

We thank God for the opportunity to complete the mission that He gave us to conduct four pastoral training institutes and one short seminar in India and Nepal over a period of four weeks. Training Pastors International (TPI) sent two different pastoral training teams from the United States and Hyderabad, India to conduct these pastoral training institutes in Hyderabad, India [172 pastors]; Chennai, India [110 pastors]; Patna, Bihar, India [69 pastors]; and Kathmandu, Nepal [134 pastors]. We also did a short half-day seminar in Lalitpur, Nepal [15 students]. **We trained a total of 500 pastors and evangelists at the four institutes and one seminar** in the areas of Expository Preaching, Sanctification of the Believer, Preparation for Future Ministry (half-day seminar), and Sermon Preparation and Delivery of the Message. Furthermore, **we gave out 344 certificates to those pastors who completed the whole program each week. Jennifer Balmer joined me for all four weeks and was able to help in many administrative ways to enable each of the institutes to run smoothly and also help us to get our reports out to our supporters.** During the four weeks, I taught Expository Preaching and The Sanctification of the Believer for each of our three-day TPI institutes. In the first week (Hyderabad, India), Rev. Joshua Peram from Hyderabad joined me in teaching on Sermon Preparation and Delivery of the Message since we wanted a local pastor to join me on the teaching team. **We saw 61 people saved during our India/Nepal Fall Mission Trip to these two countries during the 4 weeks of our institutes.** Some of our pastors have not received a clear presentation of the gospel message, so we rejoice in the salvation of these pastors and evangelists. We also saw many pastors and evangelists surrender to the Lord in some aspect of their lives or ministries, which was an added bonus of God's grace displayed during our time in these countries. Please rejoice with us in how God truly helped us to gain the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore give God all the glory for what He accomplished through us so that many pastors were equipped for their ministries, and thus, the Church in India and Nepal was built up more solidly on the foundation of Jesus Christ and is better able to complete the Great Commission.

Every year we face different challenges as we seek to provide pastoral training to pastors in Africa and now in India and Nepal. This fall we faced a very unique situation that we have never faced before: the monetary situation in India made things very difficult since the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, announced the day before we arrived that two of the most common rupee bills, 500s and 1000s (Indian local currency), would no longer be accepted anywhere in India, but instead, they had to immediately be traded in for the new currency. The lines at the banks were outrageous (4+ hour wait in long lines around the banks), and then the banks would only let people withdraw or exchange the equivalent of \$70 USD per day. Given the fact that 90% of all transactions in India are cash created a huge problem since most people don't use credit cards or checks, and most vendors don't accept them. As a result, we quickly found out that the banks would not accept our US dollars either, and therefore, we could not exchange our dollars into rupees. Therefore, our local TPI coordinators had to borrow rupees from other local people in their cities in order to pay all of our bills and TPI's bills with the hope of eventually being able to exchange our US dollars to Indian rupees and pay the donors back long after we had gone. This created a major problem at every step of the first two weeks during our first two institutes. I will never forget the poor poverty-stricken people in this Muslim/Hindu background church coming up with enough rupees in all of their households in order to hand-deliver to Pastor Anand Kumar so that he would be able to pay for the restaurant bill (\$20 - \$25) we had racked up at 12 AM on a Friday night in Hyderabad after the church service had ended. I was equally surprised at how accepting the people were of the crisis and that there was no outrage, just a calm acceptance and patience. I would imagine that there would be some major protesting and rioting in the streets in the USA if this had happened at home.

We also had a major problem flying from Hyderabad to Chennai (two multi-million people large cities in India) due to this same problem. We missed our first scheduled flight because our local coordinator could not come up with enough funds to pay for the taxi to get to the airport on time. Then once we pleaded our case unsuccessfully at the airport ticket counter, we tried to buy another two flight tickets from another airline to Chennai, but the airport banks would not allow me to exchange more than \$140 US dollars (\$70 for each of us), and that was not near enough to buy our two tickets plus the excess baggage fees associated with the box of certificates and our other two overweight

bags. It was only after I gave up my house in the USA and promised one of my local coordinator's kids (just kidding) that the bank manager finally made an exception to be able to get the necessary rupees to buy the tickets. By the time that it took to get this done, when we got back to the ticket counter, the price of the two airline tickets had gone up, and I did not have enough money to buy them – I was still not out of the woods! When the ticket agent saw my dejection, he offered to help me go around to some other airline ticket counters, and he helped me find two tickets that were even less than his originally-priced tickets that he offered to us about an hour ago, and so we bought them, and by God's grace and a lot of extra elbow grease, sweat, consternation, and prayer, we finally made our flight, and the new flight ticket agents did not charge us nearly as much (they gave us a \$100 discount) for the excess baggage kilos (weight). In conclusion, we came very close to missing our flight completely that night, and thus, boarding a sleeper train all night long, stopping in every town along the way, wondering if we would ever get there. We also realized that the Devil was trying to stop our flight to Chennai to thwart our plans, and at the same time, God was working to give us His victory over the Devil and get us there in time for our next TPI institute in Chennai, India, which turned out to be a complete success.

We have also seen that when we obey the Lord and go on mission with God, He has already set up opportunities for us to share the gospel message with people who have never heard it. One such mission task was set before us by Pastor E. A. Abraham after we had a successful TPI institute in Patna, Bihar in Northeast India, where we had 69 pastors and evangelists attend the three-day TPI Institute, in which they had traveled by bus from five different states (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and West Bengal) to get there. All of these pastors had no more than six months of Bible training prior to this week and most of them were first generational Christians because Christianity is so new in most of these northern states in India, where there is much persecution by the Muslims and Hindus against Christianity and churches.

Since we had an extra weekend between the last two TPI institutes (Bihar, India and Kathmandu, Nepal), we were given the tremendous opportunity to travel eight hours northeast of Patna to Kishanganj, a city in northeast Bihar on the border of India and Bangladesh, with over two million people comprised of mostly Muslims and Hindus. In Northeast India, there is a lot of persecution of Christianity by both Muslims and Hindus, and as a result, there are not many Christians up there, and we have been told that not many Americans come up to these parts as well. I was asked to dedicate a new church building, Emmanuel Fellowship Church, which would be a public meeting open to the community, and I would have the opportunity to preach the gospel as well.

When we finally arrived after traveling all day long with 10 people and luggage in an old small school van for almost 12 hours, we stayed in a hotel in the center of town, and I also went to see a doctor, who had never before treated an American, so word began to go around town that there were two Americans roaming around the city since we had to go through quite a difficult process just to check into our rooms. The next day we went to a Christian school, Bethel Mission School, with about 300 students, which was populated mostly by Hindus and Muslims since there are very few Christians in town. When we were on campus, the students came up in groups and wanted to take their pictures with us, and others were asking for "selfies," so once again, Jennifer and I were celebrities in Kishanganj. The curiosity, however, opened up doors for the Gospel, so it was all good.

Later that afternoon, we first went over to the new church building, which had a big tent set up outside the one-room small church, and there were very few people sitting in the chairs set up under the tent. When we got there, they were already playing praise music while the organizing team was still getting set up. The chairs were only 1/3 full under an outside complex of tents, and it was already 4:40 PM, which is 40 minutes past starting time. Eventually, they put up two huge megaphones so that the surrounding community and school would hear what was going on. Typically, when a public dedication of a building such as this is announced in public, even though churches are scarce in this area and church buildings are more unusual, many in the community will come out to see what is going on, mainly out of curiosity. That night was a very special occasion since many new visitors will likely come out to attend the meeting because there are not many public events quite like this one, and on top of that, there were two Americans coming to this event, so many came out just for that alone. As a result, a lot of the students from the school began to walk the short distance over to the complex since we had already befriended them, many from the

surrounding community came out as well, and the place started to fill up. By the time we officially started the meeting, people were standing all around the edges of the tents, and the place was packed out to the full. There were an estimated 400 people crammed into the outside tent area, and Pastor Abraham told me that about 98% of the people were mostly Hindus and some Muslims, and almost all of them have never heard the gospel before. **Wow! That got my juices going! Just to think that God has arranged a meeting of 400 Hindus and Muslims that have never heard the gospel message, and I get to preach it to them. Move over Beethoven, we are going to have an event tonight - I was born for nights like these!!!**

When I was introduced to speak for the dedication message, I started speaking and a lady translated for me as I dedicated the church to the Lord, but soon I transitioned to sharing the gospel message. I knew that God had arranged for me to preach the gospel "for such a time as this," and even though it was against the law for me to evangelize in India in a public meeting and I could have had my visa revoked, I said to the Lord, "Tonight is your night Lord, and I will obey you and not man, so come what may, I am preaching your gospel to these Hindus and Muslims tonight." Jennifer later told me that at times I sounded like Billy Graham preaching, but I knew God had put the fervor of the Lord in me to preach His message, and nothing was going to stop me from preaching the gospel that night! Only God knows and eternity will bear out what happened on this night, but I knew that the Spirit of the Lord was working, and many times on the mission field God sets things up like this because He wants people to hear the good news of His eternal offer of Jesus Christ as the gift of salvation for the whole world. Praise God that I had the opportunity to preach it fervently to these people and we saw at least nine people and the next day on Sunday five more (14 total) come forward and accept Christ and enter the kingdom of heaven!

During the second week in Chennai, India, we got to tour **St. Thomas Mount**, which is the place where the apostle Thomas was martyred by a blow from the lance of a pagan priest on December 21, 72 AD after spending twenty years establishing 7 and ½ churches in cities along the Malabar Coast of present day Kerala in Southwest India. We also saw where Thomas supposedly hid in a cave, which is called the "**Little Mount**," which is 80 feet above sea level and where there is a small window and the hole that went to the fountain that is still there that he crawled out of to get water and then escape. Finally, we saw the Old Gothic Catholic church, which is built over the place where Thomas was buried in 72 AD. It is a huge white cathedral called the **National Shrine of St. Thomas Cathedral Basilica**, where the Persians came and built a church and tomb over the burial site of St. Thomas, and the Portuguese came in 1523 and rebuilt the ruined church over the burial site of the apostle, even until this day. During the final week in Kathmandu, Nepal, we had another great successful TPI institute with many pastors and emerging leaders just one and a half years removed from two major earthquakes that impacted all of our participants. Afterwards, I was able to fly in a small propjet over the great Himalayan mountain range, which contains the highest mountains in the world right on the northern border of Nepal and southern border of Tibet/China. I got to see the king of all mountains - Mount Everest, which stands at 29,029 feet (the tallest mountain peak in the world) from the cockpit of the plane and take some pretty amazing photos.

We thank God and give Him all the glory for all those who helped us with their prayers and gifts to send us to India and Nepal to offer these four pastoral training institutes for these pastors, who have no way or finances to get it. You have helped to provide this training to them, and God will use it to multiply His kingdom throughout India and Nepal so that many may come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Please continue to pray for these pastors as they implement this training in their lives and ministries. Please pass this synopsis on to others that they may see God's work in Southeast Asia as well. May the Lord bless you, your family, and church as you have helped us to complete this crucial mission assignment to train these indigenous pastors in Asia where the challenge is greatly needed to equip pastors to produce Great Commission churches in the land.

Yours for Christ and His Kingdom,

John M. Balmer, Jr.
Training Pastors International
President and Founder