

EXCERPT

IVP Books

You Welcomed Me

Loving Refugees and Immigrants Because God First Loved Us

Available November 27, 2018 | \$15, 128 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4553-8

"Kent Annan is a gifted storyteller. You Welcomed Me vividly conveys the stories of refugees and other immigrants throughout the world, challenging preconceptions and inviting readers to consider how the lives of displaced people might intersect with our own stories and, ultimately, with God's story. A compelling, inspiring look at one of the most pressing issues of our day."

Matthew Soerens, US Director of Church Mobilization, World Relief, and National Coordinator, Evangelical Immigration Table, coauthor of *Welcoming the Stranger* and *Seeking Refuge*

"We're Letting Too Many People In"

"I often think of America as a lifeboat and a lot of the world is a raging ocean," said TV show host Bill Maher. "Everybody wants to get in the lifeboat. And certainly everybody has a right to be happy in the world. But if too many people get in the lifeboat, then the lifeboat goes down. We want to rescue people who are drowning. But eventually if you let too many people in, we'll sink."

No, not everybody wants to come to America, but Maher's comment gets to the point that it's more complicated than opening our arms wide and saying, "Let everyone who wants to come in!"

My cousin John Stackhouse, a professor in Canada, sees parallels for North Americans in how God commanded Israel to care for the stranger but also to protect its borders. We should welcome, he says, but "societies also correctly maintain their integrity by being careful how much 'difference' they introduce into their social bloodstream, how much change they try to accommodate."

"We, too," he says, "should use our wealth and power to care for the needy. But we also should use our heads and not compromise precisely what makes Canada so attractive to so many people around the world . . . our democracy, respect for law, stable institutions, social safety net, and, indeed, our regard and accommodation for differences in our neighbors even as we help them assimilate into our common life."

The US should welcome more generously. For example, in response to the Vietnam War, we welcomed 800,000 Vietnamese. Compare that to this moment of global refugee crisis, when we're cutting back by more than 50 percent how many we welcome each year. At the same time, as Stackhouse warns, different sides in the debate can oversimplify: "No few Bible verses . . . can provide a shortcut past the difficult conversation we have been having, and must continue to have, about immigration policy in this country."

We should welcome more refugees, but we also have to continue the same kind of vetting that has ensured that no American life has been taken by a refugee in a terrorist act since the Refugee Act of 1980—and some number of refugees does have to be decided on. With immigrants, our society has to choose how many to welcome and how to create a fair, dignified system. Europe has demonstrated generosity toward refugees, while also showing some problems of failed integration. Surely we have a moral duty not to deport those who were brought here as children, those who are in school or have graduated, worked hard, complied with laws, paid taxes, been good neighbors.

Experts emphasize how important refugee care is in countries next to violent conflict or drought that makes people flee. These countries receive so many more refugees. We will never bring most of the refugees to our country, and that's not the best-case scenario. We should be more generous in helping other nations receive their neighbors. These are all complex issues that need to be wrestled with and decided. Yes, there should be wise limits.

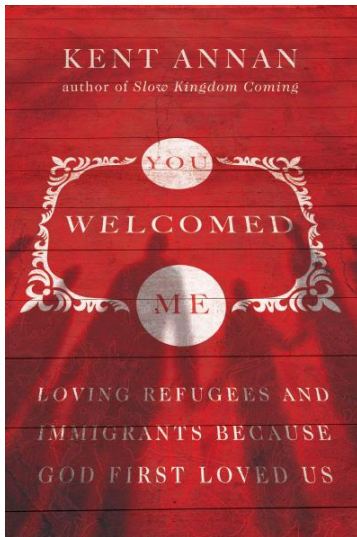


Alisse Wissman, print publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, broadcast and online publicity
800.846.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com

INTERVARSITY PRESS | ivpress.com/media





EXCERPT

IVP Books

You Welcomed Me

Loving Refugees and Immigrants Because God First Loved Us

Available November 27, 2018 | \$15, 128 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4553-8

“Kent Annan is a gifted storyteller. You Welcomed Me vividly conveys the stories of refugees and other immigrants throughout the world, challenging preconceptions and inviting readers to consider how the lives of displaced people might intersect with our own stories and, ultimately, with God's story. A compelling, inspiring look at one of the most pressing issues of our day.”

Matthew Soerens, US Director of Church Mobilization, World Relief, and National Coordinator, Evangelical Immigration Table, coauthor of *Welcoming the Stranger* and *Seeking Refuge*

Immigrants and refugees both challenge and affirm the narrative of America. The United States has been a place of refuge and opportunity for many strangers (as seen in immigrant American dream stories), a place of refusal for others (during travel bans), a place of purgatory for millions (particularly undocumented workers), and a place of exploitative oppression past and present for still others (including Native Americans, slaves, and their descendants).

This isn't a political statement. This is being honest people who love our neighbors and respect the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. Welcoming refugees and immigrants gives us a chance to live toward Statue of Liberty ideals.

Finally, with the annual refugee cap now at its lowest by far since Ronald Reagan, who one year set the cap at 140,000, we certainly can welcome more. There is a limit somewhere, but unemployment is very low after we have been welcoming about 100,000 people a year. We receive only 0.2 percent of the world's refugees. Our nation has proven that we can handle it economically (to the country's benefit), the process is safe (see the security statistics above), and those who live in diverse neighborhoods benefit economically, through safety, and in a neighborhood that looks more like the residents of God's kingdom.

We aren't called to first defend our country's borders or honor, but to seek the kingdom of God. We're susceptible to seeking comfort, patriotism, war, power, pleasure, success, and so many other things first. We're susceptible to seeking liberal, libertarian, or conservative stairways to heaven rather than going down on our knees to love, learn, and pray. We don't want to huddle within bonds of racism or nationalism, but instead to cross borders into the liberation of God's kingdom.

—Taken from chapter three, “Real Concerns”

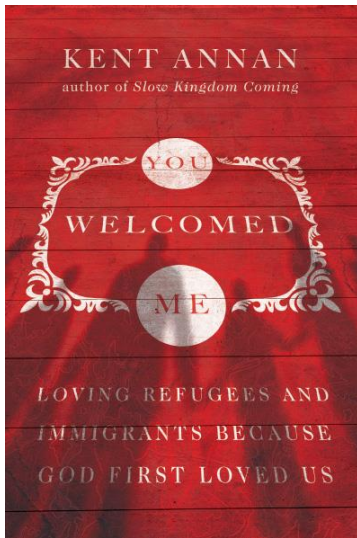


Alisse Wissman, print publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, broadcast and online publicity
800.846.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com

INTERVARSITY PRESS | ivpress.com/media





Q&A

IVP Books

You Welcomed Me *Loving Refugees and Immigrants Because God First Loved Us*

Available November 27, 2018 | \$15, 128 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4553-8

"You Welcomed Me invites us into the amazing opportunity to welcome refugees and immigrants. We get to love others because God first loved us. We get to welcome Christ into our lives because 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' We get to witness for Jesus when we're known for loving our vulnerable neighbors. This book inspires, addresses concerns, and gives wise, practical advice for you and your church. Fear and politics can distract us, but You Welcomed Me is a passionate call to make much of love and make much of Jesus in our lives."

Ed Stetzer, Billy Graham Distinguished Chair, Wheaton College

"When there is reason to fear, let's be wise."

What made you want to write a book about the immigrant and refugee crisis?

Kent Annan: For two reasons: the lives of people who are vulnerable are at stake, and our own lives are at stake as people who will or won't welcome them. "Isn't putting it that way a bit extreme," I ask myself. But no. Refugees had to flee danger at home, and the ones eligible to resettle here are only the most vulnerable 1 percent. We're breaking up families with deportation; children were separated from their parents at the border. As a country we're now receiving about 75 percent fewer refugees than the recent past. Immigrants and refugees are, it seems, being harassed because of how they're talked about in the public square. Our call to love our neighbors as ourselves can get warped into a call to protect Americans as ourselves. I wrote about this topic because there are legitimate concerns to be addressed and because there so much at stake—for them and for us, as we choose whether or not to welcome. And if we choose to welcome, how do we do it well?

How do you hope your book helps readers with the questions of love verses fear?

Annan: Our fear is being stoked all the time, isn't it? Fear is used by the news to keep us watching, by headlines so we click, and by politicians for how to vote. Don't get me wrong—fear is a legitimate response when there is real danger! But when fear starts moving us in the opposite direction of love, we need to pause: to pray, to look at the facts, to understand why we're scared, and to ask where God's love leads us. So this book is, I hope, a way for us to pause together—to listen to people's stories, to economic and security research, to Scripture. Where there is reason for fear, let's be wise. And wherever there is opportunity, let's ensure love casts out fear.

What about your work, both in Haiti and elsewhere, made this an important topic for you?

Annan: Living in and then going back and forth to Haiti for the past fifteen years has shaped my life in profound ways. But my first job after college was working with a refugee ministry. For two years I worked in Europe with refugees from Sarajevo, Sierra Leone, Iran, Bangladesh. They became my friends. They beat me in chess. During the first snowfall they'd ever seen, the guys from Sierra Leone and I slid down the street together laughing like kindergartners. Later I lived in Albania during the Kosovo refugee crisis to help with response. All of this has made me sensitive to the needs of people who are immigrants and refugees. I've been close to their pain and admire their courage. Also, my life is so much better for these friendships and all I've learned. All these experiences have made me care about the topic—which is vital for us as individuals and communities, as a church and country.

Why do you open the book with your son's question, "Are we for them or against them?"

Annan: We have to make important, complex policy questions about immigration and refugee issues as a country. But the simplicity of my son's question, right before he attacked me in one of our regular wrestling sessions, struck me as the right place to start. We follow Jesus who said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." We love and seek guidance from God who says, "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. . . ." In our country's current climate, the answer to my son's question is

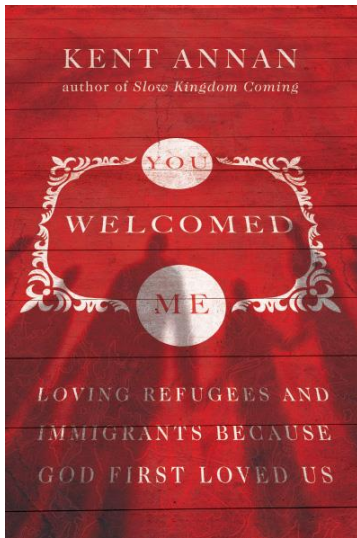


Alisse Wissman, print publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, broadcast and online publicity
800.846.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com

INTERVARSITY PRESS | ivpress.com/media





Q&A

IVP Books

You Welcomed Me *Loving Refugees and Immigrants Because God First Loved Us*

Available November 27, 2018 | \$15, 128 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4553-8

"You Welcomed Me invites us into the amazing opportunity to welcome refugees and immigrants. We get to love others because God first loved us. We get to welcome Christ into our lives because 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' We get to witness for Jesus when we're known for loving our vulnerable neighbors. This book inspires, addresses concerns, and gives wise, practical advice for you and your church. Fear and politics can distract us, but You Welcomed Me is a passionate call to make much of love and make much of Jesus in our lives."

Ed Stetzer, Billy Graham Distinguished Chair, Wheaton College

not a given, but it is where we have to start. Then we go through legitimate concerns, listening more deeply to their lives, and considering practical ways to help. Each chapter in the book ends with a simple practice that helps us to go deeper into being for them through reflection, prayer, and interactions with other people.

Why does thinking in terms of "that could be me" help to empathize with refugees and immigrants?

Annan: We can think, "Whew, glad that's not me." We can think, "That would never happen to me." Or we can empathize and really imagine, "That could be me"—which is dangerous, in a Jesus kind of way. Because then our imaginations lead us toward loving our neighbors as ourselves. Now how I pray, vote, give, talk, act is shaped by how that could be me trying to escape bombs in Aleppo carrying my children, like one mom I talked with in Jordan who was a refugee. I hope the book helps us grow in empathy for refugees and immigrants, which is beautiful and a bit risky, like growing in love always is.

Your last book was on the topic of compassion fatigue. How does *You Welcomed Me* address it?

Annan: The book gives readers a chance, whatever your political leaning, to step out of any fatigue you're feeling about this issue to ground ourselves in what is most important and life giving. For example, it helps to recognize this is actually a spiritual issue. This is God's work in which we're called to do our best to love our neighbors. This is a controversial issue, but I hope the book leads people into freedom and joy as they help others.

Why are the two scales you talk about—the Dehumanizing Our Neighbor Scale and the Good Samaritan Scale—so important to understanding the concept of welcoming you discuss in the book?

Annan: The bad news is we're vulnerable, as the famous Milgram experiment in psychology and too many examples from history show us, to dehumanizing our neighbor. When we think of them as *less*, then we can blame them, bomb them, deport them without hesitation, separate children from parents, and not welcome them. I don't like admitting this vulnerability about myself, but it's true for me and all of us. But the good news is, in a similar way but opposite direction, we can grow step by step in empathy and love that leads us to deeper connection, to thoughtful helping, to friendship, and to being beautifully connected as God's children with those who have had to flee their homes. Understanding our vulnerability (along the Dehumanizing Our Neighbor Scale) and our opportunity (along the Good Samaritan Scale) is so important for refugees and immigrants right now. Making the most of this opportunity is this book's invitation for us personally and as a country.

Why do you think our nation and world have become a place where welcoming the stranger is so difficult?

Annan: The answer seems easy in some ways: many of us are scared of change. A lot of this is understandable, and this book takes these concerns seriously. Then media and politicians that can bring us together can also bring out the worst in us. But I want to answer your important question with two questions I hope will guide us: If God loves us, how should we then love? If God welcomes us, how should we then welcome? That's why the book's subtitle is, *Loving Refugees and Immigrants Because God First Loved Us*. Living in the grace of God's loving welcome changes everything about how we see refugees and immigrants. Then there are still lots of wise decisions to make and practical things we can do, which the book gets into, but now we're on the right path of welcoming the stranger.



Alisse Wissman, print publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, broadcast and online publicity
800.846.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com

INTERVARSITY PRESS | ivpress.com/media

