

# New Roots Review

September 2020 Edition

## ***Blessed, to Know the Rest of the Story*** by Fred Wilgenburg

Do you ever long for “the rest of the story?” Like me, maybe you don’t so much because you were not aware there is more. Then when you read it, like a good explanation of a Bible text in a devotional, and you never understood it that way before, it’s enlightening, and intriguing.

As a Jesus-follower and Gospel-sharer, learning “the rest of the story” about other religions, cultures, and points-of-view has also been critically important for me. Admittedly, and unfortunately, I have been off at times in holding onto half-truths and one-sided perspectives. Here are some rest-of-the-story examples:

Up until a few years ago, I thought Muslims strongly disliked Jesus. I thought their main man is Muhammad and that one could be persecuted for proclaiming the name “Jesus.” That’s quite incorrect. Yes, Muhammad is considered their last and greatest prophet, who received the message of the Qur’an from Allah—“God” in the Arabic-language. However, they believe Muhammad was an imperfect man who sinned. They believe Jesus—“Issa,” was the only sinless human, he did miracles, he was born of the virgin Mary, and he will be the one to usher in the end of time. They also believe that Jesus was a great prophet, but lesser than Muhammad, that he was not crucified on a cross because it wouldn’t make sense for Allah to have a perfect man crucified, and that he is not the Son of God. I have been learning this as I visit with friends like Ali, as I am reading the Qur’an he gave me, as I visit mosques, and as I have read *Encountering the World of Islam*, which is edited by a Christian author. By the way, Ali, a conservative Muslim, as well as some Kurdish friends I visit with over Facebook video chat, remind me that Islam is quite a peaceful religion and the large majority of Muslims do not wish harm on others who are different from them. **If you might have misunderstandings about Islam, and if you live in my region, I can introduce you to Ali who would be happy to answer questions. If you live elsewhere, consider visiting a mosque and talking to an imam there as typically they welcome sincere interest in, and questions about, their faith. Wanting conversation-starters in approaching them, just let me know.**



I had always thought Hinduism was a polytheistic religion. Well, it kind of is, in that Hindus believe there are many gods and goddesses. However, they believe these are manifestations/embodiments of one Supreme God—Brahman (<https://www.patheos.com/library/answers-to-frequently-asked-religion-questions/is-hinduism-polytheistic>). My friend, Bishnu, a Bhutanese Hindu spiritual leader in Sioux Falls, would rather consider those gods and goddesses to be messengers or prophets of the main, supreme god, and he considers Jesus as one of those messengers. The author of this informative article describes Hinduism as not polytheistic, but henotheistic—<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/life/faith/2014/08/20/hinduism-many-gods/14247795/>. **If you would want to learn**

**more about Hinduism, and you live in my region, I could introduce you to Bishnu, who could enlighten you well about his religion.**

Ignorance and curiosity has often been my ticket to learning. In October, I will attend my 4th Nepali festival; last year was at Bishnu’s niece’s house. The festival is very cultural, and Hindu. I stand back —>



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as an observer as the people go through their worship rituals, and then we enjoy food and fellowship. I also hear my Bhutanese, Nepali, and Indian Christian friends as they caution against attending these festivals because the festivals are spiritually Hindu. I respectfully consider what they say, and I pray for God's protection. It's just that, the non-Christians have lamented to me that when their fellow Asian people receive Jesus, they seem to leave them and the culture, which then causes the Jesus-followers to lose their relevance and their friendly, positive influence toward the non-Christians. That's a problem.

Presently, I know the least about Buddhism, as there is not as much of that here. Durga, a store owner and a Buddhist Society leader, has welcomed me to come to one of their gatherings and to visit him about his religion. **Let me know if you are interested, and we could do that together.**

We sometimes lack the rest-of-the-story when it comes to others' points of views on societal issues. Regarding something like Black Lives Matter (BLM), we might stereotype all protesters, or those with other views, as all being the same. **If you live in my region, you would be blessed to visit with Pastor Dwayne, a fine African-American man who can enlighten us about how many of them feel and how our society might be able to make real progress in light of the unrest. New Roots Ministry Board members, William and Solomon, are black men, but they are African immigrants rather than African-Americans. They are not burdened with the same historical frustration and hurt as African-Americans, but they can enlighten us about being racially-profiled.** It's likely many of us would be willing to hear from Christian brothers like Dwayne, William, and Solomon, but wouldn't it also be beneficial to talk with someone with whom you would likely disagree, to at least understand their perspective, and their feelings? **I'm guessing a person would take up an offer to meet at Burger King for a respectful conversation in gaining understanding.**

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.



One of my best friends is Brian, a Native American man. He loves Jesus, he understands and practices his culture, and he understands hardship. **If you live in my region, I would be honored to introduce you to Brian who could talk with you about the Native American/ First Nations point of view.** He could also enlighten us well on Gospel outreach to his people.

Ohhh, to receive "the rest of the story"—a rich experience, indeed!