



Read

Along:

When Welcome Looks Like Courage

**World Relief's Myal Greene on
Refugees & Welcoming the
Stranger.**

A companion to Good Faith Episode 204

Over the coming months, *The Good Faith Podcast* is continuing a series of conversations on immigration, an issue that, for many, has become one of the most emotionally charged and politically divisive in our national conversation. Beyond the headlines and policy arguments, there also lurks a profound spiritual question: what does Biblical welcome look like? ***Specifically, how are we called to respond to refugees who are fleeing extraordinary circumstances and are already in the United States?***

In this episode, we turn toward this very question. Globally, as of June 2025, more than 117.3 million people have been forced from their homes due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order (UNHCR), making this the greatest displacement crisis in recorded history.

What is a refugee, you might ask? This official designation describes individuals who are fleeing a well-founded, credible threat of persecution, typically on the basis of their race, gender, political views, ethnic group, or religion. They have crossed an international border and differ from internally displaced persons, migrants who enter a country without permission, etc. ***In 2024, the U.S. took in approximately 100k refugees. In 2026, the government has capped refugee resettlement at 7,500.***

To help us see this not merely as a global crisis but as a call to discipleship, host Curtis Chang is joined by Myal Greene, president of World Relief. For over two decades, Myal has served at the intersection of faith, policy, and humanitarian relief. His perspective is both sobering and hopeful and reminds us that, from the beginning, the refugee story has been intertwined with the story of God's people.

As Myal reflects, "Welcome doesn't happen through one person or one act – it takes layers of community, people extending belonging until a stranger can finally say, 'this feels like home.'" Indeed, the Scriptures are filled with migrants and exiles: Abraham is called to leave his homeland, the Israelites flee Egypt, Ruth journeys to a new country, Mary and Joseph escape with the infant Jesus. And so we conclude with confidence: to welcome the stranger is not a peripheral command. It is a central act of worship.

LISTEN TO THE EPISODE NOW

A Biblical Welcome

From the very beginning of the biblical story, God reveals Himself as the One who welcomes. The command to “love the foreigner” is not a social add-on but a reflection of God’s own nature: the God who took in the wandering, who brought the exiled home. As Myal Greene notes, “again and again in Scripture, we see that God defends the cause of the foreigner,” and if God’s heart bends toward those on the margins, then ours must, too. Welcoming refugees, he reminds us, is not primarily about politics or programs but about obedience – an act of worship that mirrors the heart of God.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What does it mean to see hospitality towards refugees not as an optional virtue but as a command at the heart of the Gospel?
- In what ways do you see your own community reflecting or resisting God’s call to “welcome the stranger”?
- Might Biblical hospitality look different for refugees than for immigrants? Why or why not?
- Why do you think fear so often replaces compassion when refugees become politicized?
- How does remembering that Jesus Himself was a refugee reshape your understanding of God’s solidarity with the vulnerable?
- What does your default reaction to today’s refugee debate reveal about your own heart? Consider asking God to sharpen your thinking to the extent it glorifies Him and weed out the beliefs and assumptions that might not.

PRACTICE TO TRY: LEVITICUS 23 GLEANING MEDITATION

- **Read Leviticus 23:22:** “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you.”
- **Reflect:** What are the “edges” of your own life – your time, money, energy, attention – that could be left for others? Name one specific way this week you could extend generosity or presence to someone who feels unseen.

"I think the call to action is stand up and be a church of welcome and do something big for people who are facing incredible persecution and great difficulty in this world...what can you do to do the big thing for a family that's facing desperate circumstances?"

Belonging Takes a Neighborhood

For Myal, the foundation of faithful social engagement begins not with politics or policy but with Scripture. He turns to Matthew 25:34–40, where Jesus names the works of mercy – feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and welcoming the stranger, as core to the life of discipleship. This, Myal says, “*should be our core offering of what it means to minister in society.*” The command to welcome the foreigner is echoed throughout the Bible: “God defends the cause of the foreigner,” and so must His people. Even Israel’s laws, he reminds us, were designed to make space for outsiders, like the instruction in Leviticus 23:22 to leave the edges of one’s field for “*the poor and the foreigner living among you.*”

In that same spirit, World Relief builds Good Neighbor Teams – small communities of believers who walk alongside refugee families as they learn new systems, form friendships, and find belonging. It’s a picture of the church at its best: ordinary people embodying extraordinary hospitality, a neighborhood formed by grace.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What would it look like for your church or small group to become a “Good Neighbor Team”?
 - [Learn more here!](#)
- How does belonging differ from charity? What makes people feel truly at home?
- Can you recall a moment when someone’s hospitality changed your own sense of belonging?

PRACTICE TO TRY: BECOMING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

- **Listen together.** Gather a few friends, small group members, or leaders from your church to listen to this episode. As you discuss, resist the urge to debate policy. Instead, listen for what God might be stirring in you through the stories shared.
- **Ask your pastor.** Start a conversation with a church leader: Could your church partner with a local nonprofit, like World Relief, to walk alongside a refugee family? Even one willing church can make an extraordinary difference.
- **Learn and advocate.** Visit worldrelief.org to learn more about refugee resettlement, find opportunities to volunteer, and explore advocacy tools that help Christians speak up for just and compassionate policies.
- **Map your community.** Identify where refugees already live, work, or worship near you. Pray over those places and consider how your church might show up as a neighbor.
- **Practice daily welcome.** Extend one tangible act of hospitality this month: a shared meal, a ride to an appointment, or a warm invitation into your circle. Let it be the beginning of relationship, not the end of a task.

Courage for the Long Road

As refugee admissions in the U.S. have sharply declined, Myal speaks candidly about discouragement – the kind that comes from watching programs close, families separated, and promises broken. “It’s hard,” he admits. “We get punched in the gut daily in this work, but it’s my faith that carries me through.” He recalls walking through refugee camps early in his career, meeting fathers pleading for their children’s lives, and realizing that even amid immense suffering, faith still flickered like light in the dark. That same faith, he says, is what keeps him from cynicism – a conviction that God is still the restorer of a broken world and that courage, for Christians, means choosing to love anyway.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Where in your life or community do you need the courage to keep showing up, even when change feels impossible?
- How might faith sustain you through fatigue or disappointment as you tackle this and other complex issues?
- In your own words, what does “have courage” mean for the church in this cultural moment?
- Is there one thing – however small – you can do to elevate the concept of Biblical welcome in your local community?

PRACTICE TO TRY: PRAYING “YOUR KINGDOM COME”

- **Spend time with the Lord’s Prayer.** Pause on the phrase “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Imagine one person, one family, or one community displaced by conflict. Pray that God’s kingdom would come near to them – that they would experience safety, justice, and welcome. Ask God to reveal what specific role He might have you play in bringing His kingdom near to the vulnerable around you.

"The power of the church to be an instrument of welcome and to be a place of belonging is so crucial."

A Story of Past Faithfulness

Myal shared the story of Evelyn Mangham as a defining example of early Christian leadership in refugee resettlement. Evelyn, a missionary in Vietnam, helped launch World Relief's refugee ministry by personally calling churches to sponsor Vietnamese families fleeing the war. Her persistence, and her now-famous line, "You're choosing a parking lot over people", embodied the kind of courageous, sacrificial welcome Myal says the church must recover today.

[Read more about Evelyn from Christianity Today.](#)

Really from the beginning of the refugee resettlement program, churches were on the front lines of this work – and World Relief, even how we got into that work, is very unique. It really begins with a couple missionaries from the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Grady and Evelyn Mangham, who had spent many years in Vietnam.

As the story goes, the State Department called them up – a person who had known their work in Vietnam said, 'Can you help these people that are coming? Can you and your churches be a part of welcoming these individuals?'

And so Evelyn started calling every single church in the phone book of the CMA denomination. When they ran out, they turned to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) directory and started calling churches there – saying, 'We've got a family coming in next week. Will you take them?' And people did.

I've spent time with Evelyn's daughter, and she's told so many stories from those years. People would say things like, 'Well, I've got a parking lot to build – I'll have to pass.' And Evelyn would reply, 'These are people. You're choosing a parking lot over people.'

The next day, she'd often get a call back: 'We changed our mind. We'll take the family.' That level of sacrificial love and commitment was the foundation of the program – churches reaching out, connecting people, and helping them find belonging in their new community.

- Myal Greene

(8:31-10:49)



Closing Examen: Love in the Time of Displacement

Finish your time with this spiritual exercise, either silently or aloud:

- Who in my community feels far from safety or belonging?
- Where have I turned away instead of drawing near?
- What fears or excuses have kept me from offering welcome?
- What does courage look like, not in grand gestures, but in daily obedience?
- Where might God already be restoring what is broken and how can I join Him?

More Resources for You

- **Read:** *“Trump’s Refugee Policy ‘Is Slamming the Door on Persecuted Christians’ from Christianity Today* | A powerful overview of how recent refugee restrictions have impacted persecuted Christians and the faith communities striving to welcome them.
- **World Relief Workshops** – A series of practical and spiritual trainings that equip local churches and volunteers to respond faithfully to the refugee crisis. Learn about topics such as biblical hospitality, trauma-informed care, and community partnership.
- **Volunteer with World Relief** – Your time makes all the difference. With 20 offices across the U.S., World Relief connects volunteers to practical opportunities such as welcoming new families at the airport, helping immigrants apply for citizenship, teaching ESL, and building community through friendship. You can also start your own *Good Neighbor Team* – a small group of volunteers who walk alongside one refugee family.
- **Got policy questions?** – Our friends at the **National Immigration Forum** offer bill summaries, legislative updates, and explainers on key refugee and immigration issues – from DACA and TPS to Afghan Adjustment legislation. Their *Legislative Bulletin* and *Featured Resources* make it easy to stay informed and advocate wisely.
- **Open Doors Watch List** – as mentioned in this episode, this list identifies the 50 countries where Christians face the highest levels of persecution, many of them home to today’s refugees. Keep up with the list, pray for these nations, and ask God what He might have you do for those who suffer for their faith.
- **Evangelical Immigration Table** – Equip your church to talk about immigration with both conviction and kindness through sermons, small-group guides, and advocacy updates.
- **Women of Welcome** – A community of women learning to live out Christ-like welcome through education, storytelling, and shared action.