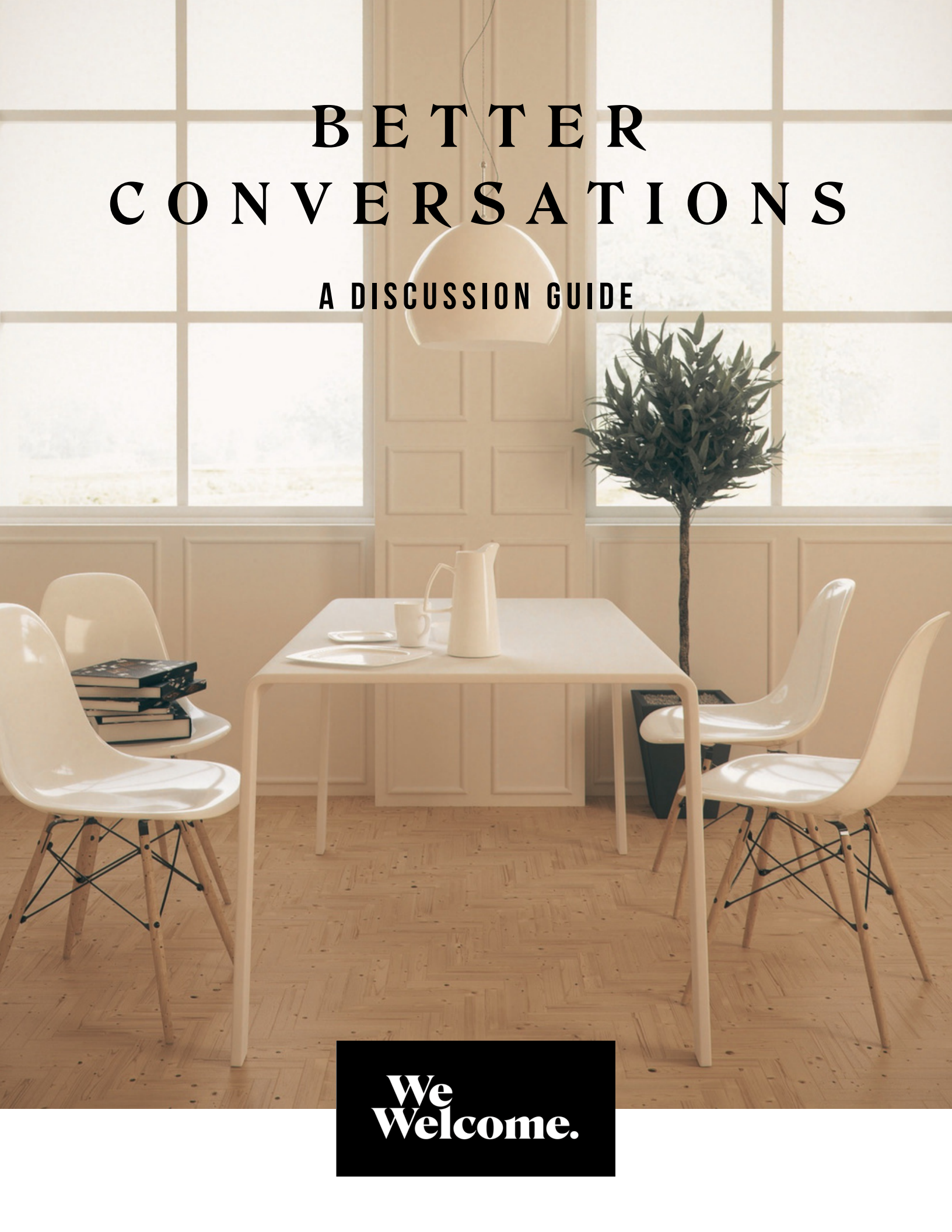


BETTER CONVERSATIONS

A DISCUSSION GUIDE



**We
Welcome.**

INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

Fewer issues in our society are as sharply polarizing as immigration. Many Americans have strong, emotional reactions just at the mention of the topic. Many Christians would rather avoid sparking a divisive argument, so they stay silent.

But the topic of immigration is actually much more than a political issue: it is a biblical issue. It involves people who are made in the very image of God.

This short guide is designed to encourage you to lean into these tough conversations about immigration. We believe these conversations are needed and when rooted in grace and truth they will lead to communities that thrive with mutual respect for one another.

Whether you are engaging family or strangers, we pray that these foundational concepts will help you have better conversations.

C O N T E N T S

I. PREPARATION

II. ENGAGING

III. RIGHT MINDSET

IV. EMPATHY

V. KINDNESS

VI. COMMON GROUND

VII. GET PERSONAL

VIII. BRING IT BACK





P R E P A R A T I O N

Tough conversations require intentional preparation. Before engaging in any potentially contentious discussion, it is wise to spend time in prayer. The psalmist David gives us language to invite God to examine our hearts:

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

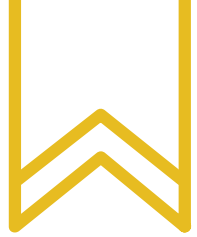
(Psalm 139: 23-24 NIV)

We should ask God to help us rightly assess our own motivations, ensuring that they are rooted in God's love for both immigrants and those with whom we may disagree. Pride and impatience can build up walls and shut down conversations quickly. It is helpful to remember how far we have come in our own journey. We are all works in progress and no one has fully arrived yet.

PRAYER

God, help us to walk humbly with You so we may walk humbly with others. Keep our motives rooted in love even when disagreements arise. We need Your Spirit to bring peace; help us to be peacemakers who walk patiently alongside others in this journey.

PREPARATION



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is one thing I can work on to prepare myself for engaging in better conversations?
2. As I consider people who have approached me about this topic, how can I pray for them before we have a conversation?
3. As I think about immigration, how can I expand my knowledge of this complex and nuanced topic?



Now Under Construction

That's Us!

THE FIRST
BIKES

 **KOPS RECORDS**
416.593.8523
kopsrecords.ca



ENGAGING

You should not feel responsible to engage in every conversation with every single person you come across. Sometimes the wisest choice is not to engage at all, or at least not very deeply, especially over social media.

Before you decide to discuss immigration with someone, we recommend taking a few things into consideration:

What's your relationship with the person?

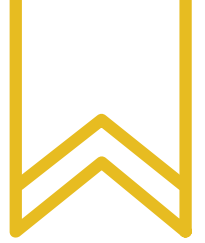
Is it someone with whom you are close enough that they will respect your perspective and be authentic with you?

Genuinely reflect on your own motivation for having the conversation.

Are you prepared to learn from the other person like you hope they learn from you? Are you in the emotional space to engage the conversation in a Christ-like way?

We recommend only moving forward with the conversation after you've considered some of these things carefully and made a conscious choice to engage in a God-honoring way. Sometimes the best path is to engage later on when the environment is more conducive to a positive conversation.

ENGAGING



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is one person who has tried to engage me online that I could try to talk with in person?
2. As I reflect on my own motivations to engage with someone- Is it to prove a point or to genuinely seek to understand and be understood?
3. How can I develop a mindset that is willing to “play the long game” with this person?



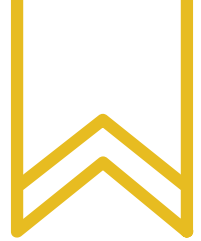
RIGHT MINDSET

Rather than “winning” the conversation, your goal should be to understand the other person’s perspective and for them to understand yours. This won't always happen in one conversation. Even if we follow all of the advice in this guide perfectly, the other person might leave the conversation unconvinced by what we say.
We must hold space for this tension.

It is far more important to engage with love, empathy and respect than to get the other person “on your side” at the end of one conversation. These efforts often take time and several conversations before people are moved. We want to leave conversations with the door open for future conversations; not burned down bridges with no hope of return.

As followers of Jesus, we put our trust in the Holy Spirit to change people’s hearts and minds, which often happens outside of our ideal timeframe!

RIGHT MINDSET



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is a specific issue that I have a hard time "agreeing to disagree" on? How can I prepare myself to give more grace to those areas of tension?
2. In what ways have I forced my opinions on people in the past?
3. How can I develop a mindset that doesn't want to "win" every conversation but is more focused on relating?



292

Miss everyone, even people at the nursing home. (I) May
voices that come out of nursing mouths. STENITE could make no
cat, you talking rock. STENITE gave a shit about me and not just
whether I could fix this world I don't give a shit about me and not just
No. She should forget me and in Meow. Find some boring job
actually wants to sleep with. Have a boring life. She doesn't like
Night falls in the time it takes Nassim to reach the building
Steel repositions, appearing in front of a strange, asymmetrical
line, wedge-shaped, twisted, whose high end faces the wind. It
a rock of the building, in the lee of the wind. It is a
on the roof, more than likely to have accumulated from the
ward over centuries. It looks planned, though overgrown. In
amid the mess, Nassim can see that someone has huddled on
a garden. Recently, the plants are overgrown, too, now growth
springing up from dropped fruit and split, unopened vines, the
given the relative dearth of weeds and the still near row, the
garden can't be more than a year or two neglected. The house
is now almost two years old.

Later, The building's door moves on its own, sliding and
Nassim approaches. It closes on its own, too, once she's gone
then Schafta far enough. Steel moves inside, pointing
upstairs. She drags Schafta to the foot of the stairs and then
drops beside him, shaking too tired to think or go any further.
Schafta's heart is still strong, she thinks, as she uses his chest
for a pillow. With her eyes shut, she can almost imagine the
man over her body, determining her fate.

291

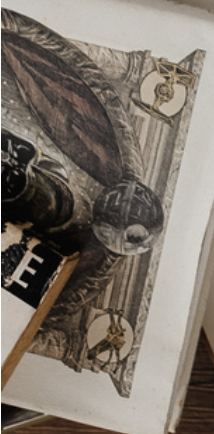
The Stone Sky

N. K. Jemisin

Let's holding her, rather than the other way around. It's pity
comfort, but enough to let her sleep without dreams.

with me
No. She should forget me and in Meow. Find some boring job
actually wants to sleep with. Have a boring life. She doesn't like
Night falls in the time it takes Nassim to reach the building
Steel repositions, appearing in front of a strange, asymmetrical
line, wedge-shaped, twisted, whose high end faces the wind. It
a rock of the building, in the lee of the wind. It is a
on the roof, more than likely to have accumulated from the
ward over centuries. It looks planned, though overgrown. In
amid the mess, Nassim can see that someone has huddled on
a garden. Recently, the plants are overgrown, too, now growth
springing up from dropped fruit and split, unopened vines, the
given the relative dearth of weeds and the still near row, the
garden can't be more than a year or two neglected. The house
is now almost two years old.

Later, The building's door moves on its own, sliding and
Nassim approaches. It closes on its own, too, once she's gone
then Schafta far enough. Steel moves inside, pointing
upstairs. She drags Schafta to the foot of the stairs and then
drops beside him, shaking too tired to think or go any further.
Schafta's heart is still strong, she thinks, as she uses his chest
for a pillow. With her eyes shut, she can almost imagine the
man over her body, determining her fate.



EMPATHY

Part of the reason that the topic of immigration can be so difficult to discuss is that it touches on very personal concerns, fears, hopes and dreams.

It's vital that we genuinely listen to others – not to form a clever rebuttal so as to win an argument, but to genuinely understand the experiences, underlying fears and assumptions that have shaped another's perspective.

We don't have to agree with their perspective, but if we are to “show proper respect to everyone” (1 Peter 2:17), we must seek to understand.

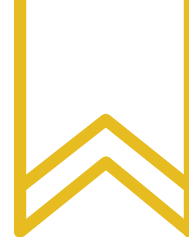
Try to listen longer than feels comfortable before offering a response. Engaging people with empathy helps us bridge divides and break down biases, creating a solid foundation for conversation within relationships.

Consider responding with affirming statements like:

“Tell me more about that.”

“How does that make you feel?”

“Why do you think you feel that way?”



EMPATHY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some personal fears I have around immigration? If none, were there any concerns you had earlier on?
2. What are some things I do in conversations that prevent me from displaying empathy?
3. How do I want to be treated in conversations? Pause and quietly consider the empathy you desire to receive and think of how you can extend that to others. Grace, not coercion, always provides an opportunity for lasting transformation.



KINDNESS

Rather than responding with your own opinion, try to ask questions that further explore the other person's understanding and experience. Take care to use a curious and calm tone that communicates your authentic desire to learn more.

Some helpful questions might include:

“Have you ever been in a circumstance where you were a newcomer or felt out of place?”

“What factors do you think most influence your perspective?
(Possible factors: Your personal experience with immigrants whom you know? The media? The Bible?)

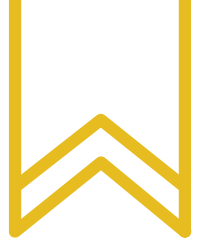
“How do you think you might respond if you faced the circumstances that many immigrants were in prior to their decision to come to the U.S.?”

“Can you tell me about an immigrant you know in our community that you've worked with, served or learned from?”

Remember, our responses are important.

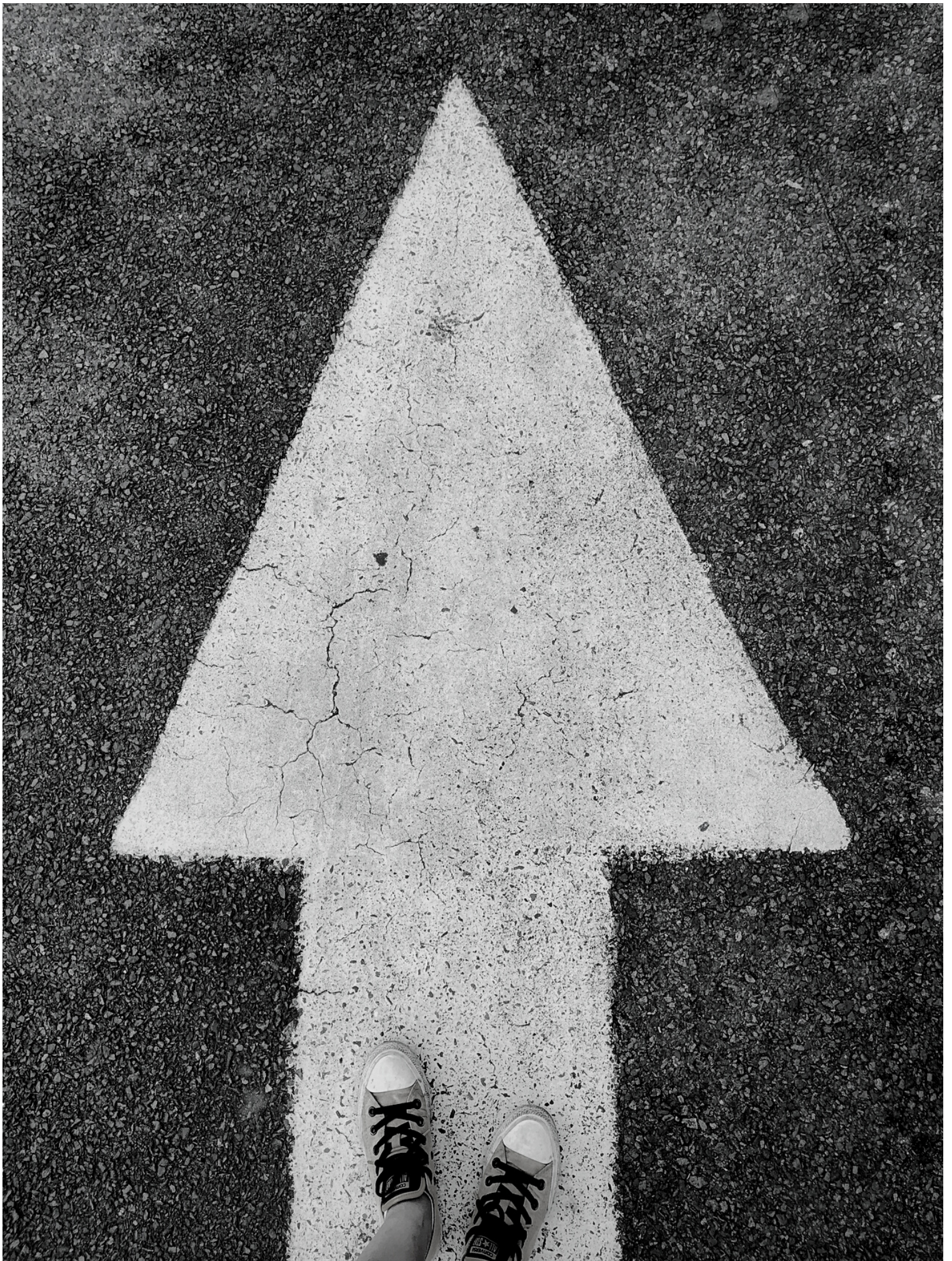
A kind response will encourage deeper trust for future conversations.

KINDNESS



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Write about a time you were the "stranger" and how the kindness of others made you feel welcome.
2. How can we remain curious with those who have different perspectives from our own?
3. Who do you need to show kindness to in your own life?
4. How can we use kindness as a tool to build relationships?



COMMON GROUND

We should prioritize finding common values with our conversation partner as a foundation for dialogue.

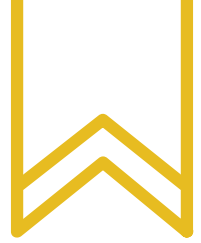
Use affirming statements like “I know we share many of the same values” or “You are a very compassionate person.”

If you make this effort to draw out the best in someone in a genuine way, it will go a long way toward having a productive conversation.

You should also encourage others to recognize commonalities with immigrants. First and foremost, they are people made in God’s image. Another overlooked commonality is that they are motivated by the same dynamics and values that guide most U.S. citizens such as: concerns for their families, safety, the ability to create a better life, and in many cases their faith in God.

When discussing immigration with fellow Christians, it’s often helpful to emphasize that many immigrants to the U.S. arrive with a strong Christian faith.

COMMON GROUND



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of your core values in life?
2. How do those values shape your decisions?
3. What shifts in your perspective when you think about immigrants having the same values as you?
4. What could we gain by embracing our brothers and sisters in Christ who simply have a different legal status?



GET PERSONAL

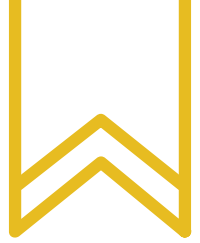
While there may be a place for sharing statistics or other facts, in an era of “alternative facts,” many people are skeptical of information from news reports or politicians.

What’s harder to disagree with is your own personal experience: talk about your own experience with immigrants/immigration, something you learned that changed your perspective and/or about the experiences of individuals and families whom you have met. These people who you saw face to face probably broke through all the negative stereotypes of immigrants that are common in some media outlets.

This is where we are trying to lead people; to a personal connection with fellow human beings, not political labels.

You do not have to have answers to every question or fully understand how U.S. immigration laws or policies work. You can always pivot back to your own experience and sometimes this speaks louder than statistics.

GET PERSONAL



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can oversharing statistics and using only political terms actually backfire in conversations?
2. What are some personal experiences you have had that you haven't shared yet?
3. What are some ways you could come alongside someone to bring them into proximity with immigrants or refugees?
4. Write out a prayer asking God to show you how you could be a leader in helping others see the people behind the politics.



BRING IT BACK

If you are having a conversation with someone who shares your Christian faith, consistently encourage them to form their view of immigrants/immigration not in political points but in biblical truth.

The Scriptures abound with God's commands to his people to love the "foreigner in the land" and to practice hospitality – literally, the love of strangers.

We can and should seek to obey these commands while also acknowledging and respecting the various biblical teachings that compel us to respect governing authorities and their role in maintaining safety and order.

Scripture to Study and Share

Genesis 12:1–4

Exodus 12:48-49

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

Exodus 23:9

Ezekiel 22:29-30

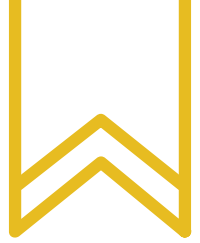
1 Peter 2:11

Galatians 3:28

Ephesians 2:11-22

Hebrews 11:13-14

BRING IT BACK



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some ways you can practice hospitality in this season of my life?
2. What Scripture passage, regarding God's heart for the immigrant, resonates most strongly with me? What can you do to share that passage more clearly to others?
3. Are there some commands you have neglected or refused to do? Write out a prayer of repentance and ask God to renew your commitment to His commands.

CONTENT CONTRIBUTORS

We want to thank The Evangelical Immigration Table for providing these foundational concepts and framework for engaging in respectful conversations.

You can find more resources from the EIT here:
<https://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com>

We want to acknowledge Tess Clarke, Katharine Hurlburt, and Tim King for their contributions in creating this resource for the We Welcome Community.

(If you are interested in using this for a small group discussion, please contact our Social Advocate Coordinator via email,
katharine@wechoosewelcome.com)

The logo for 'We Welcome.' is displayed in white text on a black rectangular background. The word 'We' is positioned above 'Welcome.', and the period is included at the end of the word 'Welcome.'

**We
Welcome.**