

New Roots Review

November 2021

Let's Tell Each Other What God has Done, and What He is Doing

by Fred Wilgenburg



**NEW ROOTS
MINISTRY**

I hope these next two months' newsletters inspire you during the Holiday season as I write about some profound spiritual experiences of followers of Jesus. Personally, I have not had the same experiences as my friends (*described below*), and I envy that sometimes, though I am thankful to God for having always known of Him, and for having many less-dramatic spiritual experiences like answered prayers, a sense of peaceful closeness and strong purpose, and occasional odd "coincidences"—thinking about somebody for the first time in months or years, and then soon after they show up in my life; somebody is struggling acutely with something and though I have not seen them in a long time and I am not aware of their pain, our paths cross right about then; I have also been the recipient of that good timing. Coincidences? Possibly, but probably not.

Santosh and his family were devout Hindus, partly in keeping with the high status that went with their specific caste. The family was originally from Bhutan, but they had to leave there as refugees to Nepal. Meanwhile, Santosh's older brother struggled much with epilepsy. The brother was encouraged by Christian friends in the refugee community to come to their church for just one month to experience worship and prayer, including for healing. He asked for his parent's blessing, which they granted. The brother was healed, he received Jesus, and he has not suffered from epilepsy since—over 15 years ago. Slowly but surely, the rest of the family gave up their Hinduism, and their place in the caste, and they received Jesus. About ten years ago, Santosh and his family came to the US as refugees. They attend Awakening Generations Church in Sioux Falls, which they were part of starting, and of which Santosh is the pastor. Santosh has gone to seminary, getting his M-Div degree. Presently, he is working toward his D-Min degree.



Unfortunately, their extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins) has largely ostracized Santosh's family for leaving Hinduism. May they be inspired by the unconditional love and kindness of Santosh and his family as they follow Jesus' example.

Stories of miraculous healing and powerful answers to prayer are common among people with backgrounds similar to that of Santosh.

Twenty five years ago, Ethiopians **Adanech** and **Muhammad** were a married couple with two children, living in a refugee camp in Kenya. Adanech was an Orthodox Christian, but not committed. Muhammad



was Muslim. The differences in their faiths caused friction with their parents and it was difficult on their marriage. About that time, Adanech became alarmed and intrigued by a bright beam of light that glowed in front of her on different occasions. In seeking understanding, she had a pastor pray with her about this. As Adanech's experience occurred during the holy month of Ramadan, Muhammad, who was fasting much, deeply desired a similar spiritual experience, but it didn't happen, so he asked the pastor for prayer. Following the prayer, he still didn't see the beam of light that Adanech saw, but he had powerful dreams about Jesus

as the One understood by Christians according to the Bible, and not with the limited view that Muslims have of Jesus. Muhammad, typically an unemotional person, became very emotional for days, but with a newfound sense of peace. As well, he had no interest in alcohol and drug use any longer, and his hard personality softened much. He soon claimed for himself the name "Natnael," after Jesus' disciple. —>



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A friend who has a similar background as mine recently had a unique spiritual experience. This followed an extremely difficult period of two years---surgeries, long hospital stays, marriage struggles, strains in the relationships with his children, treatment for alcoholism, financial hardships--as well as a recommitted, closer walk with God. Here's what happened: Following a three-hour surgery, he had a recovery room experience like never before. This time, he didn't experience nausea and confusion, but like before, his youngest daughter was again in his dreams during the recovery. In this dream, she was floating in clouds and he could remember saying to her, "things are going to be okay; we will be okay." This time, rather than just see his youngest, he saw his estranged wife and his two older children, who had not been speaking to him, and he said to them within the dream, "we are going to be okay." Further along in the recovery room process, he asked a nurse who was present and who spoke with an accent where she was from. She came from another country recently due to war. Not knowing of a war there, he asked her about that. It was a personal war within a broken relationship, and recalling it brought tears. My friend, still in the process of recovery, said, "You're going to be okay, and you're not going to be hurt like that again." "How do you know?" she asked. He responded, "Jesus has told me this, and he will never leave you." More tears flowed. As the nurse eventually brought him to his regular room, he felt moved to ask her another question: "was one of you nurses in the recovery room named "____," his youngest daughter's name. "Yes!" This has had a big impact on my friend.

I hope you are encouraged by the experiences of these children of God. I'll write of a few more next month. These are not to make other, less dramatic experiences with God seem less significant. Each life-walk with the King is personal and special for us, His "children, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). At the same time, let's keep leaning into Him, including welcoming new, fresh experiences with Him. By the way, it's likely Santosh, Adanech, Natnael, and my other friend would not want others to go through the hardships they endured when they had their experiences. But, those things happened, God worked through them, and we can walk on together, encouraging and affirming each other.

Continued...

Adanech, attributing to God the beam of light which she saw, and seeing her husband's transformation, also committed her life to Jesus.

Much has occurred since that time. They came to the US as refugees. Their love for each other as a couple has deepened much. They had two more children. In Sioux Falls, they lead a church for new Americans who are originally from Ethiopia.

Dreams and appearances of Jesus to Muslim people are quite common—

www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/muslims-dream-jesus/.

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.



The All Nations City Church reunion-event was a good time. Among others, Lana, known as "mother" to some people on the streets, offered prayers, Jorge, who was a chaplain for the Juarez, Mexico police department offered a powerful testimony, and Pastor Salvador reminded us of the challenges of many central Americans.

