

Transcript 110

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. One of the most frequently asked questions we get that has a large, I'll say political component to it is something about immigration. Seems to be very, very common in election years, especially in the summer when illegal immigration seems to become more of a problem. So this is something that we've been wanting to do for a right time. It was just a matter of me finding the right guest, so of course been doing research trying to find someone who I found presents a what I felt was found to be a very Biblically, balanced perspective. So joining me today is Reverend Samuel Rodriguez. He's the president, founder of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. So Samuel, welcome to the show today.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

Thank you for having me.

Shea Houdmann

Reverend Samuel tell us a little about yourself a little bit about the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and also how God's given you a passion for the immigration issue.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

Yeah, by the grace of God we lead the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. It's the nation's oldest and largest Hispanic Evangelical network. We have 42,000 plus certified member churches. They're certified annually. By a very prestigious law firm, and it's a wonderful network indeed.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

In addition to that, we produce movies. We write books, speak at conferences, Pastor a wonderful multiethnic church in California with campuses in Los Angeles and Sacramento, and I'm the father of three, have the most amazing wife on the planet. I'm a Trekkie, a Batman fan, a Yankee fan and here we are.

Shea Houdmann

That is a good, thorough introduction, so thank you for that. I get I can. I can see the Batman fan so, what did you think of the most recent Batman movie just out of curiosity? I haven't seen it yet, so don't spoil it for me.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

Me yeah no. I'm a Christopher Nolan fan and I'm in the industry so there's only one Christopher Nolan and one Christian Bale and that's all I have to say about that.

Shea Houdmann

OK point taken yeah, so back to the subject at hand. How can we as evangelicals balance both the biblical call to obey the law, which I think we agree is important, but also with the biblical commands to show love, respecting compassion to sojourners, to immigrants, to refugees.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

I truly believe the biblical antidote to the immigration melees may very well emerge as the political antidote. The angst for so many years. You have to understand the historical context not just of migratory patterns as it pertains to the impact on the American demographic from 1776 to the present. But you would have to go back a little bit to 1986-87. Ronald Reagan granted amnesty to those that were here illegally. This is a Republican president, by the way, who granted amnesty. He talked about the beauty and the blessing of the immigrant community and how these immigrants share the values of our founding fathers, meaning faith, family, hard work, entrepreneurship. Move that forward to 2006, the current debacle. There was legislation proposed by James Sensenbrenner, supported by Tom Tancredo and that legislative initiative really saturated the landscape even rhetorically with language that does not line up with the Bible. What do I mean? It was full of nativist language. Language that talked about preserving Western European heritage and doing away with that which was counter in their perspective to Western European heritage.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

So we were advising back then George W Bush. We've had the privilege of advising 3 presidents George W Bush, President Obama and President Trump on this issue. And I always brought about the biblical prescription. I did away with the politics. And I say, here's what the Bible says. We have to be pro immigrant Leviticus 19. Absolutely! Immigrants are a blessing to America, not a curse.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

At the same time, Romans 13, we have to be a nation, a sovereign nation, and engaging the rule of law. We are a nation of laws. We have to stop all illegal immigration. So as Christians we come in with that lens. It's not either or. Politicians engage in dichotomy's perpetual dichotomies either or. Christians come along and where people have both the vertical and the horizontal planes of the Christian message. So we're both vertical and horizontal. That's the cross. We're both righteousness and justice. We're both truth and love, conviction and compassion. So we're both John 3:16 and Matthew 25. Our Christian solution it's both and.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

What does that mean? We're a pro immigrant nation. We love immigrants. We understand they are a blessing. However, we want them to come here legally, not illegally. So we submit to that outline and I submitted something to both President Obama and to President Trump. And I mean submit it literally. In meetings I had with them and the solution was let's stop illegal immigration immediately. Let's engage infrared technology satellite imaging. We have the technological wherewithal, know how to read a license plate in Afghanistan from thousands of miles in the air. We can detect who's coming in over the border illegally. Just a matter of resource and asset allocation. Let's stop all illegal immigration on humanitarian, on a humanitarian purpose and basis first and foremost.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

What do I mean, as a Latino pastor, I know first hand the issue of sex trafficking. I can tell you horrific stories that will break your heart regarding 7, 9, 10 year old little girls and boys sexually molested, raped, violated. Tragedy. And I mean tragic. It's difficult for me to even talk about it. We have churches

full of young men and women, boys and girls who are now adults with great trauma because they came here illegally and the coyotes exploited them sexually. And so on that basis alone as a pastor, I want to stop all illegal immigration. We need to. We're feeding the cartels and the coyotes, and it's just horrific tragic indeed. Morally reprehensible.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

In addition to that, that's the first motivation. We are a sovereign nation and there are people that want to do as harm and there is fentanyl being transferred over. There is so much happening over the border egregiously negatively impacting our nation via the conduit of illegal immigration. So we want to stop illegal immigration immediately. Stopping illegal immigration is not anti American, it's Pro America and I would argue pro Christian. Forget America is beautiful and blessed to be an American.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

I'm a Christian first and foremost, so it's it's our Heavenly Father before Uncle Sam and God bless Uncle Sam. But sometimes our uncles get drunk. So I'm going to listen to my Heavenly Father, first in formost. And on that basis alone, we should stop illegal immigration. But in addition to that, we are a sovereign nation. We need to protect our borders. On the other side, the question always arises, all right. Sam, what do we do with the millions that are here already? That that's the question. I can tell you first hand. The reason we haven't solved the immigration crisis is because there's angst regarding that issue.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

What issue? If we make legal 10 to 20 million individuals who are here without documentation, we are literally empowering a political apparatus. And on one side of the aisle, the Republicans think these are primarily people from Latin America therefore, they will be emerged as a voting constituency for a Democratic Party, therefore we will never sign on to. Even with Donald Trump proposed legalizing the dreamers, those that came in here as young men and women, young boys and girls, the Democrats said, we don't want to give the Republicans a political advantage because some of these individuals may end up voting Republican.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

So both parties have engaged in in malfeasance, moral malfeasance, egregious malfeasance regarding utilizing human beings as political toys. Both Republicans and Democrats have. Both are equally guilty. The solution is this. The solution is, if you came to this country illegally and you've been here for years, and your children grew up here, and we know that you you probably are using a false identification number, Social Security number. But if you're not living off government entitlements, being welfare and so forth, you're hard working. So many of them are churchgoers. Actually, 98% of them are either Catholic or or evangelical, Protestant, and that's pretty amazing the number, by the way. And so if you're churchgoer you love God and your hard work. You came here illegally. Here's a solution. You we will give you a green card. You will admit you came here illegally. You will pay some fine being a Domini miss amount, be it \$300 or \$1000. You're gonna pay a fine.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

There has to be a sense of culpability, but you're here legally going forward, but you'll never become a citizen of the United States of America. And that's the price you will pay and there is no if and or butts

about it. There is no citizenship for you. Now your children who you brought over they shouldn't pay for the sins of their parents. We will grant their children citizenship. Children should not have to pay. When your six and seven-year old years of age and your parents bring you here illegally, you have no no vote as it pertains to what happens to your outcome, so they shouldn't pay for the sins of their parents as long as they're not involved in the nefarious activities and so forth.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

So that's the solution that we propose to both President Obama. But we doubled down with President Trump. And literally over dinner, I gave the president the proposal and I can tell you it's gained traction in Congress. I've met with senators and members of Congress, and they have said this is the biblical solution. This is the Bible. You just reconcile Leviticus 19 of Matthew 25 and Romans 13. These 3 chapters. Leviticus 19, Matthew 25, the sheep and the goats. How do you know if you are a sheep or goat? How you treat the alien, the stranger, the immigrant, etc. The marginalized. And then Romans 13. The application of the little law. There it is. That's a biblically substantiated solution where we reconcile mercy and compassion and love the imago dei with the rule of law. So it's not either or it's both and.

Shea Houdmann

Amen Samuel, that I've I've written on this before, just kind of thinking. OK, if I were to put together a proposal. I mean I, I don't have influence over anyone. I mean thankfully, a lot of people read gotquestions.org and watch the podcasts and videos so we do have some influence. But in terms of political, that's really not our interest at all. But if I were to put something together. And I've heard you'd speak on this before. I'd be, if not identical, very, very close to what you propose, and it makes makes perfect sense to me, both from a biblical standpoint and like you said, balancing the need for obeying the laws, but also showing compassion. With also the political standpoint, it seems like a compromise view that I have trouble seeing either side really being able to come up with a good argument against, but so in your experience, that's we'd stick on the political side just a little bit longer. What is the resistance that you're finding from politician United States to the plan that your proposing?

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

And I've had. I have had an interesting trajectory. I've had issues in 2006 where my pushback came from the right. I've had issues during the Obama administration where the pushback came from the left. I find myself in this group. I'm an independent. I am a Lambs agenda guy. So I vote according to biblical values. But that right now, the hesitation is from the left, because they're saying Reverend Rodriguez you not granting citizenship is immoral and I would argue no. It's naturally moral. Citizenship is not a you know, God ordained right other than Kingdom citizenship, in the writings of the apostle Paul. So you came in here illegally. There's a price to pay. There must be consequences of breaking of a law, and there must be. If not, we are raising a generation of anarchy and chaos. No respect for the rule of law. So there have to be consequences and it does away with the political angst on the right.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

The idea that we're gonna be legalizing millions of Democratic voters. Well no and and by the way, just a little side note, little amendment, not. We're discussing the political opponent. The idea that every Latino immigrant is gonna automatically vote one political party meaning the Democratic Party as you well know from the past few weeks and months, totally a misnomer and I've been saying this for 20 plus

years. Latino immigrants primarily are very conservative in their worldview. Faith, family, entrepreneurship. Some of them come from totalitarian socialist communist regimes, so they already line up as we have seen recently in Texas and Florida and so forth, where with with many on the right. And during republican party. So yeah, that's the angst right now.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

The pushback is from Democrats saying no, they must be granted citizenship. Your plan is is immoral, and I'm and I'm arguing my plan is the only thing that could actually bring a solution. A practical solution that both sides would cite onto, and I do believe we'll gain some traction. Inevitably, we will gain some traction, especially after this upcoming November. I will be meeting with members from both sides of the aisle and and establishing a coalition to push immigration reform. And sometime next year.

Shea Houdmann

That's fantastic. I'd love for you if possible to keep me posted or something's going to nothing else I could be praying for this, but I grew up in South Texas. And even back then I remember this being a controversy. We're talking 40 plus years ago people were arguing about that then, and here we are four decades later, and we're still fighting over some of the same issues. And it's just, it's infuriating. But it's also sad when you look at the people who are involved. There are people who are, like you said, being used as pawns for political purposes that. So this is not a political podcast, but it's impossible to really discuss the immigration issue without getting into politics at least a little bit from from a more spiritual background. But I have found it so hard to have a conversation even amongst brothers and sisters in Christ. When there's a political spectrum involved, so in your experience, how can we as Christians treat this issue with more grace or treat each other with more grace when we may not agree. We may, one side may want to emphasize enforcing the law more, the other side may want to emphasize showing love, compassion mercy to the immigrant side, how? How can we. How can we all just get along? For lack of a better way of saying it.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

Let's put on our Kingdom hats. If you wake up in the morning and you're primarily a Republican or a Democrat. And then we're gonna have some issues, but if you wake up in the morning and you are first and foremost a child of the living God. A benefactor of the gracious vicarious atoning work of Christ. Finished work of Christ. Then you will look at this differently.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

I look at this primarily vertically. I'm going to go back to that cross being vertical and horizontal. We discussed for the past few minutes of horizontal. Let me talk about the vertical. What if I tell you that if we deport 20 million which is impossible, we can't do it. We don't have the the manpower, the bandwidth, the inclination. We just can't do it, but hypothetically speaking, if we deport 20 million immigrants, we may very well be deporting the next Great Awakening, period. We may be deporting the next great spiritual revival. The next Jesus movement, the fastest growing demographic coming to Christ as Lord and Savior, are emerged from the immigrant community.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

In today, that's every study from Pew to Barna to Gallup. This is it. Immigrant community is embracing Jesus. When we just found out from Gallup, 81% of Americans now believing God is a number down in the past 12 years. But guess what, this emerging demographic of immigrants are embracing the finished work of Christ. It's a beautiful thing to see.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

My point to you is the fastest growing demographic in the Southern Baptist, The Assemblies of God, the Church of God, Foursquare, Christian Missionary Alliance, the Evangelical Church, the immigrant community, the immigrant community. If not for the immigrant community, these major denominations would be in steep decline. Not my wording, by the way, this is actually the wording of people like Ronnie Floyd and other great leaders, so there it is my friends, let's not. Let's be careful when we discuss this. Let's deport them. They came here illegally. Well, you know these individuals may actually be the the antidote to moral relativism and cultural decadence. They actually may be the new Spurgeons and finis, and Wesley's last names, Rivera, Sanchez and Miranda. Nevertheless, they may be the carriers of an awakening that may help this nation in these troubled times. And that's what drives me. They love God and there's a strong hunger for spiritual, awakening and righteousness.

Shea Houdmann

Oh, Reverend Samuel, how can people learn a little bit more about about you, your ministry and your political proposals? And the spiritual background behind them?

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

NHCLC.org and National Hispanic Christian leadership conference, the acronym or PastorSam.com and you can of course Google not everything and Google is accurate and some of you know Google Pages are full of hate and mischaracterizations. Nevertheless, you'll find some, maybe put Samuel Rodriguez and immigration reform. You'll discover some articles and the proposals that I submitted to the previous President. The previous president brought me in as a negotiator between the White House and Nancy Pelosi to Speaker Pelosi, so I was I was involved there as the go to person literally going from the White House to Congress coming back the same day. And negotiating a solution, and we resist far away until it was bamboozled by the Senate, Senate leadership. So yes, Pastorsam.com NHCLC.org.

Shea Houdmann

So Reverend Samuel I truly appreciate your your time today. Thank you for coming on the program. We'll include links in the show notes at podcast.gotquestions.org and also on the description field when this video goes live on YouTube where people can learn more about you, the ministry God's calling you to, and even your political proposals. Again like we said earlier is is not a political podcast. But at the same time, the issue of immigration is both a biblical spiritual issue but also a political one, so we couldn't help but touch on it. I'm not here to propose anything politically, but from what I've read of your proposal, from what I've heard you present it makes sense to me, both from a biblical perspective and a political perspective. So thank you for giving me some further insights and for just sharing your passion. And it's it's exciting to see and I would love to see our nation head in the direction you're proposing on the immigration issue.

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

Thank you for having me my friend. Honored to be with you.

Shea Houdmann

This has been the Got Questions podcast with Reverend Samuel Rodriguez. Got questions? The Bible has answers. We'll help you find them.