistance Project, told me, "I think if Trump is reelected, it's the end of the U.S. refugee program."

The U.S. has a "moral" responsibility to settle more people than it has in the past few years at a time when an estimated 80 million people are forcibly displaced from their homes, and about 30 million are refugees, Yang said in a Q&A posted on World Relief's website.

"There's no question we've completely abdicated our leadership in refugee resettlement," Yang elaborated to RNS. "We have this historic low refugee ceiling, but it also has ripple effects where other countries around the world are now not accepting refugees either."

"You're not just changing policy for a couple of years; you're dismantling decades of work and relationships that will be nearly impossible to rebuild," Jen Smyers, the former director of policy and advocacy for the immigration and refugee program at Church World Service, told RNS in 2019.

Indeed, rebuilding the U.S. apparatus decimated by Trump — which agency leaders said resulted in a third of refugee settlement sites closing their programs — will take some time.

The drastic changes over the past four years caught refugee resettlement agencies by surprise when the program historically has enjoyed bipartisan support, Matthew Soerens, director of church mobilization at World Relief, said on a recent call with reporters.

The crushingly low ceilings act to limit the overall numbers, but Trump also keeps refugees out—now, and for years to come—by setting up barriers that make it just about impossible for them to complete their applications.

Last year, of the several thousand available slots allotted by Congress for America's Iraqi allies, just 4 percent were filled. Behind the numbers are human beings, in some cases separated for years from children, parents, or spouses already resettled in the U.S., waiting in limbo, in danger, in growing despair. The IRAP report calls Trump's policy "death by a thousand cuts." I would call it bureaucratic sadism.

Trump's rollicking abuse of refugees and the answering jeers of his fans are a frank confession of moral rotteness. His contempt for people who have given up everything to become Americans fully displays his fundamental unworthiness as a president and a human being. His words amplify his deeds: A policy of keeping out refugees in order to feed the fear and hatred of the president's supporters disgraces the country. Part of the damage, of course, lies in the blighted futures of hundreds of thousands of desperate people. The rest of the damage is to ourselves. There's no clearer sign than this of America's abandoned standing in the world. There's no better way to begin to restore it than by opening our doors wide.

Drawn from:

The Trump administration already made huge refugee cuts. It's making more.

The US will only accept up to 15,000 refugees in the coming year — a record low.

By [Nicole Narea@nicolenarea](mailto:Nicole.Narea@nicolenarea) Updated Oct 1, 2020 - [here](#)

Donald Trump's Refugee Policy Is Bureaucratic Sadism: The president's rollicking abuse of refugees and the answering jeers of his fans are a frank confession of moral rotteness. By George Packer, Staff writer for *The Atlantic*, OCTOBER 24, 2020

[here](#)

After 4 Years of Historic Lows, Faith-Based Refugee Resettlement Groups Start Rebuilding By [Religion News Service](#), February 8, 2021 - [here](#)