

New Roots Review

November 2019 Edition

"Pastor, tell her Truth!" by Fred Wilgenburg



**NEW ROOTS
MINISTRY**

As the chaplain at Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls, I was recently in "5th floor, pork cut" (*There are eight floors in this particular section of the massive, 100+ year old packing plant.*), talking to a young woman who is originally of Nepal. I asked her about her nursing classes, which she takes during her off-hours. As we chatted, there came another woman, a Christian originally from Ethiopia. She pointed at the other woman, as she spoke above the production noise, "Pastor, she doesn't think Heaven is real, and she doesn't believe in God!



Tell her truth!" I encouraged her to go back to her neighboring station, as I would soon visit with her. Naturally, the first woman, a Hindu, was annoyed by the other, so I apologized on behalf of my fellow Christian and we continued our brief chat.

I actually applaud the Christian woman for her fervor in wanting her co-worker to know Truth, though more sensitivity would be helpful. Eventually, I circled around and we talked. I told her that the non-Christian woman has Christian Nepali friends, including her best friend who also works at the plant, and that nearly all of the 500+ Christian Nepali people in Sioux Falls were Hindu or Buddhist in the past. They came to know Jesus through the warm interactions, prayers and kindness of Christians. A week later, we met during a break so I could show her what I learned at a recent Gospel Conversation training event. As I'm working on it, so I hope she also is prepared to share effectively at the right moments, and by the Holy Spirit's lead.

(If you are interested in learning about the 15-second testimony or the 3-minute presentation of the Gospel taught at the event mentioned above, and having easy, natural conversations which may lead to those opportunities, please let me know and I'll send you some links and other information.)

Many people who are originally of other countries are accustomed to spiritual dialogue. My friends Maru, Abidela, and Mohammad "Natnael", all originally of Ethiopia, and all who were former Muslims, each came to receive Jesus as their Savior while in Africa as kind Christian neighbors or friends patiently discussed the Gospel with them over tea. That motivated them to do the same, which is quite obvious if you interact with them; they are open about their faith, and they will want to know where you stand. In fact, though they appreciate much about the U.S., they miss the aspect of Africa where people had more time for good, deep dialogue, and where there was more interest in becoming well-acquainted with others.

An observation I have made, of myself as a city outreach pastor, and of churches, is that we sometimes overly-calculate and -consider when it comes to sharing the Gospel. For example, in Gospel outreach ministry, we often first seek to meet felt-needs, and then hopefully, as a relationship might develop or respect is earned, we might get to pray for the other person, and then, if the opportune time arrives, we might talk clearly about the Gospel. In church, many resources are contributed to developing programs—>



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As the Gospel Conversation training event taught me, and which many of my friends originally of other countries know, people first and foremost need Jesus. As well, as people are all made in God's image, they are spiritual and therefore naturally inclined to think about spiritual things. Even if they do not seem interested even in sharing a prayer need, or to answer a follow-up question like, "Well, let me ask you another way, if God could do a miracle for you, what would you want Him to do," they usually won't be offended by your kind approach and respectful presence. I'm learning this by experience as one of the event's teachers reminded us that, like training for an athletic event, it is important to do "reps"—repetition. And, people might not show it in the moment, but receiving Christian kindness and interest will likely be unique-enough from the daily grind that your interaction will be warmly thought-provoking.

(If you are interested in hanging out, either to observe, join in, or learn about Gospel conversations with others, please let me know. OR, if you are interested in hanging out and meeting people who were refugees, please let me know.)

Continued...

that teach about the Gospel, or to form committees to do evangelism. But sometimes, though well-intended, the main thing that a person needs—an organic, personal explanation at the right moment that God profoundly cares about and loves them—goes unmet as it is lost in the shuffle of programming. Rather, why don't we consider starting with helping a person meet their deepest need—a personal relationship with God, and then perhaps also help them with other, felt-needs? Is that more direct approach avoided because the conversation may seem weird, unnatural, or disrespectful?

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 17 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.



Our November 2 event, "Looking Back, Yet Looking Forward: Immigrant Stories," was our best yet! Good attendance was complemented by a variety of ethnic food & beverages, and learning from 6 speakers about migration from their home countries and how we Americans can better receive newcomers.

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