



GOOD FAITH **READ ALONG**

IS THE BORDER REALLY IN CRISIS?

***National Immigration Forum's
Jennie Murray on crime,
fentanyl, and the facts.***

A companion guide to Good Faith episode 208.

The Good Faith Podcast has been engaging in a series of conversations on immigration, an issue that has become both a political flashpoint and a pastoral challenge for many in the Church. Too often, the conversation gets reduced to slogans or talking points: “build the wall,” “abolish ICE,” “follow the law,” “welcome all.” But beneath the noise lies a deeper spiritual tension – one that invites Christians to wrestle with an ancient paradox: How do we hold together law and grace?

In this episode, we step into that tension by exploring the U.S. immigration system itself – how it actually works (or doesn’t), and what it means for those caught within it. Host Curtis Chang is joined by Jennie Murray, president of the National Immigration Forum and a follower of Jesus, who brings both technical expertise and personal conviction to a topic often clouded by confusion.

Together, they examine the myths and realities surrounding the border, crime, and asylum seekers. They ask: What does it mean to obey the law when the law is broken? What happens when compassion and enforcement seem at odds? How is the economy shaped by the politics of immigration? And how might Christians resist the pull of partisanship and instead bear faithful witness in this debate?

As Jennie reminds us, Scripture has little to say about U.S. immigration law, but it has much to say about immigrants. The Bible calls us to welcome the stranger – not because it’s politically expedient, but because it reflects the character of God Himself. And while the immigration system may be complicated, our calling is not: to treat every person, regardless of status, as someone *made in the image of God*.

This conversation is an invitation to think deeply, speak carefully, and act justly. We invite you to listen or watch, and then read along, as we reflect together on this question: How do we, as Christians, hold both grace and law – justice and mercy – in an immigration conversation that desperately needs both?



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BEFORE YOU GO FURTHER, CONSIDER:

- What might it mean to lead with your Christian identity, rather than your political affiliation, when thinking about immigration?
- When you think about immigration, which comes to mind first: the policy or the people?
- Have you ever said (or thought), “They should just come here legally”? What assumptions does that reveal?
- How does your faith shape your view of law, order, and compassion in public life?
- How has fear – of change, of the unknown, of being wrong, or of being on the outs with your “political tribe” – shaped your response to the immigration debate?

**The foreigner residing among you
must be treated as your native-born.
Love them as yourself, for you were
foreigners in Egypt.**

LEVITICUS 19:34



WHERE DO WE START?

It's tempting to begin any conversation about immigration with policy – or even politics. But Jennie Murray invites us to start somewhere else: with our identity.

In the opening moments of the conversation, Murray challenges Christians to ask: What part of me comes first – my American citizenship, or my allegiance to Christ? It's a deceptively simple question. For many of us, these identities are intertwined. But how we untangle and order them matters. If we start as American citizens, immigration is mostly a legal question. If we start as followers of Jesus, it becomes a deeply spiritual one.

Murray doesn't dismiss the importance of national law and order. In fact, she insists those values matter. But she cautions against using them as the primary lens, especially when the current immigration system is, by her account, "not orderly, not humane, and not secure." The system is so broken that insisting people "just do it legally" ignores a key truth: for many displaced people, there is no line to get into. The rules don't work – and they haven't for decades.

So where do we start? Not with slogans or assumptions, but with Scripture.

Murray reminds us that while the Bible says nothing about U.S. immigration policy, it says a great deal about how we treat the vulnerable. To begin with a biblical imagination is to remember that we are all sojourners – guests in a world that belongs to God. That starting point changes not just what we think about immigration, but how we think.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: WHO ARE YOU IN THIS STORY?

- How much of your current view on immigration is inherited – politically, culturally, or theologically? What would it look like to test that inheritance against the teachings of Jesus?
- How have your family history or personal experiences shaped your view of immigrants and immigration?
- Do you tend to see immigrants as a "them" or as part of your "us"?
- Are you more comfortable talking about immigration in terms of rules or relationships? Why might that be?



IT'S NOT JUST BROKEN LAWS. IT'S A BROKEN SYSTEM.

What happens when a system fails not just practically, but spiritually?

Murray describes a U.S. immigration system that is confusing, inconsistent, and in many cases, closed. But more than that, she describes a system that distorts how we, as Christians, make moral judgments. In a functional system, it's easy to say "follow the law" and assume that doing so aligns with justice. In a broken system, that shortcut collapses.

For Christians, this is where discipleship gets tested. Scripture does not give us detailed instructions for modern bureaucracies, but it does give us a clear pattern for how to treat the vulnerable. Throughout the Bible, God's people are called to do what is right, even when the systems around them fail. Think of the Hebrew midwives in Egypt, who defied Pharaoh's command to kill newborns (Exodus 1), or Jesus healing on the Sabbath despite religious rules (Mark 3). In each case, moral clarity required more than legal compliance. It required courage, compassion, and proximity to those who were suffering.

"We are all going to be wrestling with a movement of vulnerable people around this globe and being global citizens and trying to solve these issues together."

JENNIE MURRAY



IT'S NOT JUST BROKEN LAWS. IT'S A BROKEN SYSTEM.

Murray's critique of the immigration system isn't just about politics. It's about imagination. When laws are unjust or unworkable, do we retreat into slogans, or do we press into deeper spiritual discernment? Do we excuse suffering because it's "the law," or do we ask what love requires in the moment?

Romans 13 reminds us that government is a gift meant to uphold good. But when government fails in that purpose, Christians are not called to blind allegiance – we are called to prophetic witness. And that begins with refusing to let the law – especially a broken one – set the boundary for our compassion.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: HOW DO YOU RESPOND?

- Can you think of a time when following the rules felt like the wrong thing to do? What guided your decision?
- How do you respond emotionally when you hear that a system like immigration is deeply dysfunctional? Do you feel frustration, helplessness, defensiveness, compassion?
- Have you ever avoided engaging an issue because it felt "too complex"? What might it take to re-engage – not with all the answers, but with a willingness to listen and learn?
- What might it look like for the Church to be a countercultural witness – not by choosing a political side, but by standing with those most affected by a broken system?



FACTS MATTER. FEAR DISTORTS.

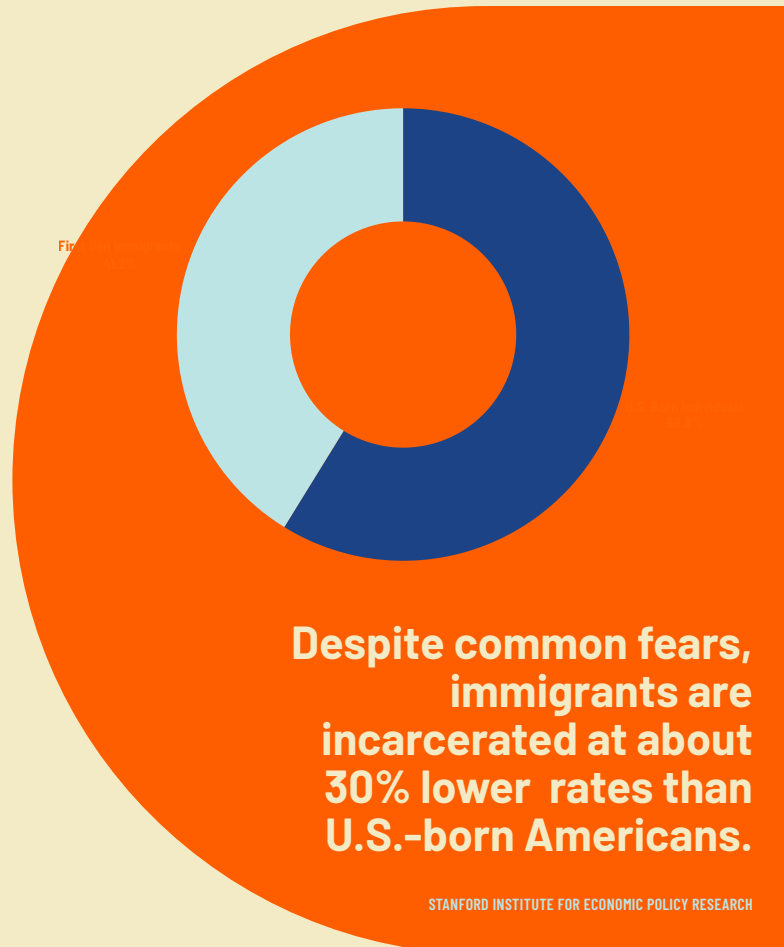
One of the clearest takeaways from this episode is how much misinformation surrounds the topic of immigration, especially around crime. Murray dismantles one of the most enduring myths: that immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, pose a unique threat to public safety. The data tell a different story: immigrants – regardless of legal status – commit crimes at significantly lower rates than native-born Americans. Even the issue of fentanyl, often used to stoke fear, is widely misunderstood. The vast majority enters the U.S. through legal ports of entry, typically smuggled by U.S. citizens, not by vulnerable migrants crossing the desert.

Yet facts alone rarely drive the immigration debate. Fear does. And fear – left unexamined – distorts our moral vision.

Scripture warns us about the power of fear in 2 Timothy 1:7. When fear takes the lead, it becomes far easier to dehumanize the other, justify cruelty, or close ourselves off from compassion. Christians are called to resist that impulse – not because the world isn't dangerous, but because Jesus modeled a courage rooted in love, not suspicion.

God gave us
a spirit not
of fear but of
power and
love and
self-control.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7



Despite common fears,
immigrants are
incarcerated at about
30% lower rates than
U.S.-born Americans.



FACTS MATTER. FEAR DISTORTS.

Curtis and Murray both note how easy it is to weaponize anecdotes over evidence. A single tragic crime involving an immigrant, no matter how rare, can go viral and define an entire narrative. Yet Christians are called to a different posture: patience, discernment, and truthfulness. We are people of the Word – and that includes a commitment to words that reflect reality.

This doesn't mean ignoring genuine concerns about safety. It means rejecting fear that scapegoats whole communities based on partial truths. As Murray notes, most immigrants live in quiet fear of being noticed. They work hard to avoid attention, even when they need help. That kind of fear isn't just personal – it's political. It tells a story about who belongs and who doesn't. And Christians have the chance to tell a different story.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: FACING FEARS

- How do you discern the difference between fear that protects and fear that distorts?
- Have you ever believed something about immigrants that later turned out to be untrue? What changed your mind?
- Are there news sources, social media accounts, or conversations that regularly stoke fear in you? How might you approach them differently as a friend who follows Jesus?
- What would it look like for the Church to be known more for truth-telling than fear-sharing?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of mercy,

Open our eyes to see every person as Your image-bearer.

Help us seek solutions that honor both order and human dignity.

Give us strength to do the good work set before us,
and the courage to set our politics aside
so we may care for our neighbors in love.

Amen.

MORE RESOURCES FOR YOU

- [World Relief's 'Let's talk About It' Conversation Cards](#) – Conversations can be transformative, download these 50 topics to begin this conversation with your people.
- [Updates from The Immigration Forum](#) – Jennie's organization sends incredibly helpful updates on the latest in immigration news and policy, sign up for updates!
- **Book Recommendations From Our Friends at The Forum:**
 - [Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate](#)
 - [Start with Welcome: The Journey toward a Confident and Compassionate Immigration Conversation](#)
 - [Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugees Crisis](#)
 - [Refuge Reimagined: Biblical Kinship in Global Politics](#)
 - [Crossing Borders: The Reconciliation of a Nation of Immigrants](#)
 - [Inalienable: How Marginalized Kingdom Voices Can Help Save the American Church](#)
 - [One Mighty and Irresistible Tide: The Epic Struggle Over American Immigration](#)
- [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.

