

New Roots Review

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**NEW ROOTS
MINISTRY**

Off-Balanced...is Good? by Fred Wilgenburg

I find myself saying, “we got to find that balance,” like that’s the sweet spot. That’s often true, but what about for us who identify as Jesus-followers, as disciples of Christ? Might we be at our best if we are off-balanced—not toppling over, but taking on risk, and sacrifice, which is to come up short on meeting our own needs for the sake of meeting others’ needs.

Jesus exemplified this best. He said in Matthew 16, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” Jesus then went and did it, offering up his life for our sake.

Here I address two areas of life that challenge me in becoming off-balanced as an American Christian leading a ministry focused on refugees, new immigrants, and their churches: 1) **What’s in it for me/for**

us? A family member told me that in the Christian retirement community in which she lives, as the residents dialogue during this political season, she has asked, unpopularly, “what’s wrong with us paying more taxes if it helps those in need?” An individualistic response, though not necessarily wrong, will think, “That will mean less money for me.” A Jesus-follower’s response may take it further: “That will mean less money for me as a steward for God, and I think I can do better than the government at guiding funds, including charitable.”

Nationalism is defined as “the identification with one’s own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations” (*definition by Oxford Languages*). Toward immigration, a nationalistic attitude will likely say “yes” to more walls on the southern US border, and “yes” to lowering immigration numbers. That’s not necessarily wrong if the desire is to be sure one’s country has its affairs in order before helping others;..... (*Please consider these statistics from PewResearch.org’s Fact Tank before reading on: From 2008—2017, an average of 67,100 refugees arrived into the US each year. In 2018, it declined to 22,500. In 2019, it was 30,000. In 2020, the cap was set at 18,000. 15,000 has been proposed for 2021. From 2018—present, 80% of refugees who came into the US were Christians. In comparison, for the years preceding 2018, Muslims accounted for just over half of refugees coming to the US.*)but beyond that, for off-balanced disciples of Christ who seek to reflect Him, He tells them in Luke 10 to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus was then asked, “who is my neighbor?” Jesus illustrated then with an interesting twist that the good neighbor was a caring outsider, the Samaritan, who offered great kindness to the hurting. Here’s another teaching for God’s people, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien.....you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19). As well, in light of receiving Muslim refugees, besides needing to keep out the very small numbers of radicals through proper vetting, we are called to share God’s Good News and and love with them, which can be done well when they are our neighbors: “How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?....How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” (Romans 10:14-15)! → →



From the opening prayer by one of the teens, to them interacting with those we met, to getting their hands dirty, to the warmth they offered to each other, I was encouraged by this “next generation” from Maurice Reformed Church.

Donations are always appreciated!

Gifts can be given through the mail, or through our website—www.sfnewroots.com/

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Climate change is another issue which can catch us Jesus-followers in a “what’s in it for me/for us” dilemma. While 97% of scientists, including Christian scientists, believe climate change is mostly human-caused, because it does not seem to affect people like me who are in the Midwest, and as in the short-term, addressing it causes energy prices to increase, a desire is to minimize it. At the same time, refugee and immigrant numbers will likely increase dramatically because many poor countries are affected most—flooding and storms due to rising ocean levels on their low-lying land, droughts

What is New Roots Ministry?
It’s “a springboard for immigrants & their churches.” This is done through workplace chaplaincy (both as Fred is chaplain for 16 hours/week at Smithfield Foods & as we train & place bi-lingual chaplains on commercial farms), through Timothy Leadership Training, through hosting special educational events, through empowering refugee/immigrant pastors, leaders, and their churches, through offering unique Service Opportunities—serve in, or visit, stores owned by refugees or immigrants, then hear their stories, and through helping people navigate the American system and strategically achieve their goals, like education.

upon already subsistence, struggling farmers, the vulnerable poor lack resource reserves—by changing climates, climates which are most adversely affected by developed countries. “Jesus, what would you have us to do?” I encourage you to watch some YouTube videos of [Katharine Hayhoe](#), a trustworthy evangelical Christian climate scientist, if you are skeptical of claims about climate change. I understand; we want to effectively, even sacrificially, love our neighbors, but it’s difficult to know what to believe, and what to do. God will bless our humble thoughtfulness and efforts.

2) **How do I spread my wings and not become an isolated Jesus-follower?** Isolationism can be a problem in the Midwest where I live, especially the rural Midwest where there is not much diversity. I was personally rocked by that several years ago when Sioux Falls FreeThinkers started controlling billboards across Sioux Falls and displaying atheistic and naturalistic messages. It made me feel uncomfortable, wondering, am I now in the religious minority? At a recent Zoom conference with Global Gates, with which I volunteer, we were told that 160,000 Sikh people live in Toronto, and 80,000 in New York City, and almost none of them have heard of Jesus. What!? I hardly know what Sikhism is as we have very few in Sioux Falls. Most of them are originally from India, but they are completely different from Hindus. I encourage you to visit www.GlobalGates.info to read about numerous unreached people groups (UPG) like Sikhs within major cities in North America. In my self-protected realm, I can feel overwhelmed by all these others, until I gain a sense of God’s realm. He’s “got the whole world in his hands,” and regarding all those Sikhs, and, for example, the 60,000 Somali Muslim people in nearby Minneapolis, they, like me, are each specially made in God’s image, in need of the Savior’s love, and in need of the love of others.

Taking the risk of becoming off-balanced will be fulfilling, and I think it’s right, but it’s not to be accepted half-heartedly or applied easily. Jesus further said about discipleship: “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). I ponder that as I lay my head on “My Pillow;” it’s really as good as they advertise.



I co-led a talk at Covenant CRC with Muhammad / “Natnael.” He shared about receiving Jesus as his Savior, and not just as a prophet, when he was a refugee in Kenya.