



IMMIGRANT CONNECTION

WAYPOINTS

ALONG THE WELCOME JOURNEY



BEST PRACTICES LEARNED FROM PRACTITIONERS DURING THE IC WELCOME CALL

ADVOCACY 101 – BEING AN ALLY FOR YOUR IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORS LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY

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A welcome call with Adam Estle (VP of Field and Constituencies, National Immigration Forum) and Adam Lipscomb (Director of Development, Immigrant Connection)

To watch the recording: <https://youtu.be/SK0ZA9-0DaY>

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

- Trying to influence a conversation in a positive way
- Advocacy is actually Biblical – Holy Spirit is an advocate on our behalf.
- Take an approach that is winsome in a way that is conversational and actually listens more than we talk.
 - Find out where are people coming from
- It may be less about speaking up or giving a speech and more about having a conversation than trying to win ground.

WHAT ARE VARIOUS FORMS OF ADVOCACY?

- Ladder of engagement:
 - If you've ever had a conversation about immigration and who immigrants are, you have been involved at a micro level of advocacy
 - Mustard seed conversation can change hearts and minds.
 - Engaging with members of congress/presidents and trying to change policy and laws.
- Take steps you are comfortable with, but also take steps outside of your comfort zone.
- When calling a congress person:
 - You probably won't talk directly to congressperson.
 - They are our members of congress; As a constituent, that means for congress – we are their boss.
 - While the office may agree, they're hearing a lot from constituents that don't feel that way.
 - 10 calls from anti-immigrant, 2 calls from pro-immigrant.

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS GET INVOLVED WITH ADVOCACY? HOW DO WE DO IT IN A WAY THAT IS CHRIST-LIKE?

- There is a difference between being political and being partisan.
 - Politics are how are our country functions. Let's avoid being partisan – let's not just tow our partisan line whichever side it is.
 - Do not demonize people on the other side.
- You can be involved in politics and see the person on the other side as a valuable member of our political process.
- Our democracy functions better when we can have conversations with people across the aisle.
- Turn down the temperature.
 - We don't have to meet the temperature of a conversation
 - Ignoring when someone comes after us – you don't always have to address a comment.
- Pick your battles.
- It can be a real fear of being co-opted and being pulled away from our central commitment to Christ
 - Before talking to anyone, remind yourself who you are first and foremost
 - Follower of Jesus, Ambassador of Christ – participant of earth.
 - Sharing a testimony of what God is doing in the lives of immigrants.
 - Care for your own spiritual development.

IS ADVOCACY FOR EVERYONE OR JUST A SELECT FEW?

- You don't have to know everything about Immigration Policy to be powerful.
- The power that you bring to the conversation is your story, your experience, your community.
- Don't downplay the value of stories – the senator may not have heard the story you're thinking of.
 - Share the story of the real people you are advocating for.
- Stories, experiences, relationships – those are the most powerful.
- Washington DC bubble is a real thing:
 - Many times, congresspeople lose track of what is happening in the real world.
 - Stories are grounding, and they remind the congresspeople who they are representing.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF ADVOCACY:

- DON'T feel like you have to be an expert to make a phone call
 - If you're making a phone call, it's going to likely be very one-sided and they will listen and pass along information to the congressperson.
 - You can say "I don't know", but what I do know is how real people are being affected
- DO frame the conversation in a positive way
 - Find an area of commonality with the congressperson – point out if they voted out the same way on something,
 - Build bridges of understanding.
 - They hear from angry people all the time, can you come into the conversation with a positive approach – it will make a difference.
 - Treat people like a human being.
- DO be ambitious with what you ask and follow up with how *you* can be supportive to the congressperson.
 - Shift from "This is what you should do" to "What can *we* do?"
- DO remember that everyone is made in the image of God and they are worthy of dignity and respect.
- DO remember that congressional members have *many* issues they have to work on.
 - They cannot spend every day thinking about what you're thinking about.
 - Don't be surprised if part of the conversation is educating them gently about what may be going on.

WHAT SHOULD WE BE ADVOCATING FOR RIGHT NOW?

- Humanitarian crisis at the border
 - Southern side of US / Mexico border trying to get migrants to access to legal system.
 - This is a HUMANITARIAN CRISIS not a security crisis.
 - Immigrationforum.org
- House of Reps passed 2 pieces of legislation that are now going to the senate.
 - Dream and Promise Act – legal status for dreamers
 - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status can have a pathway to become a Lawful Permanent Resident.
 - Farm Workforce Modernization Act
 - Undocumented farm workers also have a pathway to status.
 - You can encourage senators to engage in this in a bipartisan way – there's a lot more buy-in with success.
- Compromise is the art of what is promised.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

- It's tempting to paint something as black or white, what is tough is to find the gray.
- Being in the United States is not the key to happiness.
 - Being loved, made by, formed by a gracious Savior, Jesus, is the key to happiness.
 - Heaven, where our citizenship is wholeheartedly, will be filled with all tribes, tongues, people nations.
- If you're serving in a hard place, doing the hard work that can feel unseen and can feel unimportant, the Lord sees and knows the heart behind the work you do!

To sign up for upcoming Immigrant Connection Welcome Calls: www.icwelcome.org/call