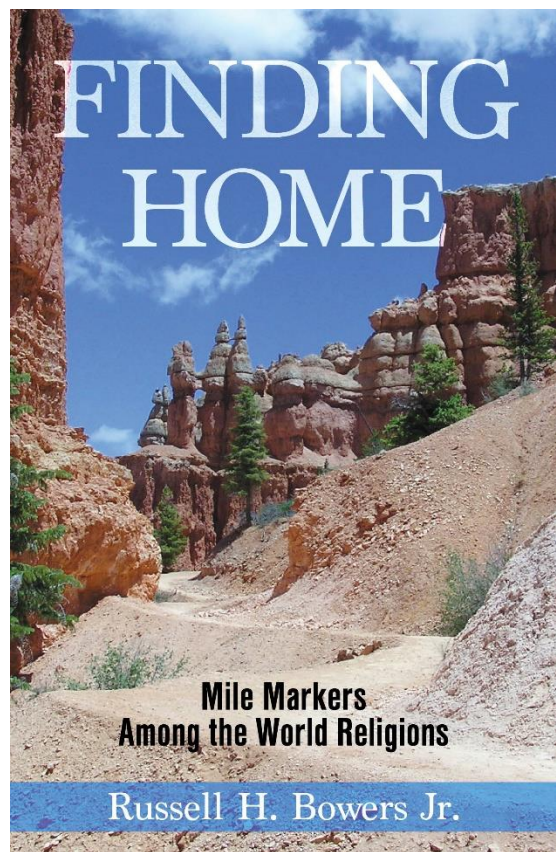


- **Release Date:** Jul 14, 2016
- **ISBN:** 9781940269870
- **Retail:** \$14.99
- **Pages:** 288
- **Category 1:** Religion & Culture
- **Category 2:** Spirituality
- **BISAC:** Religion / Comparative Religion (REL017000)
- **Format:** Paperback

# FINDING HOME

Mile Markers Among the World Religions

Dr. Russell H. Bowers, Jr.



Religion has exited the sidelines for center stage. Decades ago, Buddhist monks publicly immolated themselves. “Who *are* these people? How could they *do* that?” Now we ask the same of jihadists who incinerate not themselves, but others. Stereotypical news images and soundbites do not adequately answer. **It is time to deeply listen to and understand our neighbors.**

*Finding Home* introduces these neighbors. It opens their scriptures, allowing those next door to air issues they consider critical. Readers hear what they say and how they say it. Advocates of any cause would treasure such an opportunity. They seek the unconvinced who will momentarily cordon off their own creeds and carefully consider new concepts. Only then can the uninitiated understand the advocates’ beliefs the way they believe them—not the way non-partisans opine they believe them. Afterward, hearers can decide what, if anything, they find true or meaningful. Maybe nothing. But at least they have given the other’s ideas a fair shake. Buddhists would like non-Buddhists to do that for them. Muslims, non-Muslims. Christians and Daoists and Sikhs would like that. If we wish others to hear us, we must also hear them. If our own faith is true, it risks nothing from such listening. At the very least, we will understand each other better. In the center of this give-and-take in *Finding Home*, Christianity articulates its crucial contribution.

This book is for all—materialist, agnostic, believer; Daoist, Christian, Native American; the questioning, the committed, the curious.

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# About the Author

## Dr. Russell H. Bowers, Jr.

Russ Bowers enjoyed science as a boy, but cancelled chasing a career in chemistry to think theology instead. After marrying Glenna, he pastored two US churches, completed a PhD (Dallas Theological Seminary), oversaw Christian leadership development in Cambodia, and taught theology in Singapore and world religions in the US. He has danced with hilltribesmen

and dived in the Andaman Sea. While in Cambodia, Glenna volunteered her nursing skills to organizations serving impoverished children. His book *Someone or Nothing?* compares the thought of Kyoto School dean Nishitani Keiji with that of Christianity. He has presented papers on interreligious dialogue and Buddhist-Christian topics for fora in Thailand, Cambodia, and the US. Honeycomb, the Khmer-English journal Russ founded, was lauded as opening “a new era for theological work in Cambodia.” Though living in Texas, Russ and Glenna sometimes feel homesick for Asia.

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# What Others are Saying About FINDING HOME

## MILE MARKERS AMONG THE WORLD RELIGIONS

Mark Noll, in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, raises concern about a lack of contemporary Christian intellectualism. *Finding Home* is a refreshing piece of work which addresses that concern.

Russ Bowers' writing is at once **clear, poetic, and intensely well-informed**. It achieves in a substantive way what C.S. Lewis began in the final pages of *The Abolition of Man*, where he describes threads of commonality in human thought which he calls "the Tao."

*Finding Home* is **an indispensable map to understanding the powerful flow of ideologies that, though ancient, still drive people's thoughts and actions in the twenty-first century**. This book is a **must-have for Christian pastors, teachers, and thinkers**.

—Steve DeGeorge, EdD, dean of the School of Education, Oakland City University, Oakland City, Indiana

In a time when differences, division, fear, and ignorant caricatures of religion hold great sway, the alternative paradigm for how we view each other, found in Russell Bowers' most recent book, *Finding Home*, is a breath of fresh air.

*Finding Home* **provides a sorely needed framework and rationale recognizing our common quest for truth and meaning across a broad spectrum of religions**. Bowers does not promulgate mere platitudes of acceptance, nor champion a dull and ineffectual tolerance of diversity. Instead, he engages the reader with extensive citations and rich analysis of a broad swath of religious texts, building a strong rationale for appreciating the rich wisdom and truth that can be discovered, even in surprising places.

By drawing on primary and secondary sources from within each religion, and listening critically yet fairly, Bowers identifies a wonderfully overwhelming range of common themes, principles, and fundamental beliefs—discovering foundations of our shared humanity and quest for truth and meaning.

This book thereby lays the foundations for a more appreciative community, made up of various religions living peacefully together and calling forth the best in each other, without asking readers to make logically specious leaps of faith into false statements that all religions are the same. **Bowers' intellectual precision, hard head, soft heart, and open mind combine to bring a unique and refreshing voice** in a world where, too often, intellectual sloppiness, illinformed judgment, and armchair criticism of those who are different have added fuel to the fires of fear, hatred, and violence.

*Finding Home* is refreshingly entertaining and interesting, as Bowers guides the reader into a fascinating range of religious texts and commentaries with a spirit of respect, of listening, and of discernment. I am inspired as a Christian by the discovery of resounding and eternal truths within the guiding beliefs of people from extremely different backgrounds, and encouraged to persist in my own faith, in my pursuit of truth, and in my appreciation and recognition of the sincerity and richness found in the theology and practice of people from other faiths.

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I strongly commend this book to people of all faiths, so that we might be better able to live out our various beliefs among the clamorous media and religious voices of hatred and empire, while building the peace which any concept of a loving God would surely compel us toward.

—Bill Forbes, director of the Child Protection, Child Development and Rights Team, World Vision International

*Finding Home* is a brilliantly-written book that is easy to read and yet scholarly in content, written by a true scholar and God-lover, Dr. Russell Bowers Jr. **The book does not suggest that all religions are the same, or that all equally bring us to God. But it does urge that each argues at least one point that is right. How could anyone follow them if they contained nothing true? What the book does is find some significant good in each, and strings these points together into a path that can lead us Home.**

This approach is not syncretism, since it views the religions presented neither as authoritative nor as true in their entirety. Each chapter could have been argued as well from the Christian scriptures; however, Russ brilliantly accomplishes the task of getting readers to see that Christianity is not entirely foreign to the understanding and aspirations of many thoughtful people throughout time and around the world. **What distinguishes Christians is Jesus—who we understand him to be, and the reality of his cross, resurrection, and coming. All these are brilliantly presented within the fabric of the tapestry of this scholarly book.**

Sometimes we hear only snippets from other faiths, cut out for critical purposes by our own apologists. And, sad to say, many non-Christians are similarly acquainted with only an inadequate version of our faith presented through skewed, spotty, out-of-context biblical quotations. But *Finding Home* employs extensive quotations from non-Christian scriptures and writings to accomplish its task, so readers may glimpse what others believe as they themselves believe. We are increasingly finding people of all faiths around us, and as we interact with them it is important to learn more about what has shaped their worldview. *Finding Home* provides a forum where readers can interact in a fashion that is more leisurely, dispassionate, and perhaps objective.

**A highly recommended book for every believer to have in their personal library** and to also recommend to their friends.

—Dr. Ravi I. Jayakaran, catalyst for integral mission, The Lausanne Movement

*Finding Home* is **not the predictable Christian apologetic** in which the truth of Christianity is pitted against the errors of human religion. Dr. Bowers has ingeniously and artfully woven his way through several of the major and minor world religions by way of their own texts, periodically concluding that there are some elements of truth, similarities, and yet differences between them. In so doing, he has also uncovered the longing heart of all these persuasions in their respective quests to find relief from the reality in which they find themselves engulfed and in their attempt to make sense of the world in which they live. In a delightful way, the author has distilled the basic philosophical beliefs of several far eastern and western worldviews, perceiving where their aspirations intersect with one another. Yet, **the uniqueness of biblical truth is not lost in the survey, but also weaves its way gently through the book.** This writer can highly recommend *Finding Home* for an enjoyable, informative, and persuasive read.

—Dr. Forrest S. Weiland, professor of biblical studies and director of the master of arts in biblical studies program, Veritas Evangelical Seminary

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