

Scripture Passages and Thoughts Concerning Treatment of Immigrants

Exodus 22:21 Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.

Exodus 23:9 You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, seeing you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33-34 When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The stranger who lives as a foreigner with you shall be to you as the native-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.

Leviticus 25:23 The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and live as foreigners with me.

Numbers 15:15-16 The community is to have the same rules for you and for the foreigner residing among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the foreigner shall be the same before the LORD: 16 The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigner residing among you.

Deuteronomy 10:19 Therefore love the foreigner; for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 23:7 Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country.

Deuteronomy 24:14 You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he be of your brothers, or of your foreigners who are in your land within your gates:

Deuteronomy 24:17-22 Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. 18 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. 19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. 21 When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. 22 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.

Deuteronomy 27:19 Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow. Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

Ezekiel 22:7 In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the alien and mistreated the fatherless and the widow.

Ezekiel 22:29 The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice.

Ezekiel 47:22 It shall happen, that you shall divide it by lot for an inheritance to you and to the strangers who sojourn among you, who shall father children among you; and they shall be to you as the native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.

Zechariah 7:10 Do not oppress the widow, nor the fatherless, the sojourner, nor the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart.

Matthew 25:31-46 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ 40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ 41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ 44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ 45 “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ 46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Luke 10:25-37 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” 27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” 28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ 36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to

the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

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Several passages throughout the Bible forbid us to mistreat or oppress the aliens or foreigners because we were once foreigners, and “know the heart of an alien.” In Leviticus, we are reminded even more strongly, “the land is mine; for you are strangers and live as foreigners with me” (25:23). We are all sharing God’s world. We are all here through God’s grace and mercy. Treating aliens as less worthy to be here ignores the fact that we have all been given a gift from God – we have not and could not have deserved it. It is through God’s grace alone that we have all of the privileges we have and, knowing that grace, we are called to share it.

Aliens are repeatedly listed along with widows, orphans, and others we are commanded to love, protect, and aid. The Bible clearly understands that aliens are disadvantaged and treated unjustly by society. In Matthew we are told, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (25:40). Immigrants are among “the least” across cultures and times, and this is especially true today. By acting with compassion and striving for justice for the most vulnerable of God’s children, we are “doing for God.”

*In Numbers, we are told “You and the foreigner shall be the same before the LORD: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigner residing among you” (15:15-16). This passage demonstrates both God’s justice and God’s calling for us to act justly. As we have seen throughout history, from the enslavement of the Hebrews to Jim Crow laws, unequal treatment is **not** justice... We are all children of God and loved equally. Just as we are the same before God, we are called to love each other equally and to treat each other justly under the law as well as in our personal lives.*

United Methodist Immigration Resources

<https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/immigration-to-the-united-states>

Episcopal Church Migration Ministries

<https://episcopalmigrationministries.org/>

Interfaith Immigration Coalition

<https://www.interfaithimmigration.org/about/member-organizations/>