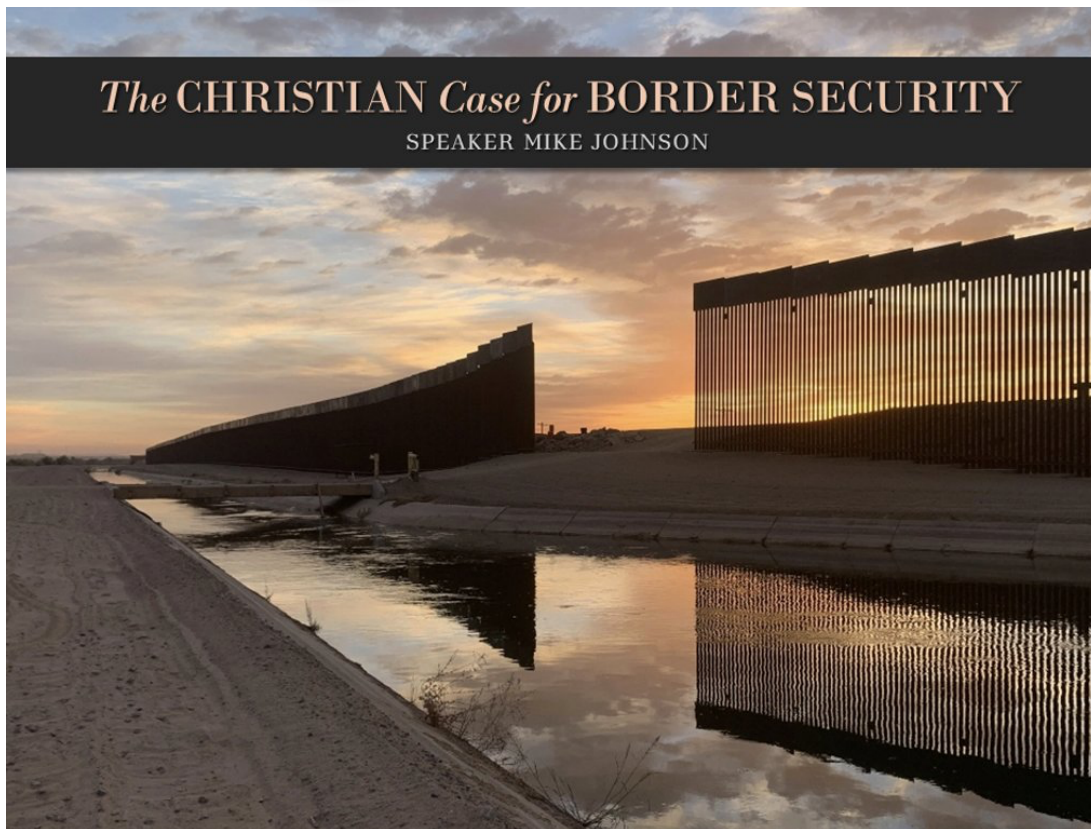




**REPUBLICAN PARTY**  
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**House Speaker Mike Johnson:** In politics, reporters will ask anything. On Tuesday, 2/3/26, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.), flushed with victory, held a 10-minute press gaggle after wrangling his caucus of cantankerous cats into [passing](#) a spending bill package to end the latest Democrat-initiated government shutdown over federal immigration enforcement. Johnson deftly fielded all the expected questions — on the spending package itself, the prospects for a deal on DHS funding, and a bill to require photo ID in federal elections — before the final question flew out into left field.

“Pope Leo has cited Matthew 25:35 to critique Donald Trump’s mass deportation agenda,” began an off-camera, male reporter, unnamed in the [C-SPAN footage](#) of the exchange. “How would you respond to Pope Leo in Scripture?” The new pope cited the verse in question, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me,” in an October 4, 2025 [exhortation](#) that argued, “the Church has always recognized in migrants a living presence of the Lord.”

Of course, the question had nothing to do with Speaker Johnson’s long, trying day of political leadership — counting votes, cajoling reluctant members, circumventing potential landmines. It had everything to do with his prominent evangelical Christian faith, which recognizes the Bible as inspired word of God and therefore the ultimate authority for our lives. It’s difficult to imagine any other House speaker from this century (the others were Dennis Hastert, Nancy Pelosi, John Boehner, Paul Ryan, and Kevin McCarthy) being challenged for a scriptural response to the pope on a political question. But then, it’s rare for a politician to live out his faith as publicly as Johnson does.

Despite his long day, the Louisianan was prepared for the off-topic question. “You want a theological dissertation? Alright, I’ll post it on my website later today. But let me give you a quick summary,” Johnson answered.

“Borders and walls are biblical — from the Old Testament to the New, God has allowed us to set up our civil societies and have separate nations,” Johnson began. Fact check: this is true. As Paul put it to the pluralistic skeptics of Athens, God “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Acts 17:26).

At the same time, “We are to welcome the sojourner and love our neighbor as ourselves,” Johnson allowed. “But what’s also important in the Bible is that assimilation is expected, and anticipated, and proper. When someone comes into your country, comes into your nation, they do not have the right to change its laws or to change its society. They’re expected to assimilate. We haven’t had a lot of that going on.” Indeed, the same law that taught Israel to welcome the sojourner anticipated both political and religious assimilation. The Lord commanded Moses, “Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:12).

On this point, it’s worth noting how Johnson was able to affirm two separate biblical teachings that could be held in tension with one another. Those who misuse the Bible often take one verse or teaching and over-extrapolate it through human reason, to the point that they make it contradict other biblical teachings. The way to protect ourselves against such misuse of Scripture is to know and understand the whole counsel of God, so that we affirm everything the Bible affirms — even if it includes ideas that are, or seem to be, in tension. Johnson modeled this well.

The speaker next drew distinctions between the intended recipients of various biblical commands. “When people cite passages out of the Old Testament, and they say, ‘Well, you’re supposed to take care of the sojourner and the neighbor and treat them as yourself, welcome them in’ — yes, but that is an admonition to individuals, not to civil authorities,” he argued. “Romans 13 says that the civil authorities are God’s agents of wrath to bring punishment upon the wrongdoer [Romans 13:4]. And it says, ‘If you do right, you have no fear of the civil authorities’ [Romans 13:3], but those civil authorities are necessary. It’s a calling. It’s a calling to maintain order in society. And we have not had that.”

Finally, Johnson argued, “Sovereign borders are biblical and good and right, and they’re just. It’s not because we hate the people on the outside. It’s because we love the people on the inside. We should love our neighbors as ourselves [Leviticus 19:18], as individuals. But the civil authority and the government have to maintain the law.”

Those were four or five different points of biblical interpretation and application that Johnson rattled off in under two minutes, at the end of a long day, in response to a question he likely wasn’t expecting. The clarity and ease with which Johnson responded suggests that he had already considered the issue thoroughly and understood his position by heart. In fact, Johnson had studied the matter previously.

Later, Johnson [posted](#) on X “a longer explanation that I drafted during the Biden Administration.” In that post, Johnson argued that “context is critical” when interpreting verses like Leviticus 19:34, in which God instructed the Israelites to “love [the stranger] as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Johnson added, “It is, of course, a central premise of Judeo-Christian teaching that strangers should be treated with kindness and hospitality. We are each called to love God first and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:36-40, KJV). However, that ‘Greatest Commandment’ was never directed to the government, but to INDIVIDUAL believers.”

“The Bible teaches that God ordained and created four distinct spheres of authority — (1) the individual, (2) the family, (3) the church, and (4) civil government — and each of these spheres is given different responsibilities,” he explained. “For example, while each INDIVIDUAL is accountable for his or her own behavior (e.g., Exodus 20), the FAMILY is commanded to ‘bring up children in the training and instruction of the Lord’ (Eph. 6:4) and ‘provide for their relatives’ (1 Tim. 5:8). The CHURCH is commanded to make disciples and equip people for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-13), and the CIVIL GOVERNMENT is established to faithfully uphold and enforce the law so that order can be maintained in this fallen world, crime can be kept at bay, and people can live peacefully (Rom. 13, 1 Tim. 2:1-2).”

“The Bible is clear that Christians should practice personal charity — but also insist upon the enforcement of laws (like our federal immigration statutes) so that ‘every person is subject to the governing authorities’ and ‘those who resist incur judgment’ (Rom. 13:1-2),” he declared.

Johnson challenged the “globalist” vision for “a utopian world order where there are no borders between countries at all” by rejecting “their basic premise (that man is inherently good and perfectible on his own).” This modernist view of man, he said, “is the opposite of the Biblical truth that man is fallen and in need of redemption that is available only through salvation in Jesus Christ.”

“Any time liberals attempt to bolster their ‘open borders’ agenda by citing Scripture out of context, they should be kindly corrected with the facts (2 Tim. 2:24-25),” Johnson concluded. “Christians are called to love unconditionally, serve selflessly, and defend the defenseless. We are also called to stand for, and work to ensure, just government. Justice and mercy are not mutually exclusive pursuits. To the contrary, God specifically requires His people to practice both (Micah 6:8).”

American Christians can draw several takeaways from this exchange. First, we should not overlook the fact that the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives views the full Bible as authoritative and coherent, the inerrant word of God. This powerful politician not only believes this as part of a timid, siloed, “private” religion; he publicly espouses this high view of Scripture, even defending his policy positions based upon God’s word.

Second, Speaker Johnson also modeled for Christians how to handle the Bible appropriately and engage respectfully in a skeptical, pluralistic culture. He presented a sound argument for his own policy position, based on good biblical reasoning, without shrinking back. Yet he did so with an eye toward persuasion and winsomeness. He left room for others to present a better argument — if they could. Most importantly, Johnson spoke the truth in love, neither hiding the truth nor forsaking love.

Peter exhorts early Christians, “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Peter 3:15-16). While no core gospel issues were at stake in Johnson’s immigration discussion, he was challenged to defend how he applies the Bible to contemporary immigration debates. And Johnson was ready with an answer.

Finally, Johnson demonstrated how Scripture applies to every area of life, even to issues of public policy. Immigration is not the main concern of Scripture, or even a large concern in Scripture. Scripture certainly does not dictate an immigration policy for the U.S. in 2026. Yet Scripture, nevertheless, provides authoritative principles that provide guardrails for public policy debates. Johnson applied these principles with wisdom and insight, refuting the naysayers who would like to exile Christian teaching from America’s public square.

