

# New Roots Review

June 2017 Edition



## He Left the 99 to Free the 1 *by Fred Wilgenburg*

Much of the Church's energy and resources go into good ministry efforts like feeding the hungry, financial mentoring, special acts of kindness, and visiting those who are shut-in or sick. In comparison, how much goes into evangelistic efforts? Usually not as much. True, its common to have overlap of good ministry efforts described above with evangelistic efforts, but a clear Gospel message easily gets lost in the details.

Jesus illustrates his priority for evangelism—sharing the Good News of God's salvation—in three parables in Luke 15. Here are words from the first one: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

God/Jesus prioritizes reaching the lost. He leaves the ninety-nine safe sheep to go after the one lost lamb; he joyfully puts that one on his shoulders and then calls his neighbors to celebrate with him; there is more rejoicing in heaven over the one who was lost than over the ninety-nine safe ones. Why? For many reasons, including the fact that God loves people so he wants them to become free from the pain and shame of sinfulness. And ultimately, as God is loving but also holy and just, he has established eternal places—Heaven and Hell. God wants people who are lost to be found, so they can go to Heaven.

If you, like me, consider yourself a Jesus-follower, I think God expects us to prioritize like he does. If you are part of a church which places much effort on taking care of its family members, most of whom are probably of "the ninety-nine," keep it up, but perhaps shift the focus a bit so that more of the care involves equipping the family members of all ages to reach the lost. Finding the lost can happen in numerous, natural ways: one-on-one sharing, internet evangelism, being prayer warriors, etc. If your church is good at helping others in practical and kind ways, great! If you are not already, consider tweaking your efforts a little to (→)

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*Pastor William, Brett of Minnehaha County, Rehan, me, and Yakob, at Rehan's house. (This picture followed a fantastic African meal provided by Rehan and his wife, Ashira.) William, Rehan, and Yakob are originally of South Sudan. This was an interfaith gathering to discuss a common concern—many of their young countrymen in Sioux Falls are struggling with addiction and homelessness, in part due to unresolved PTSD from when they experienced horrible things as they were on the run as refugees.*



Donations are always appreciated; please help support New Roots Ministry.

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## Continued...

include sharing clearly and naturally about God's saving love and grace.

It takes intentionality. For many of us, we realize that evangelism is important, but it makes us nervous—what if it creates conflict? As well, service projects take a lot of planning and they are busy. If we are not intentional about sharing the Gospel, it loses its place.

PERSONALLY, in my role with New Roots Ministry, I have the blessing of becoming acquainted with more Muslims than before. Many of whom I meet are kind, and interested in being my friend. As well, many are quite open to dialogue about faith as long as I am genuinely interested in them, not just in faith-talk. Some seem to think their regard of Jesus as a most wonderful prophet is the same as my regard for Jesus. I agree with them that Jesus is wonderful and I seek to expand on reasons why I think that, according to the Bible. (Many in the Muslim world are quite ignorant of their faith, and have not read the Quran. Practice of their faith might include praying five times/day, and fasting during this month of Ramadan—May 27-June 25, but not reading the holy book.) Others, like a Somalian merchant and an Iraqi man I know, are also friendly, but these particular guys are well-versed, even evangelistic, in their Muslim faith. In a religious conversation I have found that they seek

to be quite dominant in the dialogue. I'm guessing they wouldn't attend a Christian prayer gathering as did two

—>> All Nations City Church, co-led by New Roots Ministry, gathered in April. 140 people of many nations celebrated diversity and unity in Jesus. A special feature was the involvement of youth and young adults in leading the service.



Our first seminar—"Gospel Outreach to People of Other Faiths"—was a good day! The speakers, Aaron Myers of Crescent Project and Salom Silwal of a Nepalese Christian Church, did a fine job. (The ethnic meal added to the day!)



Muslim women with medical problems who came to the prayer event of my pastor friend's church and appreciated the care and intercessory prayer offered for them. Yes, they are still Muslim but they will remember that experience. It's my understanding that kind of 'warmth' is less common in the Islamic faith and worship.

Anyway, thankfully it is not about us winning a debate or being convincing enough. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." As we are faithful, God says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News (Isaiah 52:7, Romans 10:15)," and He takes it from there.

