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## website and blog of Dr. Kevin D Glenn

### both compassion and caution ... a better way forward

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I was at home recently, when the doorbell rang. I was not expecting a visitor, so I looked out the window to see who was there. Two young men were at my door. Was I concerned? Yes. Was I curious? Yes. Was I cautious? Absolutely.

Before opening the door, I looked both young men up and down, checked to see where their hands were, what was in their hands, how they were standing, and looked for signs of aggression in their countenance. There are tell-tale signs of aggression in one's facial expression, body language, and clothing.

Seeing nothing to alarm me, I opened the door slightly, maintaining forward leverage on the door. My foot was planted behind the door as well – both actions preparing me to close the door should they try to rush. Why was I thinking they may rush the door? Because I am aware of situations where unexpected visitors rushed the door and invaded the home. Having that in mind, I was cautious.

The young men said they were from the Cross-Country Team of a local High School and were selling raffle tickets to raise money for travel to the State championships. I asked to see the tickets, asked about their coach, and about the dates of the State meet. Since I know students in the school and on the Cross Country Team, I asked about them and their events, all the while looking and listening for hesitations, conflicts in their story, or other signs of deception. In other, similar scenarios, I have asked to see to see a business card, letterhead, or some other type of credentials.

It turns out one of the young men was the boyfriend of a student I knew quite well. All was well at that point, my caution was satisfied and I invited the guys inside. I had my son, an aspiring cross-country runner, come out to meet them. We all chatted and I purchased several raffle tickets, after which the boys went on their way. Sadly, I didn't win the PS4 offered in the raffle.

Was I afraid? No. Was I cautious? Yes. Was I compassionate? Yes. Would I do all that again? Absolutely.

**BOTH** compassion **AND** caution need not be mutually exclusive practices. Any sensible parent of a teenager is keenly aware of what it means to “trust, but verify.” We hope for, strive for, and even pray for the best from people, but we should also be prepared to respond to the worst in people.

To ignore caution is reckless and naive, but to forfeit sensible compassion is cruel and inhumane. **BOTH** caution **AND** compassion are possible.

In the aftermath of the shooting in San Bernardino, and from the still smoldering embers of concerns over the arrival of Syrian refugees, Donald Trump’s suggestion Muslims be banned from traveling to and from the US has served as rhetorical lighter fluid, igniting a firestorm of response from condemnation to commendation. The span of response demonstrates how complex these issues have become, and how vital it is for wisdom to prevail. I think such a path is possible if we all can approach these issues with a humility recognizing that no single party, person, or platform alone has the capacity to fully engage these issues. We need each other. Together, we can do better than the base mentality to which Donald Trump is appealing.

I will concede that as a follower of Jesus, it can be hard to walk the line between Christ-like compassion and sensible security. However, closing the border based on religious affiliation violates the very religious freedom (among other freedoms ) upon which our nation was founded. It also sets a precedent that could just as easily be applied to Christians. As Russell Moore wrote in his [Op-Ed for the Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/12/07/russell-moore-people-who-care-an-iota-about-religious-liberty-should-denounce-donald-trump/?tid=ss_tw) ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/12/07/russell-moore-people-who-care-an-iota-about-religious-liberty-should-denounce-donald-trump/?tid=ss\\_tw](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/12/07/russell-moore-people-who-care-an-iota-about-religious-liberty-should-denounce-donald-trump/?tid=ss_tw)), “Make no mistake. A government that can shut down mosques simply because they are mosques can shut down Bible studies because they are Bible studies. A government that can close the borders to all Muslims simply on the basis of their religious belief can do the same thing for evangelical Christians.”

In addition, to punish all Muslims because of the actions of radical jihadists will only serve to confirm the worst radicalization propaganda and swell the ranks of jihadists – making the problem even worse. The Muslims I know personally are just as disgusted with the actions of radical Islamic Jihadists as my fellow Baptists are at the actions of Westboro “baptist church.”

I do think a better plan for screening and vetting refugees is essential. I see no conflict between being **BOTH** compassionate **AND** being cautious. If there is already a good plan in place, it needs to be better communicated to the American people with verification of its effectiveness.

These are important times we live in! The best advice I can give is to be vigilant in our watchfulness and faithful in our witness; striving to be **BOTH** cautious **AND** compassionate.

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