

New Roots Review

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Countercultural. Refreshing?

by Fred Wilgenburg

“The way down is the way up....This is the upside down nature of the Kingdom of God and of divine love....The more we give, the more we receive.” “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1Corinthians 1:27). “This is my (Jesus) commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). “Nothing is worth anything if not in love.”

Those lines were spoken by Walker Cosgrove, professor of history at Dordt University, as he was the keynote speaker at the 2022 graduation ceremony. I think it was a great speech. If you are interested in a copy of the 22-minute recording (mp3), email me (sfnewroots@gmail.com) and I will send it to you. I was not at the graduation, so I didn't hear it live. I had heard criticism of the speech, basically that it was not practical and real-world enough, so I requested a copy to hear it myself.

Here are more points from the speech for the 370 graduates of Dordt, a Christian university: “Education (is usually) rooted in pragmatism, and what we can measure, assess, manipulate, as knowledge, and as information.” He stated, “That is not the goal of a Dordt diploma....(Rather, we understand) knowledge as formation....What is unmeasurable is always more important than what is measurable.” “What is noble, what is good causes questions which are full of wonder”—probably alluding to Philippians 4:8.

Cosgrove's speech is **countercultural**. Jesus is **countercultural**, as he said things like: “When you give a luncheon, do not invite your friends, your relatives, or your rich neighbors....But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.” “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.”

Isn't countercultural-in-Jesus refreshing? Rather than focus mostly on making and spending money, and perhaps keeping up, or ahead of, the next person, people of God are encouraged to have the fruits of the Spirit grow abundantly—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5 :22-23)—as a response to God's gift of grace. Not that making money is bad; as someone working in non-profit ministries for over 22 years, I am thankful for many people who are good at making money, and who are also generous and desire good returns on their investments in helping others. It's refreshing, too, to feel care for others, and to have a desire to see the lives of others more fulfilled and peace-filled, no matter who they are. In my human nature, I don't always feel that care for others, as it's a process God is working on as He impresses upon me, “Come on, Fred, stay with me here. Remember? —>



**NEW ROOTS
MINISTRY**



How fun to have Alvin (top picture) and Arthur (bottom picture) join me in speaking in churches! They are both originally from Liberia, so they do an excellent job talking about life there compared to life in the US.

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affiliate? To primarily be about loving God and our neighbors, and rising to Jesus' great commission (Matthew 28:18-20), rather than being primarily moralistically expectant that others align with you? To ask, "God, what would You have me do for a career, or in this life-stage?"

It has been a good season of learning for me to work with new Americans through New Roots Ministry. Many of them who are Jesus-followers understand the above better than us long-term Americans. Most of them have suffered a lot, as part of populations led by corrupt leaders, as the underdogs in discriminatory caste-systems, or as ones facing suffocating religious persecution. Those difficult experiences can have plenty of ongoing negative consequences, but they often at least temper them (1) to be able to live on little and still send a lot to loved ones "back home" who have it worse, (2) to appreciate degrees of fairness and justice in this new country that far outweigh what they received in their old country, causing them to feel an overarching peace and contentment here and a heart-tug for those who have it worse, and (3) to grab hold of unimaginable opportunities for them, their children, and their grandchildren now being raised in the US. I admit, often I visit new American friends in big apartment complexes in Sioux Falls which are overflowing with people, and as many of them work many hours each week at Smithfield Foods where we provide chaplaincy services, often in different shifts than their spouses so they don't have to pay for childcare, and I think, "I'm glad I'm not you!" I'm amazed by their friendliness, their easy-laughter, and their open-door-policy with their neighbors and friends. Is it that their standard of living is lower than mine for having peace and contentment, and is theirs perhaps a more God-ly standard of living than mine?

Humm, is it true that "the way down is the way up?"

Continued...

Off with the "old self...and its deceitful desire, and...put on the new self...created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

What might Jesus be meaning when he challenges you, "Come on,___; stay with me here?" To be the change-agent that this world, this society, your family, your workplace, and your neighborhood needs, rather than anonymously falling in line? To identify first and foremost as a Jesus-follower, rather than as a certain political party af-

What is New Roots Ministry?

It's "a springboard for new Americans & their churches."
This is done through workplace chaplaincy (we provide chaplaincy at Smithfield Foods & we train & place bi-lingual chaplains on commercial farms), through Timothy Leadership Training, through hosting special educational events, through empowering new American pastors, leaders, and their churches, through offering unique Service Opportunities—serve in, or visit, stores owned by new Americans, then hear their stories, through helping people navigate the American system and achieve their goals, like education, and through driver training for new Americans.



Eylaf got her driver's license, with patient, kind instruction from Sara. Sara has not only become friends with Eylaf, but with Eylaf's family. She even had Eylaf's mom speak in her church..

We realize you probably receive information on many ministries besides New Roots Ministry. While we appreciate being able to send our newsletter to you several times each year, if you wish to no longer receive it, we understand. If that's the case, please just email us at sfnnewroots@gmail.com, and we will no longer send the newsletter. HAVE A GREAT FALL!