



Christian Scriptures and Farmworkers

From the laws and histories of ancient Israel to the life of Jesus and the letters of Paul, themes related to the treatment of farmworkers emerge consistently throughout the Judeo-Christian scriptures. Many of these passages suggest that a community's relationship with God is in fact defined at least in part by its treatment of foreigners, laborers, the poor, and the marginalized. Below is a brief selection of Bible verses that support the idea that farmworkers should be treated fairly. All texts are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Hebrew Bible

There shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you.

Exodus 12:49

You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 23:9

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 23:22

You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:19



You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Psalms 126:5-6

The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.

Proverbs 13:23

If you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors for ever and ever.

Jeremiah 7:6-7

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages.

Jeremiah 22:13

The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the alien without redress.

Ezekiel 22:29

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

Zechariah 7:8-10

Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against . . . those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:5

“Well you can see that they are applying the poison or it smells like it afterward when you're entering the field. It smells like poison and so you realize what it is. But no, since the boss speaks English and you speak Spanish, you don't understand each other much.”

North Carolina Farmworker

New Testament

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Matthew 25:35

'Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

Luke 10:36-37

Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due.

Romans 4:4

Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Romans 12:13

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:20

For the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain", and, "The laborer deserves to be paid."

1 Timothy 5:18

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2

Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

James 5:4



"What I would like to see is, even though they are all immigrants, that they get paid overtime after eight hours, or that they get treated with a little more respect, with the respect that they deserve. Because to work [in the fields] is very difficult, it's a job that many couldn't handle, if they weren't immigrants. So, I would like to see the people who work in the fields more appreciated. Because they are hard working people, and they don't withstand the work because they want to, but because they don't have any other choice. And these are the only jobs available for immigrants, there's no other option."

Virginia Farmworker

Get Involved & Learn More!

National Farm Worker Ministry: www.nfwm.org

NC Council of Churches: www.nccouncilofchurches.org

NC Farmworker Institute: www.ncfarmworkers.org

Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF): www.saf-unite.org