

New Roots Review

June 2026

Let's Not Miss the Big Picture

by Fred Wilgenburg



**NEW ROOTS
MINISTRY**

My Syrian friend, Basel, with whom I visit through video chat, likes English idioms, so he would appreciate this: in our personal relationships with God, I encourage us to have the 38,000-foot, wide angle, zoom-out point of view sometimes, in preventing the “can’t see the forest through the trees” sense, in other words, missing the essential **big picture**.

That is not to discourage a close, personal, experiential walk with God. Having time for Bible reading and prayer, attending worship and small groups, and having retreat-type experiences to nurture a personal walk with God are vital. As well, being in fellowship with a close-knit church family, or among Christian friends, is important. But, also having a big picture view—seeing that God’s Good News has gone, and continues to go, to the ends of the earth, as Jesus said in Acts 1:8—will enhance your walk for sure.

Our best example is Jesus. He had numerous close relationships with people—the twelve disciples, his family members, friends like Mary Magdalene, Lazarus and his two sisters, and others. As well, he needed focused times to be in close fellowship with His Father and the Holy Spirit—His transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36), His times of prayer (John 17), and His baptism (Matthew 3:13-17). But at the same time, Jesus was actively part of the establishment of His kingdom, which was the kingdom of God, and of heaven. Jesus teaches in Matthew 13 that the kingdom of heaven is like a tiny mustard seed that grows to become a tree on which birds can perch, and like a hidden treasure in a field, that, when found, is worth having to the point where you will purchase the whole field to have that treasure. He taught in Luke 13, and illustrated through His life, that the kingdom of God was like yeast that, when mixed into a large amount of dough, affects all of it.

Likewise, while the Son maintained a close walk with His Father and with the Spirit, and He had close relationships with believing friends and family, it was never at the exclusion of His purpose to offer life and salvation to people, not just of his own kind, but for people throughout the world (John 3:16). He was sure to engage not only with those close to him, but also with the Samaritans in John 4, the lepers in Luke 17, and large crowds who came to listen to him in Matthew 5-7 and in Luke 12.

Have you ever found yourself cooped up with your own kind for too long, sometimes causing us to start grumbling, about certain individuals, about politics, about community issues, more than we would want to? We sometimes call this “cabin fever.” It can be that way for families. It can be that way for church members as well, where at least in the big picture of God’s Kingdom, things like paint colors, carpet styles, and teaching or preaching styles have received too much of our attention. I write on this with experience as an occasional grumbler. The best medicine for cabin fever is to get “outside,” where a view of God’s big kingdom, of which we are blessed to be a part, is clearer. To better experience that blessedness, that sense of being privileged to be part of God’s redeeming work, let’s work the fields Jesus talked about in Matthew 9:35-38. We can do things like going door-to-door to invite the surrounding community to the good ministries—VBS, youth program, worship—we offer, or “adopting” a school in our city with a high level of children with educational needs, or shopping at and hanging out regularly at a store owned by a certain ethnic group, and perhaps even a different religion than your own, and befriending the owner or manager and expressing an interest in helping customers with English or forms or applications. Those three examples are each done in our city → →



We will have 10+ church groups hang out with us this year for cross-cultural experiences. This includes conversations with immigrants and immigration specialists, eating in ethnic restaurants, shopping in ethnic stores, and serving among immigrants..

These groups were from Bridge of Hope Church in Sioux Center, Iowa, and the Reformed Church of Steen in Steen, Minnesota.



(continued...)

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with success, and there is need for more. I am happy to offer guidance or to help make connections.

It's good to interact with people in-person, when possible, in gaining more of a 38,000 foot, wide-angle view of the kingdom of God, including of its growth and redemption, but that is not always possible. Good online opportunities are also available, including with real interaction, and probably with more of an international view, which can be especially interesting. Regarding Basel, who I referenced in the first paragraph, I became acquainted with him in the Spring of 2020, at the height of Covid. At the time, for three months, our ministry was shut out of Smithfield Foods, where we offer workplace chaplaincy; needless to say, I had idle time to fill. An international ministry I know well was building up their Gospel-sharing-through-English-training ministry. They coached people, including me, how to meet people largely through Facebook, and to develop a friendship that included helping with English. Basel, a Muslim man of Syria, became one of my friends with whom I talked by video chat every 1-2 weeks. Having extra time, through the same program, I also developed online friendships with 4 other guys, all of whom were Kurdish Iraqis. Though I don't talk much with these guys anymore, it was a blessing to learn about each other's lives, to learn about each other's understandings of life as well as faiths, and for me, to seek the Holy Spirit's help in being an effective reflection of the Gospel. Another international ministry that continually seeks online missionaries, where one can share the Gospel with people of other religions who are searching and who are from all over the world, is Explore God (formerly Global Media Outreach). One can have a big impact right from the comfort of their couch. If you might have an interest in ministering through Bible lesson correspondence with those who are incarcerated, again, from the comfort of your couch or desk, check out Crossroads Prison Ministries. If your interest is more in learning about and researching unreached people groups, online, you might be interested in serving with Global Gates, which seeks to have a "global impact through gateway cities." I have served with them and they are excellent.

A well-rounded, fulfilling life as a child of God needs quiet times alone with God, and perhaps with a few close faith-friends, along with activities "outside," beyond our comfortable zones. May God bless you on your journey!

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What is New Roots Ministry?
It "equips immigrants & engages the local church." 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 immigrant 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 immigrants, through Everyday-Ambassadors Practicum, and through English training.



"The Nations Have Come to Us!" was a workshop we hosted for a few hours on a Saturday morning. That phrase was often said enthusiastically by our founder, Carl Bruxvoort. At the workshop, Carl offered biblical perspective on immigration, and Board members William Daldoum and Simplicé Noutsougan shared about their experiences of immigration, as well as insight on migration patterns of different parts of Africa. The variety of ethnic foods and beverages added a nice touch.