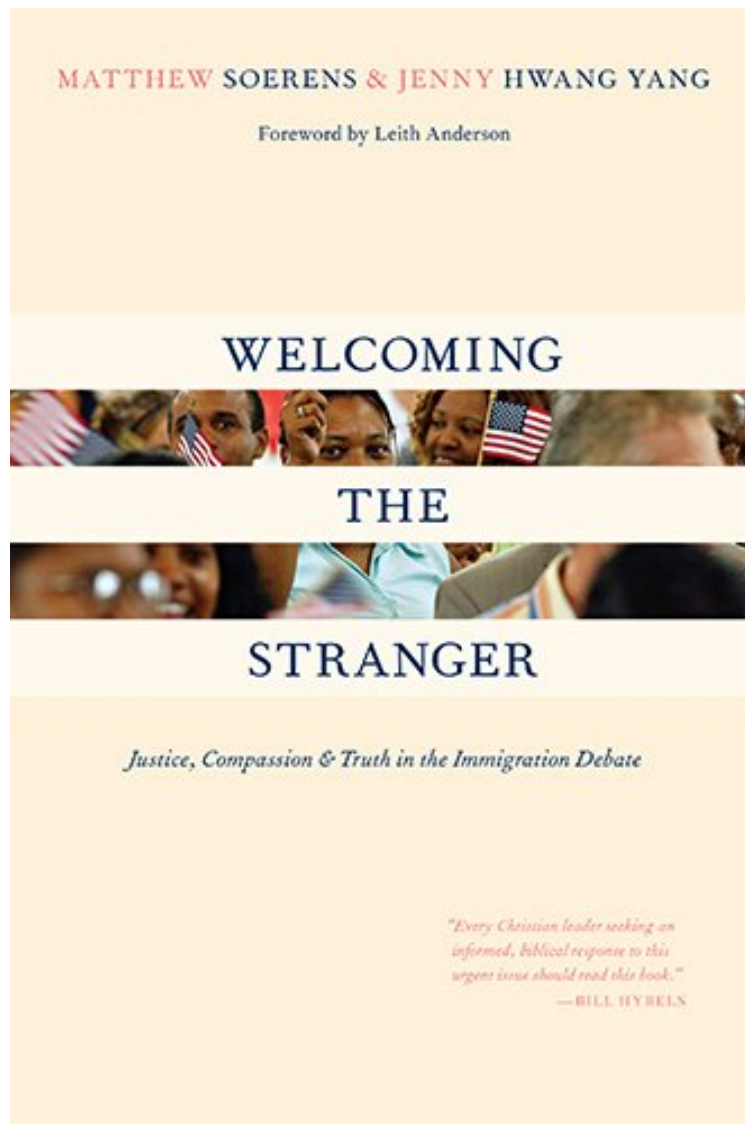


(Download ebook) Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion Truth in the Immigration Debate

Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion Truth in the Immigration Debate

Matthew Soerens, Jenny Hwang Yang

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Matthew Soerens, Jenny Hwang Yang : Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion Truth in the Immigration Debate before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion Truth in the Immigration Debate:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Call to the Church On immigration By Herbert Hofer Review of Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible by M. Daniel Carroll (Baker Publ. Group, Grand

Rapids, MI, 2008, 174 pp) and *Welcoming the Strange: Justice, Compassion, and Truth in the Immigration Debate* by Matthew Soerens, and Jenny Hwang (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2009, 240 pp) These two books are efforts to soften the attitude of evangelical Christians toward undocumented immigrants. The authors marshal biblical material to call the church to lead the country in approaching our immigrants humanely and compassionately. The authors recognize that evangelical Christians have largely been on the enforcement side of the debate, and they want Christians to approach the topic more theologically and less politically. Both books provide the historical background of immigration in US, and Soerens/Hwang provide a very helpful survey of legislation that has been passed to control immigration (pp. 139-58). Successive administrations have publicly acknowledged that our patchwork of laws has created a totally unworkable and unhelpful system. The irony.. is that by restricting immigration tightly and making it nearly impossible for many people to immigrate legally, millions have entered without inspection. (Soerens/Hwang, p. 98) Carroll provides a clear listing of the issues (p. 39), which I present here as bullet points: Unwieldy set of regulations (for the government, employers, the soliciting immigrant, and their families) Huge backlogs in processing applications (from a half million in 1990 to 6 million in 2003, according to Soerens/Hwang, p. 76) Awkward synchronization between federal agencies, states, and local governments Prisons overcrowded with immigrants awaiting trial or deportation More deaths due to security measures that have driven immigrants to pass through desert regions Conflicts in educational policies An overburdened health-care system A deeply divided public among the majority culture A Hispanic population (now the largest minority in the country, p. 40) that is at once hopeful, timorous, and frustrated. Soerens/Hwang addressed a number of misconceptions about involvement of immigrants in the American way of life: The crime rate among immigrants is lower than among the general population (p. 28) 70% of immigrants in the USA today are legal (p. 28) Illegal immigrants pay \$6-7 billion to the IRS each year (no questions asked, of course, p. 34) Only 56% of undocumented immigrants come from Mexico (p. 37) 96% of adult male undocumented immigrants are employed (p. 42) On average, legalized immigrants sponsor only 1.2 family members (p. 106) 90% of immigrants earnings go back into the local economy (p. 130) Economists agree that immigrants are a major benefit to the countrys economy (p. 119-20) o This quote from the mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg, startled me: New York City is home to more than three million immigrants, who make up nearly 40 percent of our entire population. About 500,000 came to our City and continue to come illegally. Although they broke the law., our Citys economy would be a shell of itself had they not, and it would collapse if they were departed. The same holds true for the nation. (p. 125) Personally, as the son of German immigrants, I could well identify with Soerens/Hwangs analysis that immigrants continue to take up the unwanted jobs in the economy, work hard, and get their children educated for a better life. (p. 70). Even further, their citation of this quote came home to me: Why should (immigrants) establish their Language and Manners to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens who shortly be so numerous as to (change) us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our complexion? (pp. 47-48) The quote is by Benjamin Franklin in 1751 in reaction to the mass arrival of German immigrants! Are the Latinos the Germans of today and the backbone of the US for years to come? Carroll does a better job of presenting fairly and comprehensively both sides of the debate. He points out, for example, that Hispanics appear to want to maintain their language, their customs, and even their foreign citizenship, even as they take advantage of the new way of life afforded by their work here. (p. 41) He also raises the issue of obedience to government laws by briefly discussing Romans 13 (pp. 132-34), and he points out the Old Testament expectation that sojourners in the land will accommodate themselves to the Hebrew culture (p. 111). I was particularly interested in reading these books because of the need for our congregations to study and discuss the immigration issues biblically. Both books provide such resources, though they are not arranged in Bible Study format. Soerens/Hwang, however, does provide helpful discussion questions at the end of the book (pp. 187-93). The biblical themes that the books present are similar: Respect for all people as created in the image of God, loved, and valued by Him Gods concern for the vulnerable Welcoming the stranger (the most frequent command in the Old Testament, according to Soerens/Hwang, p. 82) Biblical history of Gods People as alien immigrants and Gods sovereign direction of them in His plan of salvation: Patriarchs, Joseph, Ruth, Exiles to Babylon, scattering of Christians, etc.) Israels treatment of aliens as central to their witness to the nations. The authors contrast how totally peculiar such treatment was in the ancient world and how rooted in their own historical experience as aliens. Jesus attitude toward the marginalized, especially the Samaritans The call to hospitality Both books also provide a list of further resources for researching the issues, both biblically and politically. Both books have a helpful index. With both, Carrolls material is more thorough. Both books struggled with the issue of obedience to the laws of the land. Soerens/Hwang frame the issue well: We seem faced with a dilemma, then: Scripture tells us to welcome and care for immigrants, without reference to legal status, but it also commands us to obey and respect the laws created by the governing authorities. Given this apparent paradox, it is understandable that Christians who take Scripture very seriously have diverging opinions on the topic. (pp. 108-09) Neither book develops this theological dilemma in enough depth. Instead, they move quite quickly toward an approach implying civil disobedience (Soerens/Hwang p. 109; Carroll, p. 134). A Lutheran analysis of this dilemma through the distinction between Gods Kingdom of the Right and of the Left would seem to be necessary at this critical point. The implications of the doctrine of Christian freedom also

are relevant to the issues. The authors ultimately urge their readers to become political advocates on behalf of the undocumented immigrants, however without convincing theological rationale. Christians will have an uneasy conscience and an uncertain voice without such clarification: Am I enabling sin through this political advocacy, and even simple hospitality? Thorough biblical and theological discussion at the congregational level will solidify convictions and prompt confident, persistent action. The local congregation will also encourage differing spiritual gifts in addressing the situation, from prayer to service to hospitality to generosity to the prophetic voice. In such a complex, emotionally charged, politically divisive issue, congregation pastors will need to guide the members to respect each others freedom of conscience. As the people humbly put themselves under the Word and the Spirit, they will appreciate the differing views and reactions. Toward this end, these two books can be a rich resource for informed Christian discussion and concerted Christian action.

Herb Hoefler
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. No Myths
By Steve Schmidt
A well researched and documented analysis of the impacts both negative and positive and the scriptural evidence for working to change immigration laws in the United States.
4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A robust Christian engagement filled with specifics
By James Korsmo
This book gives robust answers to many Christian questions surrounding issues of immigration. Hwang and Soerens start with biblical issues, as they help Christians to think "Christianly" about the issues, a study that leads them to advocate for a generally loving and open approach. But this book is set apart from many similar studies in that it doesn't stop there. Soerens and Hwang both have intimate knowledge of real immigrants, and they help humanize the issue by telling the stories of real people caught up in the "debate." They also are knowledgeable about issues of current law and major policy proposals (though it is a tad dated now, since it was written back in 2007, though the general contours of the debate haven't really changed), lending a ton of specifics that help make the book's arguments concrete. This specificity helps them tackle major questions that often dog the debate, such as Why don't these people just immigrate legally? or Are immigrants a major drain on our government? I'm sure they haven't given the last word, but this is a robust Christian approach to this important issue that ought to be in the hands of all concerned Christians, and I highly recommend their approach.

Immigration is one of the most complicated issues of our time. Voices on all sides argue strongly for action and change. Christians find themselves torn between the desire to uphold laws and the call to minister to the vulnerable. In this book World Relief staffers Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang move beyond the rhetoric to offer a Christian response to immigration. They put a human face on the issue and tell stories of immigrants' experiences in and out of the system. With careful historical understanding and thoughtful policy analysis, they debunk myths and misconceptions about immigration and show the limitations of the current immigration system. Ultimately they point toward immigration reform that is compassionate, sensible and just, as they offer concrete ways for you and your church to welcome and minister to your immigrant neighbors.

"While Soerens and Hwang may not answer all your questions about the correct response to current immigration policies and, indeed, may even raise more complex questions, they do show us that, if we are to act justly, we will have to consider all its complexities." (Jim Miller, The Daily Sentinel, July 31, 2010)"Welcoming the Stranger offers an introduction to the many aspects of immigration and the controversies surrounding it." (Elizabeth Pearson, The Christian Librarian, vol. 53, no. 1)"Welcoming the Stranger lays the groundwork for and practically equips Christians to continue practicing what it means to follow Christ's commandment to love God and love neighbor in a fallen world." (Kyle Navis, Latin American Theology, vol. 4, no. 2)"Soerens and Hwang argue persuasively that immigration has been and is valuable to the United States." (Marvin Olasky, WORLD, August 15, 2009)"Soerens and Hwang advocate a generous, biblically based invitation to all immigrants to take part in America. This book will not persuade all Christians to support liberalized immigration laws, but even the skeptical should find the authors' approach useful." (Tony Carnes, Christianity Today, May 2009)"Soerens and Hwang have injected justice, compassion, and truth into what needs to become a new conversation on immigration--values that are often in short supply in this debate." (Glen Peterson, Sojourners, June 2009)"Soerens and Hwang do an impressive job making a complex and charged issue accessible for the average reader." (Ben L., Book Bargains and Previews (bookbargainsandpreviews.com), April 2009)"In this highly engaging, well researched and documented book, Soerens and Hwang team up to survey and analyze the history of immigration in the United States and attempt to solve many of the problems that immigration faces through well-reasoned argumentation and personal experience. Most importantly, they do all of this not through the eyes of partisan politics, but rather through the lens of the Christian worldview. Welcoming the Stranger is a timely and important book at a point in America's history where the immigrant population is considerably growing and many Americans seek to 'do something about it.'" (Daniel Seatvet, Christianity in Culture Examiner (examiner.com), March 20, 2009)"The authors have done a masterful job pulling together the most compelling data and information on immigration and explaining it. This is the only book a Bible-believing person needs to read to understand the importance of immigration reform." (Richard Land, president, The Southern Baptist Ethics Religious Liberty Commission)"A fresh, compelling call from Scripture to live out the gospel with boldness and courage in the twenty-

first century. A significant pivotal guide for the church in these times." (Jo Anne Lyon, general superintendent, The Wesleyan Church)"In the next forty years there will be an estimated 132 million Latinos in this nation, and a critical concern for our community is fixing our broken immigration system. Welcoming the Stranger is a must-read that helps us to embrace a biblical response to this critical issue." (Noel Castellanos, CEO, Christian Community Development Association)"Every Christian leader seeking an informed, biblical response to this urgent issue should read this book." (Bill Hybels)"Biblical, urgent, readable. An excellent introduction to this complex moral issue. All thinking evangelicals should read it." (Ronald J. Sider, president, Evangelicals for Social Action)"Thinking of immigration policy requires that we think first about the kingdom of God--God's rule and reign; his plan, will, agenda and story. Only then will we be able to think well through the secondary lenses of nation-states, tribes and ethnicities. The parable of the good Samaritan, while easy to understand, has fallen victim to global, political and economic complexities. Welcoming the Stranger, without being simplistic, clears our thoughts and lights a way forward to love and serve twelve million undocumented neighbors." (Todd Hunter, church planter, The Anglican Mission in the Americas, past president of Alpha USA and Vineyard Churches USA, and author of Christianity Beyond Belief)"A daring and desperate call to remember the story of God that begins with baby Moses being floated down a river in the middle of Pharaoh's genocide and climaxes with God's Son entering the world as a homeless refugee in the middle of Herod's bloodshed. It is a story of immigrants and strangers. This book invites us to participate in the radical inclusion and grace of God. Welcoming the Stranger is written with the urgent sense that we cannot wait for politicians to tell us how to treat immigrants but we simply need to pick up the Bible and reimagine what it means to be the people of God. Here is a reminder that as a people of rebirth our love does not stop at the borders of nations." (Shane Claiborne, author, activist and recovering sinner)"Welcoming the Stranger is a great primer on immigration for the church. It is a historical, current, biblical and theological resource for the person who is trying to understand immigration issues today." (Reverend Luis Cortes Jr., president, Esperanza USA)"Welcoming the Stranger is a must-read for one who desires to take a fresh biblical look at the issue of immigration in the U.S. I believe this is the compassion and justice issue of our day, and we need to do careful work so we are accurate and biblical in our solutions. I wholeheartedly endorse Jenny and Matt's wonderful work and commend it to you for your study." (William J. Hamel, president, Evangelical Free Church of America)"Immigration stands as the metric of whether or not America embraces social justice in the twenty-first century. In Welcoming the Stranger Jenny Hwang and Matt Soerens contextualize the narrative of an issue that requires analysis and discussion not from the extremes of political ideology but rather from a platform of truth, justice and compassion. Jenny and Matt equip us with the necessary acumen to reconcile Romans 13, the rule of law, with Leviticus 19, treating the alien as one of our own. Accordingly, the universal Christian symbol is the cross. The cross is both vertical and horizontal, redemption and transformation, conviction and compassion. This book will challenge us to meet at the point of convergence, the great intersect, where John 3:16 meets Luke 4, immigration via a biblical worldview." (Reverend Samuel Rodriguez, president, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, The Hispanic NAE)"Finally, a book on the immigration challenge that combines head and heart! Soerens and Hwang have experienced both the frustrations and the hopes that come with caring about people in difficult circumstances. This book is deeply personal in a way that helps us all be compassionate, yet it does not dumb down the challenge we all face with our natural propensity for shallow platitudes and partisan politicking. This book helps us find our way as Americans and as Christians to understanding the real issues, and it will help us shape a comprehensive public policy direction that honors both law and love." (Dr. Joel C. Hunter, senior pastor, Northland Church, Orlando, Florida)"Drawing from their experience in the trenches, Soerens and Hwang challenge their readers to move beyond the all-too-contentious and simplistic debate and think critically and biblically about what it means to love our immigrant neighbors. Clearly written and theologically informed, Welcoming the Stranger combines evocative stories of real people and the complexities of their lives with lucid explanations of immigration policy. Soerens and Hwang's book offers balanced yet impassioned analysis that is so rare but so essential to help Christians bring their faith to bear on this vexing policy issue." (Amy E. Black, associate professor of political science, Wheaton College, author, Beyond Left and Right)"Justice, compassion and truth are too often missing from the immigration debate in this country. Welcoming the Stranger provides all three with comprehensive information on every aspect of the current problem, its roots and commonsense solutions. Every Christian seeking an informed response to this critical issue should read this book." (Jim Wallis, president, Sojourners)"Immigration is one of the most pressing issues facing our country today. Some twelve million undocumented immigrants live among us, but their lives are largely in the shadows. They are our neighbors and we are theirs. The ethical challenges that face us all are numerous in the legal, economic, educational and health areas. What would God have us do regarding these new neighbors? Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang have made an invaluable contribution to Christians through their book Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate. With great precision and fairness, they lead us through the difficult and thorny ethical issues of immigration. They provide personal stories and abundant statistics. Most of all, they bring God's Word to challenge us to obey God and to welcome the strangers among us. This book is must-reading for every Christian and every congregation that desires to love the strangers in our midst." (Lindy Scott, professor of Spanish and Latin American studies, Whitworth University, and coauthor of Los

Evangelicos: Portraits of Latin American Protestantism in the United States)"Here is a book for every Christian and every church leadership team interested in one of the greatest mercy/justice issues of our time: how will the church care for immigrants in our midst? The authors write with sensitivity concerning the volatile emotions on all sides of the debates as they offer essential information designed to help us formulate responses to this very complex issue. Welcoming the Stranger inspired me to expand my heart of compassion and take action." (Paul Borthwick, adjunct professor of missions, Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts) "Thinking of immigration policy requires that we think first about the kingdom of God--God's rule and reign; his plan, will, agenda and story. Only then will we be able to think well through the secondary lenses of nation-states, tribes and ethnicities. The parable of the good Samaritan, while easy to understand, has fallen victim to global, political and economic complexities. Welcoming the Stranger, without being simplistic, clears our thoughts and lights a way forward to love and serve twelve million undocumented neighbors." "Immigration stands as the metric of whether or not America embraces social justice in the twenty-first century. In Welcoming the Stranger Jenny Hwang and Matt Soerens contextualize the narrative of an issue that requires analysis and discussion not from the extremes of political ideology but rather from a platform of truth, justice and compassion. Jenny and Matt equip us with the necessary acumen to reconcile Romans 13, the rule of law, with Leviticus 19, treating the alien as one of our own. Accordingly, the universal Christian symbol is the cross. The cross is both vertical and horizontal, redemption and transformation, conviction and compassion. This book will challenge us to meet at the point of convergence, the great intersect, where John 3:16 meets Luke 4, immigration via a biblical worldview."