

# New Roots Review

June 2025

*Jesus-Followers, Primarily*

*by Fred Wilgenburg*



**NEW ROOTS  
MINISTRY**

We are tremendously blessed to be Americans, aren't we, with many freedoms and opportunities. But, identifying and living out as a Jesus-follower, and as God's ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20), at least for me, is far ahead of being an American patriot, and of a certain political party. Actively being a child of God is foundational, it's an anchor, in life—decision making, setting priorities, being a bridge-builder instead of a wedge-driver—and while bearing the "Christian banner."

I admit, I write this as a prayerful reminder so the Holy Spirit will keep refining me as I can get off track on what I wrote in the above paragraph. As well, I write on this because it is so important for us as the Church, which is part of the continual ushering in of the Kingdom of God, and as part of that, the essential work of growing God's family. Below, I highlight some examples of being Jesus-followers and ambassadors for Him, first and foremost. Admittedly, my perspective is as the leader of a ministry largely for immigrants, and as one with acquaintances and friends in other countries.



Regarding immigrants, Leviticus 19:33-34 states: "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." Did you notice God's emphasis as He closes with "I am the Lord your God."? Following God's directive is most important, but you're right, a country like the US, where many of other countries would desire to live, needs good order and administration. So we bring God glory through our conduct, and so we maintain good policy-balance, it is important that our basis for the formation of our views is correct, instead of positioning ourselves on possible falsehoods or misunderstandings. That said, I encourage you to take about 13 minutes to read these two webpages to gain some possible new understanding on why many Latin Americans have come to the US: <http://bit.ly/4j8ClSJ> & <https://ufcguatemala.voices.wooster.edu/contextual-essay>. As a chaplain at Smithfield Foods, I have learned that many Latin Americans desire to, upon retirement or sooner, move back to their native countries.

Ranee (2nd from right), formerly a Board member, is our liaison. She teaches English, helps immigrants learn community systems, & she mentors, all while bearing the Gospel. Though we don't specifically seek them out over others, all of them are Muslim, and they love Ranee.

The articles above describe the messes we get involved in as "the big guy on the block." Sometimes, messes are caused because of good intentions. Other times, messes are engaged in due to decent intentions initially, and due to our inability to forecast the future, like seeking to combat communism in southeast Asian countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Unfortunately, when deep in the mess, selfish political ambitions can dominate, like delaying the US's exit from Vietnam, though many more lives were lost in the meantime—(Ken Hughes wrote the book *Fatal Politics*... about President Nixon and the Vietnam War; I encourage you to take 2 minutes to read about it here: <https://bit.ly/4dstMb6>). A similar example to the above was entering —>—>



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(continued...)

a war in Iraq based on intelligence which determined that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, though none were ever found (I encourage you to take 2 minutes to read about Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes: the History of the CIA*: <https://bit.ly/3SzVRnn>). Another example was being deeply involved in Afghanistan, then rapidly exiting and creating a "vacuum," which the oppressive Taliban government has filled, bringing terrible conditions, especially for women. New Roots Ministry has befriended a number of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Afghans who have come to the US due to circumstances described above.

How are we Jesus-followers to encourage dealing with bad situations, even when intentions were good or decent? It's never simple, but there should be humble "ownership" of mistakes made, and seeking to make things right.

Aligning with one side over another is not typically the way of Jesus. However, it is definitely the way of governments, and how news sources often choose to report. As the examples highlighted in this newsletter have affected millions of

human lives, let's not regard numbers as collateral damage, or as enemies, but as each specially made in God's image. What has happened in Palestine and Israel in the last few years is tragic all the way around, from the Hamas terrorist network taking 251 hostages and murdering 1200 people on October 7, 2023, to Israel now having responsibly killed over 54,000 Palestinians—mostly civilian women and children—as it seeks to root out Hamas. God speaks of the shedding of lifeblood this way: "I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man,... For in the image of God has God made man" (Genesis 9:5-6). Jesus says to our view perhaps of some others: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

Would Jesus be more about nationalism and policies like "America First," or about Kingdom of God? We know the answer. He described the Kingdom of God as being like a tiny mustard seed that, when planted, becomes the tree in which birds perch (Luke 13). The Apostle Paul would agree, writing in 1 Timothy 2: "Prayers, intercession...be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"—to ultimately join the family of God. When treated decently, and at the same time learning of God's grace by us Jesus-followers, even those who seem far from God can thrive, and have a high probability of joining the family. That's not surprising as each person is made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27), therefore innately having the capacity to personally know God. But, that becomes less likely, especially for Muslim people, at least through the witness of American Christians, as the US, often viewed as a "Christian country," seems to offer silent support to the decimation of Gaza, and to censor those who speak against it.

Too idealistic? Aren't we Jesus-followers to look above and beyond, to the One who brings light into darkness, sight to the blind, strength to the weary, grace to those shamed?

### 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 bilingual 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, through driver training for new Americans, and through Everyday-Ambassadors Practicum.