**#6: Where the Gospel Meets Refugees**

*Note: The Love Thy Neighborhood podcast is made for the ear, and not the eye. We would encourage you to listen to the audio for the full emotional emphasis of this episode. The following transcription may contain errors. Please refer to the audio before quoting any content from this episode.*

***KEVIN JONES:*** *This episode contains mature content that may not be suitable for young listeners. Listener discretion is advised.*

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**JESSE EUBANKS:** I want you to take a moment and imagine something with me: What would it take for you to leave everything behind? Your job’s gone, your house is gone, everyone you know - they’re gone from you. You don’t have access to them anymore; it’s like a door that locks behind you. What would it take for you to walk through that door?

**KEVIN JONES:** What would it take? It would take… death awaiting me. Somebody’s knocking on my door with a gun saying ‘Hey, you just gotta go - because you look the way you look, because you talk the way you talk, because you eat the food you eat.’ I’m outta there. I’m out.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** For 85,000 people who came into our country last year? That wasn’t something they imagined. That was their real life. And that door that they walked through? *We* were waiting on the other side.

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**JESSE EUBANKS:** You’re listening to the Love Thy Neighborhood podcast. I’m Jesse Eubanks.

**KEVIN JONES:** And I’m Kevin Jones. Each episode we hear stories of social justice and Christian community.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Today’s episode - where the gospel meets refugees. We’re gonna hear what it would take for someone to leave everything they’ve ever known behind and come to a place they’ve never been. And what would happen if Christians were the ones waiting for them when they got there? Welcome to our corner of the urban universe.

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***NEWS CLIPS:*** *President Trump’s travel ban officially took effect in late June... Protection for the nation from foreign terrorists… Like a key question’s gonna be whether or not the Supreme Court even issues a ruling… And every potential threat, and that’s the key point in this… No hate, no fear, refugees are welcome here. No hate, no fear…*

**JESSE EUBANKS:** We’ve all heard those famous words engraved on our Statue of Liberty: *Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free*.

**KEVIN JONES:** But this idea of welcoming those who aren’t our own isn’t an American concept. It’s not even a man-made concept. The practice of welcoming strangers, it’s God’s idea. After the Israelites had been freed from Egypt, God starts laying out all the laws for them as their own nation. He speaks to Moses chapter after chapter, giving them specific, very specific, details on how God wants his nation to operate. In the midst of this conversation, God says this in Leviticus 19: ‘*When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you. And you shall love him as yourself*.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Part of God’s vision for his people is not just to love their fellow Israelites whom God had clearly chosen, but to love every one of their neighbors coming in. We of all people should be on the front lines of welcoming strangers, but in the reality the exact opposite is true. So there was a recent study from the Barna Group that shows that only 16% of evangelicals agree that we should welcome in refugees during a crisis. Think about that for a second. 16%. That means that almost nine out of 10 evangelicals believe that, when a crisis is going on, we should not be welcoming in refugees. Why is there such a gap between *our* attitude and *God’s* attitude shown in Leviticus 19?

**KEVIN JONES:** Because we have laws and restrictions and many man-made constraints…

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Yeah, so politics, you know politics are important, we need politics, but a lot of times we create these politics as a way to protect ourselves from having to get personally involved. So this idea of helping refugees and helping other people that we don’t know, that have cultures that we don’t understand, it just scares us. A lot of our politics are really just about making sure that we feel safe and protected. But we’re not here to talk about politics. Today we’re going to talk about people. And for a guy named Eric Allen, he was about to find out what welcoming a refugee really meant.

**ERIC ALLEN:** And we had five couples, five families, including my wife and I…

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Eric is a Christian who lives outside Louisville, Kentucky, and he and other folks from his church were wondering what to do in the midst of this refugee crisis. And that’s when they heard about an organization called Refuge Louisville.

**KEVIN JONES:** Now the city of Louisville is one of the top 10 refugee resettlement cities in the country. As a matter of fact, since 2011, the city has welcomed more than 10,000 refugees.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** So Refuge seeks to help churches get connected with the thousands of refugees coming to our city. So to get involved in the refugee crisis, Eric and his friends decided to volunteer with Refuge.

**ERIC ALLEN:** So we discussed it, talked about it, and said ‘we’re in, sign us up.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Eric and his team volunteered as a Welcome Team. They would go through some basic trainings and background checks. And then they would wait for Refuge to match them with an incoming refugee family. And Eric and his team would meet this family whenever they finally arrived at the airport. They thought they would have a bunch of time to prepare, but things ended up happening a lot faster than they had planned for.

**ERIC ALLEN:** We received a call on a Friday: ‘Can you take this family on Tuesday?’ All of our team had not even been through the training yet. And I’ve gotta tell ya, there was a little bit of apprehension, a little bit of ‘I don’t know if we can do this.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** And they were apprehensive because of this: Not only would Eric and his team be picking up this refugee family at the airport, they would also take turns visiting this family once a week for at least three months because they were gonna be helping them with whatever they needed to get settled and acclimated to life in America. It was a really big commitment. So that Tuesday, Eric and his team were sitting at the airport waiting for this refugee family.

***AIRPORT CLIP***

**ERIC ALLEN:** So we had all these questions, all this uncertainty.

***CLIP:*** *It’ll be interesting, kinda just have to roll with, roll with it.*

**ERIC ALLEN:** Oh gosh, you know they’re coming today. What does that mean tomorrow? You know, I mean, what’s going to happen?

**JESSE EUBANKS:** They weren’t the only people there waiting. A staff member from Refuge came along, as well as a translator, but because everything had happened in a rush, no one really knew much about the family, where they were from or if they knew any English. All Eric knew was that they had a lot of kids. So as they’re waiting with really no idea who it is that they should be looking for, the staff member from Refuge suddenly stands up and announces: ‘There’s our family.’

***CLIP:*** *Hi... Hi... Hi! How’s it going?... Say so-doh-woah... So-doh-woah!... I like your hat. I like your hat. It’s good! It’s very good.*

**ERIC ALLEN:** They arrive, they’re a large family of seven with children, they have everything they own in a few suitcases and their children in their arms.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** The father can speak a little English, but not much. The translator with them at the airport learns finally that the family is from Ethiopia and has spent the last eight years in a refugee camp in Kenya. So with luggage and kids in tow, Eric and his team pack into their cars and take this Ethiopian family to their new home in Louisville, Kentucky.

**ERIC ALLEN:** And so we went into the home and begin to help them with some of the very earliest things like how to open the lock on the door, the importance of closing the blinds at night, how to work a thermostat, all of these things that we take for granted. Y’know, you just don’t think about someone not knowing how to do those things.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** In fact, for Eric and his team, welcoming this Ethiopian family for the next three months wasn’t going to involve anything super complicated. It was gonna to involve a lot of really normal, average activities for Americans.

**ERIC ALLEN:** Something we’ve been doing regularly that’s been very helpful to them is taking them to the grocery, helping them learn to shop.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** But just like Eric took for granted knowing how to unlock doors and work thermostats, buying groceries at an American grocery store had its own unforeseen problems.

**ERIC ALLEN:** For example, you know, he was able to say ‘we need eggs’ and I pointed out the eggs and was kinda trying to educate a little bit about how we shop for eggs. He immediately picks up organic, which is good and healthy but not necessarily most economically friendly, you know, to buy. So I then try to explain organic difference from regular fruit…

**KEVIN JONES:** So guy’s looking at eggs and he’s trying to figure out, you know like, which eggs are good eggs when every egg he’s ever eaten to this point in his life is a good egg because it’s come from his own backyard. He lives organic. Try explaining *organic* to someone who’s probably never eaten a preservative in his life.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Well yeah, but the father speaks a little bit of English. I mean, his wife on the other hand hasn’t been able to learn much yet, so communicating with her can be a bit more of a challenge.

**ERIC ALLEN:** And so we were trying to help them understand the water in Louisville, it’s okay to drink from the faucet. And my wife had taken a bottle of water - it was empty - and she put it under the faucet, filled up her bottle of water, and went to show the mother that she was gonna drink it. And the mother about smacked the bottle out of her hand into the floor because she thought it would be harmful for us to drink the water.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** But Eric says communication isn’t as big of a barrier as you would think, and actually he’s been able to learn some about this Ethiopian family.

**ERIC ALLEN:** So we begun having conversations about what he’d like to do with his life. He aspires to have a business to be able to provide for his family.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** But there’s one topic in particular that seems to be more off limits.

**ERIC ALLEN:** They have been open to talking about anything that we ask, but they have not talked as much about the refugee camp experience.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Well, in order for us to understand why this topic might be more difficult to talk about, we need to make an important distinction. And that’s the distinction between a refugee and an immigrant. An immigrant is someone who *chooses* to relocate. A refugee is someone who is *forced* to relocate. And what forces them is extreme violence or persecution in their neighborhood. Death or serious harm will result if they don’t flee and seek asylum elsewhere.

**JOHN BARNETT:** You’re actually having to leave, because if you don’t, you will die and in a horrific way.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** This is John Barnett. John is the executive director of Refuge Louisville, the organization that got Eric connected with the Ethiopian refugees. And he’s seen first hand the effects of being a refugee.

**JOHN BARNETT:** You have a lot of psychological trauma for people to deal with being victimized themselves or watching family members killed in front of them…

**JESSE EUBANKS:** The two images that come to mind that Americans have had to come into contact with - one was the image of the young boy that had washed up on the shore, and the image was just of his lifeless body face down. And then the other famous photo that came out was of another boy; he was just sitting there and he was covered in white ash because he had just survived an explosion and a bombing.

**KEVIN JONES:** So especially for me, because I have a son who’s about that age, those boys are anywhere from six to 10 years old, I think it’s fairly difficult not to superimpose any loved one’s face, especially when you’re dealing with a child.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** I think I’ve looked at both of those pictures like twice apiece because every time I look at them I see my son and I can’t handle it.

**ERIC ALLEN:** And it’s story after story of some of the most horrific things that you can think of. Like a horror movie, but this really happened. So that creates an incredible emotional need.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** So to help us better understand those needs and what it really means to be a refugee, we talked to this family.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Coming up - Terrorists. A wedding. And a prayer to Jesus. Stay with us.

**COMMERCIAL**

**JESSE EUBANKS:** You’re listening to the Love Thy Neighborhood podcast. I’m Jesse Eubanks.

**KEVIN JONES:** And I’m Kevin Jones. Today’s episode - where the gospel meets refugees.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** We’re about to hear the story of David and Ishraq, refugees who also live in Louisville. Now, the stories we tell in this podcast, they’re local, things happening within our own city. But in order to understand this story, we have to zoom out and away from Louisville and travel to Iraq, specifically in the midst of the Iraqi War. Because that’s where David and Ishraq’s story starts.

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Now David and Ishraq both speak English, but their first language is Arabic and in order for them to share their thoughts most clearly, we decided to take a translator with us. Now the voices you’re about to hear, they’re actually voice actors helping to share their story with us in English.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** They come into our neighborhood, into our house, and they killed a lot of people because they considered us unbelievers.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Ishraq belonged to the Sabean religion, which was a minority religion in Iraq. So when the the Iraqi War broke out and terrorism became rampant, terrorists targeted her Sabaean neighborhood.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** They killed everybody - most of my family, my uncles from my mother’s side, from my father’s side, my cousins...

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Essentially they put to death most of the neighborhood, which included most of Ishraq’s family. Details from the translation were a bit unclear, but the few people who were left alive were left with broken bones and pieces of glass in their eyes. And a warning from the terrorists.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** They tell us ‘You have twenty four hours to leave this place, or we’re gonna blow you up…’ We didn’t take anything - whatever we have on us, our clothes - and we just left right after that.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** No one was going to stick around and see if they really did have 24 hours. They had a chance to get out and not be killed. So Ishraq immediately got on a bus headed for Baghdad.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** It was a very hard feeling. I can’t even express this feeling of seeing my family and my sisters being hurt. I just don’t know how to say it. Very horrific things happened to us.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Think about that. I mean it’s hard for me to even put myself in that scenario. It would be like this - I mean here in America, imagine someone breaks into your house, starts murdering people right in front of you, people that you love, they move on to the next house but promise to come back for you, so you leave all these dead bodies of your loved ones, head out to your car. You can hear the screams of people in the house next door and you know the same thing is happening to them. You get in your car, and you just start driving. As far and as fast as you can. Unfortunately, Baghdad was not a safe place either. So Ishraq headed to Syria, where she met David. And David experienced his own events that drove him from his home.

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** So my sister was kidnapped by terrorists. They said the only way I could get her back was to pay a lot of money.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** So David asked his family for money, and he asked his friends for money. And then - suddenly the terrorists just change their mind: He doesn’t want money anymore. He said he wants to marry David’s sister. So, David takes this as an opportunity to concoct a plan.

**TRANSLATOR:** So I tried to be smart. I said ‘let us at least see her and we can prepare her for the wedding.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** And then, as soon as his sister returns to begin to prepare for the wedding, David grabs her and they immediately flee to Syria.

**KEVIN JONES:** Man, this sounds like a Hollywood movie.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** I know, and it’s so foreign to most of us, but this, this is their reality. And in fact, as we continued to ask for details about their experiences in Iraq, at one point Ishraq doesn’t just really seem like she wants to talk about it anymore.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** I would like to move on now.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** So Syria became flooded with Iraqi refugees, and David was lucky to find work and a house, but it is not somewhere where you can stay permanently. So they apply for refugee status to be resettled, and then they wait… And they wait. In fact, they end up waiting in Syria for seven years.

**KEVIN JONES:** Hold on, hold on man. Waiting for what? Why don’t they just go somewhere else?

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Well because, to be officially recognized and resettled as a refugee, it’s a pretty detailed process. So let me break it down for you in five basic steps. First, the UN determines if they qualify as a refugee and refers them to a resettlement country, so in this case it would be the United States. Second, they go through a number of security checks run by both law enforcement and intelligence agencies *and* have an in-person interview with a Homeland Security officer. Third, *if* they pass the security screening *and* everything checks out, they receive a medical screening. Fourth, they get matched with a resettlement agency. So Louisville has two major resettlement agencies. They get security checked again, investigating any new information that has transpired during this whole process. Fifth, they are put on a plane and arrive in the resettlement country, receiving one final security verification upon arrival. And now, after all of these steps, they are finally considered a resettled refugee.

**KEVIN JONES:** So five steps, seven years, David and Ishraq are in Syria.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** And finally after seven years of going through this process, David and Ishraq receive the news that they are cleared and are going to America.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** We were so excited that we were going to move to another place where we don’t have to suffer anymore.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Being resettled also meant saying goodbye to David’s sister because she would be resettled in a different country. But Ishraq had an aunt resettled in Boston and other family who had been resettled in Louisville. But in a country of more than 320 million people, Ishraq’s handful of family were the only people that they knew. So remember Eric and his team? They’re the ones who met the Ethiopian family at the airport when they arrived. Well David and Ishraq didn’t have someone like that to welcome them. They had a case worker from the resettlement agency and were given some maps and locations of places they would need, like grocery stores or hospitals. But that was about it. They didn’t know folks here who could help them acclimate. So - they decided to seek out some familiarity. While in Syria, David and Ishraq had gotten engaged. And now, three months after resettling in America, they’re ready to get married. So they learn that in Michigan, there’s a community of Sabaeans, which, remember, that was their religion. So they go to Michigan to be married in the Sabaean tradition. But the church? Well, they ask for more money than David is able to afford. And they’re not willing to negotiate. David and Ishraq have no other choice but to leave - unmarried. And then - David remembers something he learned while in Syria. He had met some Christians there, and they had been really kind to him.

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** So what we did was we went to the Christian church and they married us in the Christian way.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** A Christian pastor who speaks Arabic marries them, free of charge. Their own people had not welcomed them. But these Christians, who believed and lived differently? They did.

**TRANSLATOR:** This is when we first learned that the people of Jesus are one family and they are related by love.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** David and Ishraq really didn’t know who this Jesus was. But what they also didn’t know was that he was about to change their life forever. When they came back to Louisville, they decided they wanted to start a family but the doctors tell Ishraq that she’s not going to be able to have kids.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Well the Christian translator who’s working with them suggests that they pray and ask Jesus for a baby. So they go to a Catholic church building and they pray to Jesus. And a few days later? Ishraq finds out that she *is* pregnant. And they are so amazed that they want to name their child after this Jesus who is called the Christ. So they name their first child Chris.

**KEVIN JONES:** So David and Ishraq, they are praying to Jesus, they name their baby Chris after Jesus Christ - and they’re not even Christians?

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Yeah, well they’re not sure exactly who this Jesus is. I mean they just have a lot of dots that just haven’t been connected yet. But what they continue to find out is this - this Jesus is some kind of miracle worker. So their first child grows up healthy and strong, and then eventually Ishraq gets pregnant a second time. But this child is born with serious medical complications.

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** So when he was born, he was sick. He had a problem with his brain.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** We don’t know exactly what the problem was, but we know that it was serious enough that the doctors are expecting the child to die at any moment. There’s nothing else that they can do. But Ishraq - she thinks she knows who *can* do something. So, Ishraq returns to the same Catholic church and prays again to Jesus.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** And I said with confidence, ‘Jesus just touch my kid with your hand to heal him.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** And that is exactly what happens. The next day, their child starts improving and soon becomes completely healthy.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** Since then I was just thinking all the time about Jesus. *He* is the god of miracles. Anytime I pray for anything, he answers me.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Who was this Jesus? They still did not know. And some Christians would tell them, “Jesus is Lord!” But they weren’t really sure what that meant. All they really knew was that this Jesus seemed to care about them. And they would soon find out that his people did too because when Ishraq became pregnant for the third time, they actually ended up receiving some devastating news. The doctors tell them that their third child will be born with Down Syndrome. As David and Ishraq try to come to terms with the realities of having a child with special needs and what that would mean for the rest of their lives, they turn to their family. They hope to get support and encouragement, but their family’s response is not what they expected.

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** Both of our families said that we don’t need this baby, we should just abort it.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Their families didn’t want the shame that would be brought on them by having a child with Down Syndrome. So they give David and Ishraq a choice: either you abort this baby… or we will no longer be a part of your life. They had been kicked out of Iraq by terrorists, they were refused marriage from their own church, and now - they could be disowned by their own family. Coming to America was supposed to mean no more suffering. So what did David and Ishraq decide?

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** So we told our families ‘no, we don’t want an abortion.’ This started a big problem with our families.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** True to their word, their families cut them off. So David and Ishraq are raising two kids, about to have a third, they still don’t have very good English, and now their support systems are gone. All while living in a country that that they barely know and barely understand. David and Ishraq needed help. But who could help them? Where was this Jesus, this god of the miracle, now? Being disowned by their family was such a big blow that Ishraq’s doctor suggests she go see a therapist to help her get through the pregnancy. And her therapist? Just happened to be a Christian. And the therapist told her about this really great organization called Refuge Louisville. Here’s Refuge director John Barnett again.

**JOHN BARNETT:** They began to realize every time they’ve had challenges in their life, there’s been Christians, there’s been believers there to come alongside and to help them.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** David especially had been intrigued by Christians ever since he met them in Syria. In fact he had done quite a bit of reading and learning about Christianity. But he still was not able to understand what it all meant - this Jesus and his people. They weren’t like the terrorists who hated them for their beliefs. *And* they weren’t like their families who shut them out. Christians seemed to be in this complete other category.

**JOHN BARNETT:** They began to ask questions. Y’know - ‘Tell us a little bit more about, y’know, this love. Where do you get that? You’re so kind…’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** So when John Barnett went to meet David and Ishraq at their house, David had a burning question in the back of his mind.

**JOHN BARNETT:** He sat down, we were talking about a few things, and he said ‘John I just hope you can help me answer one question that I’ve had for my entire life’ and I said ‘Well I’ll try’ and he said ‘Who is Jesus?’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** This Jesus who answers when we pray to him, this Jesus whose people are more welcoming and loving than our own people, who is this?

**JOHN BARNETT:** And then I said, ‘Well I think we can help you with that.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** We’ll be right back.

**COMMERCIAL**

**KEVIN JONES:** Welcome back to the Love Thy Neighborhood podcast. I’m Kevin Jones.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** And I’m Jesse Eubanks. Today’s episode - where the gospel meets refugees. We’ve been following the story of David and Ishraq, refugees from the Iraqi War. They have resettled in America, experienced multiple miracles from Jesus, and they’ve just been cut off from their family and left alone in a country with more than 320 million people. But there is just *one* person they really want to get to know.

**JOHN BARNETT:** ‘Who is Jesus?’ And then I said, ‘Well I think we can help you with that.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** So John sat with him and answered their questions and eventually John asked them if they would like to come with him to church.

**JOHN BARNETT:** And so actually the first service that they went to with us was on Easter Sunday, and it was so great - I was sitting next to David and you could just see him soaking things in.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** The next week, David and Ishraq asked John if he would take them to church again.

**JOHN BARNETT:** After then he said ‘This is the good news. This is what I believe.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** And a few weeks later, David and Ishraq were baptized. Now as part of celebrating baptism at this particular church, each person getting baptized will write a short version of their story and how they came to know Jesus. Then before the baptism, a member of the church will read the stories out loud. So one Sunday, David and Ishraq are standing before the church congregation, Iraqi refugees dressed in white robes. And their stories get read. Here is a part of that ceremony.

***CLIP OF BAPTISM CEREMONY:*** *‘…But I prayed to Jesus and again he answered our prayer. The only people who were willing to help us were followers of Jesus. About two months ago, my husband became a believer and he shared with me about Christ, and the people from Refuge Louisville taught me about the trinity. Today I know that Jesus is a miracle-working God and that he is my Lord. We are now a Christian family that wants to come to church to pray, serve, and follow Jesus.’*

**JESSE EUBANKS:** The baptism ceremony was very powerful for both David and Ishraq. And here’s how they describe it.

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** It felt like it was another person, a new person, inside me. Not like the David from before, but a new person.

**ISHRAQ SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** I stood up and felt differently, like I was flying in the air, like I didn’t feel so heavy.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Well eventually David and Ishraq did give birth to their third child. And I’m happy to say that all three of their kids are doing very well. They say that they’re hopeful to grow in their faith in Jesus and they’re thankful to be a part of their Christian family.

**KEVIN JONES:** That’s a beautiful thing. Sometimes we create these systems in our mind that to be American is to be more God-like. An image-bearer is an image-bearer, whether you’re born here or in Venezuela or in Dubai or in South Asia. Wherever you’re made, you’re still made in the image of God.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** For some reason we romanticize this idea of Christians going abroad to other nations, but the Lord is literally bringing the world to our doorstep. How are we going to love them? What are we going to do with the people that are standing in front of us?

**KEVIN JONES:** So how’s Eric and his refugee friends?

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Yeah, so Eric and his team have just about hit the three month mark with the Ethiopian family.

**ERIC ALLEN:** I think this last weekend a family helped them to cook banana bread. This weekend I think a family is taking them to the zoo for an outdoor movie out on the lawn.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** But they’re planning to be friends long after that. Because like David and Ishraq, these Ethiopian refugees, they see their Christian friends not just as friends - they see them as family.

**ERIC ALLEN:** The wife on a couple different occasions has motioned to the lady on our team who’s helping them and she, because she doesn’t speak a lot of English, she would say ‘sister’ and she would motion between that person and herself ‘sister.’ It’s been a super experience. I wish more Christ followers would do that. I really do.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** At the beginning of this episode, we talked about a statistic from the Barna Group - 16% of evangelicals agree we should welcome refugees during a crisis. That’s it. So, John, help me understand - why aren’t more Christians getting involved in helping refugees?

**JOHN BARNETT:** It seems very difficult, and people say ‘I don’t know if I want to step into that.’ I mean, am I going to help someone who’s going to destroy our country? There’s all sorts of issues, then you’re walking a fine line between how do we have compassion and care and how do we maintain security. And I think those are both answered in where does your compassion come from. Is it from Christ and rooted in him? And who’s your security in?

**JESSE EUBANKS:** I think in the end that we are paying way too much attention to what *we* think and not nearly enough attention to what *God has said*.

**KEVIN JONES:** In Leviticus 19, God describes to his people exactly what he requires of them. And what he requires is for them to respond to other people the same way he responded to them - with love and with kindness. ‘For *you* were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.’ God says “Look what I’ve done for you, look at the beautiful things I’ve done for you. Now *you*, in return, represent me and do those same beautiful things for other people.’

**JESSE EUBANKS:** And this is exactly what David and Ishraq experienced.

**DAVID SPEAKING**

**TRANSLATOR:** You really represent the love of God on earth, and you really represent him as a family.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** A family not based on culture or political stance. But a family related by love.

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**JESSE EUBANKS:** If you would like to learn more about Refuge Louisville, you can visit their website at refugelouisville.com. To get more resources on this topic or to hear past episodes of this podcast, you can go to our website at lovethyneighborhood.org/podcast.

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**JESSE EUBANKS:** Special thank you to our interviewees for this episode — Eric Allen, John Barnett, and David and Ishraq. Thanks also to our voice actors Hong Shu and Catherine Fowler. Special thanks also to Samir Beni for translating and to Chris Wilson for letting us tag along with you at the airport.

**KEVIN JONES:** Our senior producer and host is Jesse Eubanks.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Our cohost is the one and the only Dr. Kevin Jones.

**KEVIN JONES:** And our producer, technical director, and editor is Rachel Szabo. Additional editing by Janelle Dawkins.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Additional reporting by Anna Tran. Music for today’s episode comes from Lee Rosevere, Podington Bear, Little Glass Men, Cory Gray, Broke For Free, and Wooden Axle.

**KEVIN JONES:** Apply for *your* social justice internship supported by Christian community by visiting lovethyneighborhood.org. Serve for a summer or a year. Grow in your faith and life skills.

**JESSE EUBANKS:** Which of these was a neighbor to the man in need? The one who showed mercy. Jesus tells us, ‘Go, and do likewise.’