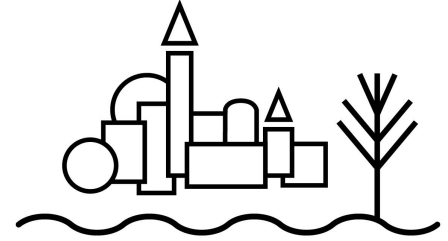


**Connecting with My Neighbor of A
DIFFERENT RELIGION
Luke 10:29-37**



Growing up as a Hindu in Memphis was fine until I reached 6th grade. Both of my parents were born and reared in India. My dad came here to attend University of Memphis on a scholarship, and a year later, he brought my mom, my sister, and me (when he could afford it). They had an altar in the home with the gods, and prayed every day. A deep light was lit, as it acted as mediator between God and humans. We even had Sunday school at various peoples' homes until a temple was built (I was already a teenager/young adult by then). I began to question why Hindus performed some of the rituals they did. My mother didn't always have the answers because her mom just did the rituals. I even did my term paper my senior year of high school on Hinduism, so I could learn more.

I think a challenge for me was explaining what Hindu's believed, but the basic idea was that all religions intertwine and that there was not just one way to God. That worked for me for a while, but I wanted something more specific.

My mother always made food for the homeless and went to the soup kitchen because she was service oriented, as many religions and churches are. Growing up I remember singing the bhajans (hymns) but not knowing what they meant. When I was pregnant with my first child, I went to visit the Hindu Temple in Eads, Tennessee to learn more about the religion, rituals, and traditions.

It wasn't until I had all three of my children that I realized they needed a church community of love and fellowship, as did I. I liked Hinduism as it always included all religions and teaches there are multiple pathways to God, not just one. Wherever we had the alters, there was also a cross. Learning that Jesus died on the cross to save us, really speaks to me.

When I was studying to be an occupational therapist, I did a rotation in a small Bible Belt town. One patient that I had to see daily was openly prejudiced against me. As soon as she laid eyes on me, she was condescending and mean. It was my job to help her regain her strength and coordination so she could dress and feed herself again. During that time, I dealt with lots of emotions. The scripture assisted me to continue to show love towards her.

Reflections

1. Read Romans 13:10. Have you ever felt uncomfortable in the presence of someone of different ethnicity or religion? Don't assume just because of a person's ethnicity, they are a certain religion. Respect their traditions and beliefs even if theirs is different from yours. Show love to all your neighbors.
2. Read Romans 14:13 and Romans 15:2. These verses also remind us of our responsibility to our neighbors.
3. Why is it important to know people of different cultures and different religions?

Connecting with My Neighbor from Different Religion

4. Discuss the author's statement that the Hindu religion believes there is not just one way to God and also that they display the cross in their worship even though they do not teach that Christ died for each person.

A Call to Action

1. How much do you know about different religions? You may begin by having a study group on the three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. See if there are classes being offered on world religions at a local community college.
2. Are there people living in your community of a different religion? If so, invite them, one at a time, to speak to your group about their religion. Attempt to get to know someone of a different religion. Your CPWM might choose to attend a synagogue, a mosque, or another place of worship as a group, especially after you study some of their beliefs.

Resources

1. *The Wide, Wide Circle of Divine Love, A Biblical Case for Religious Diversity*, W. Eugene March. West Minister John Knox

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to be mindful of all the people we encounter that may not look like us, have our same background, or act like us. Help us to be loving to all people and to guide them to you if the opportunity arises. Amen.

ABOUT THE WRITER:

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